



MEMORANDUM

CELINDA C. LAKE
President

To: Interested Parties

ALYSIA R. SNELL
Partner

From: Celinda Lake; David Mermin; Rick Johnson
Lake Research Partners

MICHAEL J. PERRY
Partner

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Subject: Analysis of 2008 Swing Voters and the American Dream

**DR. ROBERT G.
MEADOW**
Partner

Date: December 10, 2007

DANIEL R. GOTOFF
Partner

The election of 2008 will be decided by a group of swing voters who are intensely unhappy with the direction of the country and are hungry for action to restore the American Dream. The swing voters in 2008 have become significantly more anxious about long term economic prospects than swing voters in the past decade or more.

JOSHUA ULIBARRI
Vice President

RICK A. JOHNSON
Vice President

TRESA H. UNDEM
Vice President

The American Dream is the vital core of our national identity. At its heart, the American Dream is about the ability of individual Americans to achieve their dreams for themselves and for their children. The four fundamental cornerstones of the American Dream – jobs with pay good enough to support a family, access to quality affordable health care, opportunities for children to succeed, and a secure and dignified retirement – all serve to uphold that main purpose. The American Dream is a values system, not simply public policy positions on a set of issues. For swing voters, they see the American Dream becoming harder to attain.

ROBERT X. HILLMAN
Chief Financial Officer

ALAN C. WOLF
Chief Operating Officer

Anxiety over the loss of the American Dream for future generations is shaping their views and potential voting behavior.

Comprising roughly one-third of the voting population, swing voters are younger, whiter and slightly more male than the voting population as a whole. They have not committed to a party or candidate—and many do not believe that their concerns are being addressed or that any of the candidates have a plan to restore the American Dream. Over 80 percent of swing voters believe government has a responsibility to restore the American Dream and help people who work hard achieve it.

Unlike previous election cycles, the rising anxiety is not focused on immediate economic concerns such as job layoffs or recession, but rather on the long term erosion in the foundations of the American Dream. The lack of good jobs with wages that can support a family, worries about retirement security and concern over health care far outweigh personal job loss, gas prices or the stock market in determining the votes of swing voters.

Survey and focus group research conducted over the past two years¹ has found that the American Dream is the universal expression of the hopes and aspirations of Americans—regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, age, or immigration status. A good job that can support a family is the core of the American Dream for the overwhelming majority of Americans. Affordable health care, a secure retirement and opportunity for the next generation complete the foundation of the Dream that unites virtually all Americans.

While red, blue, and purple America are divided on many other issues in this election, on these core economic issues our findings show there is one America and it is the America of the American Dream.

In a survey of 2008 swing voters, the majority see the Dream as being harder to achieve today than in the past, and believe even more strongly that it will be even harder for the next generation. In assessing the future, only 16 percent think the next generation will be better off, while a near majority (48 percent) think the next generation will be worse off.

Rising anxiety about the new American economy has resulted in more than two-thirds of swing voters choosing economic security over economic opportunity as being more important to them personally.

Swing voters identify corporate behavior as the source of the economic insecurity and as the culprit in the threat to the American Dream. Swing voters strongly believe corporations have too much political power, do not share the profits with workers, that multinational corporations use their power to drive down wages and that government has not done enough to rein in greedy and unethical corporate conduct.

The shift to security has also brought increased demand for government action. Swing voters overwhelmingly support government action to guarantee affordable health care, to create a more progressive tax system, to require that corporations keep promises to employees on health care and pensions, and to reform mortgage practices. Remarkably, among swing voters, there is almost no division or doubt about the importance of this agenda.

¹ Lake Research Partners designed and administered this survey that was conducted by telephone using professional interviewers between September 6th and September 20th. The Random Digit Dialing (RDD) survey reached a total of 800 registered voters and 800 Non-supervisory workers. The margin of error for this survey is +/- 3.5%.

A candidate or campaign that succeeds in offering leadership on the American Dream agenda has the potential not just to win the support of these swing voters but could make 2008 a watershed election like 1932 or 1980 that changes the political landscape for a generation.

Analysis of the 1980 election² data shows there has been a significant shift in attitudes on key indicators of public sentiment—in 1980, Reagan expressed prevailing sentiment with “government is not the solution, government is the problem.” Now, there is a demand for government action on core American Dream cornerstones such as health care and retirement. Further, unions are enjoying growing support and are seen as a means to achieving the American Dream.

² Conducted by Roper Organization, February 9-February 23, 1980 national adult sample of 2,001.

From October 23 - 29, Quinnipiac University surveyed 1,636 American voters with a margin of error of +/- 2.4 percent.

Conducted by Cambridge Reports/Research International during July, 1980 and based on personal interviews with a national adult sample of 1,500.

Conducted by Los Angeles Times, May 20-May 25, 1979 and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,304.