

## MEMORANDUM

**CELINDA C. LAKE**  
President

To: Interested Parties

**ALYSIA R. SNELL**  
Partner

From: Celinda Lake; David Mermin; John Norris  
Lake Research Partners

**MICHAEL J. PERRY**  
Partner

Subject: The 2008 Election and the American Dream

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Partner

Date: March 3, 2008

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**DR. ROBERT G.  
MEADOW**  
Partner

The latest American Dream Survey by Lake Research Partners<sup>1</sup> on behalf of Change to Win (CTW) shows that **while voters are profoundly worried about the economy and the state of the American Dream, they are also enthusiastic and hopeful about the possibility of real change in the 2008 election.**

**DANIEL R. GOTOFF**  
Partner

**JOSHUA ULIBARRI**  
Partner

Our survey found that voters define the American Dream in terms of the fundamental economic needs and hopes of working families. **The four cornerstones of the American Dream continue to be jobs that pay well enough to support a family, affordable health care, a secure retirement, and the opportunity for the next generation to succeed. Voters are more worried than ever that the American Dream is slipping away, especially in the light of the current administration's policies.**

**RICK A. JOHNSON**  
Vice President

**TRESA H. UNDEM**  
Vice President

**With this threat to the American Dream at the forefront of voters' concerns, Barack Obama is currently leading as the "American Dream Candidate" who has the best chance to restore it.** Voters also strongly favor an American Dream policy agenda including a fairer tax system, access to affordable, quality health care, protection of employer-sponsored health insurance and pensions, and increased government investments in infrastructure and renewable energy to stimulate the economy.

### Views on the American Dream

- **Voters believe the American Dream embodies the hopes and dreams of working families.** Almost three out of four voters (71%) agree that "the phrase

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<sup>1</sup> Lake Research Partners designed and administered this survey that was conducted by telephone using professional interviewers between February 25<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup>, 2008. The Random Digit Dialing (RDD) survey reached a total of 800 registered voters and 423 swing voters. The margin of error for this survey is +/- 3.5%.

‘The American Dream’ reflects the hopes and dreams of American working families,” including 45% who agree strongly.

- **The four cornerstones of the American Dream include: jobs with pay that can support a family, chances for your children to succeed, access to quality health care, and a secure and dignified retirement.** When asked to rate from 0 to 10 how important several issues are to achieving the American Dream, the leading issue is “having a job that pays enough to support a family,” with a mean rating of 9.0 and 69% of respondents rating it a 10. The next three cornerstone issues are “being able to ensure your children have the opportunity to succeed” (8.9, 68%), “having affordable quality health care that you can depend on” (8.9, 65%), and “having a secure and dignified retirement” (8.8, 59%). These four have consistently been the highest rated elements of the American Dream in previous research.
- **Voters believe the American Dream is at risk, and the policies of the current administration have made things worse.** Nearly three out of four voters (74%) think it is becoming harder to achieve the American Dream these days—up from 70% in September 2007. Nearly two out of three (65%) believe the government’s policies of the past seven years have made achieving the American Dream harder—up from 57% in September 2007.
- **Key pocketbook issues have overtaken the war as the dominant issues for the 2008 election.** The economy and jobs is the top issue for voters (32%), followed in a distant second by Iraq (16%) with health care & prescription drugs (14%) close behind and no other issue above 6%. The percentage of voters choosing one of the American Dream issues of jobs, health care, retirement and education add up to more than a majority. This is a stark change from September 2007 when Iraq (23%) dominated the agenda, followed by the economy and jobs (17%).

## **The Presidential Race and the American Dream**

- **Barack Obama is leading as the “American Dream” candidate over the current field.** In a three-way comparison with John McCain and Hillary Clinton, a plurality (31%) see Obama as the presidential candidate with the best vision for restoring the American Dream compared to McCain (22%) and Clinton (18%). That lead widens when only Obama and McCain are mentioned in a head to head comparison on which presidential candidate has the best vision for restoring the American Dream (40% to 29%).
- **Enthusiasm for Presidential election is up markedly from the fall of 2007.** Nearly three out of five voters (58%) are more enthusiastic about this November’s election compared to previous presidential elections, up from 44% in September 2007. Intensity has also increased with 42% saying they are much more enthusiastic compared to only 25% in September 2007.
- **The candidacy of Barack Obama and his vision for the American Dream is a significant factor in this increased enthusiasm.** Voters who feel Barack Obama has the best vision for restoring the American Dream are much more enthusiastic about the 2008 election (70% are more enthusiastic than previous elections) compared to voters who feel John McCain has the best vision for restoring the American Dream (52%).

- **Voters see Obama as the candidate least influenced by corporations and CEO's.** A plurality (39%) see McCain as most influenced by big corporations and CEOs compared to just 19% for Obama. In a head-to-head between McCain and Hillary Clinton, voters are closely divided on who is most influenced by big corporations and CEOs (33% for Clinton, 30% for McCain).

### **A Progressive Agenda and the American Dream**

- **A majority of voters favor a progressive domestic agenda to make the American Dream more attainable.** Voters rated a number of policy initiatives on a scale from 0 to 10, with a 10 meaning it would be a very effective step to make the American Dream more attainable and 0 meaning it would not be effective at all. The top testing initiatives, with a majority giving the most intense support for each, include:
  - “Making sure the Government makes employers keep their promises to employees, including protecting their pensions and health care” (mean 8.4, 52% rate 10);
  - “Creating a more progressive tax system that is fair to workers and makes billionaires pay their fair share in taxes” (mean 8.3, 57% rate 10);
  - “Making sure the government invests in jobs to stimulate the economy like rebuilding the national infrastructure and expanding renewable energy development” (mean 8.3, 50% rate 10);
  - “Creating a government guarantee that every American has access to quality, affordable health care” (mean 8.2, 55% rate 10).

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*For information regarding the Lake Research Partners survey, contact Celinda Lake or Rick Johnson in our Washington DC office (202.776.9066), or David Mermin in our California office (510.286.2097), or visit our website at [www.lakeresearch.com](http://www.lakeresearch.com).*