



November 9, 2011

Choice Can Help President Obama Win Back Women Defectors

Key Findings From a Survey of Women in Battleground States Who Voted for President Obama in 2008 But Are Not Supporting Him or Are Not Certain to Support Him Now

To: Interested Parties

From: Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research

There is a group of women voters who supported the President Obama in 2008 but are not currently voting for him—bringing them back into the fold can be an important element of his reelection. By injecting the choice issue into the debate among these women defectors¹, NARAL Pro-Choice America is uniquely suited to help accomplish this goal.

A recent survey conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner on behalf of NARAL Pro-Choice America² shows that **choice provides an opening for President Obama and other Democrats to create a sharp contrast with anti-choice Republicans and demonstrate a clear sense of advocacy that works to bring many of these women defectors home:**

- 1. Being anti-choice is a deal breaker for a big bloc of women defectors.** Right off the bat, 40 percent of these women defectors report that *“I would never vote for anyone running for president who opposes a woman’s right to have a legal abortion, no matter how much I agree with them on other issues.”*
- 2. Women defectors trust Obama more on choice than on economic issues.** Women defectors say Obama will do a better job than Republicans on “protecting a woman’s right to have a legal abortion” by a wider margin (49 percentage points) than they do on the economy and jobs (30 points) or on government spending (5 points).

“I think he’s willing to help women more than Republicans and it’s a woman’s right to choose.”⁴

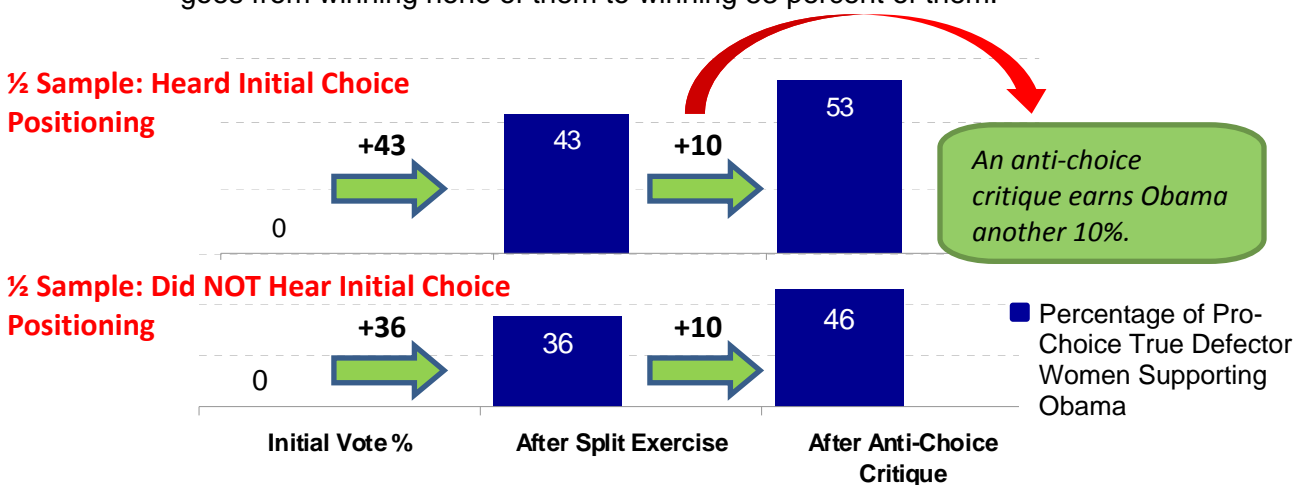
“Just based on the issue of abortion. I don’t agree with anything else he’s done.”

¹ In this survey, women defectors are defined as having voted for President Obama in 2008 but are at least one of a) currently not voting for him, b) weakly supporting him, or c) holding back from turning out in 2012.

² Greenberg Quinlan Rosner conducted a survey among 600 women defectors from Sept. 6-18, 2011. Interviews were conducted in CO, FL, IA, MI, MN, MO, NC, NH, NM, NV, OH, PA, VA, and WI, with the sample proportional to the expected composition of the 2012 electorate within those 14 states. The sample is subject to a margin of error of +/-4.0 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence interval; margin of error is higher among subgroups.

3. **Choice adds real value to the broader campaign by increasing the number of pro-choice defectors Obama can win.** NARAL Pro-Choice America understands that abortion will not be the defining issue of the 2012 presidential election. Choice can, however, help the president win an even greater percentage of the pro-choice true defector women voters—59 percent of all defectors—who are not currently voting for him³. In order to better simulate an election in which the economy will be the dominant issue, we conducted an experiment where the full sample heard each candidate’s economic positioning, while only half the sample heard their abortion positioning *in addition* to the economic message (see Appendix A). After a revote, we then introduced largely negative information—strictly on choice—about the Republican candidate. The following chart highlights two key points:

- Among the pro-choice true defectors that heard only short, balanced economic messages from each candidate, Obama goes from winning 0 percent of their vote to winning 36 percent of them. Among the pro-choice true defectors that heard short balanced economic and abortion positioning from each candidate, Obama does even better, winning 43 percent of their vote.
- Introducing an anti-choice critique of the Republican candidate earns Obama another 10 percent of the true pro-choice women defectors’ vote. Among the pro-choice true defectors who heard the choice message at all stages, Obama goes from winning none of them to winning 53 percent of them.



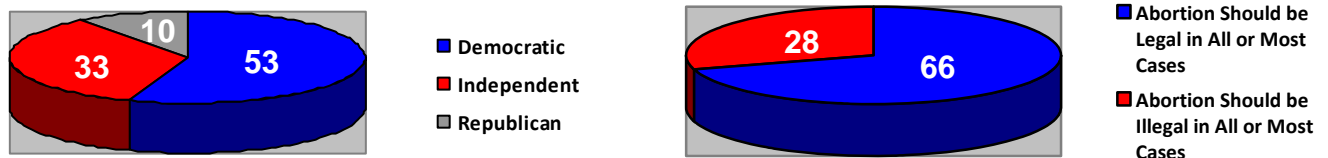
“If the election for president were held today and the candidates were - Democrat Barack Obama and the Republican candidate, for whom would you vote - Democrat Barack Obama or the Republican candidate?”

³ “True defectors” are defined as women in the battleground states who voted for President Obama in 2008 but are not voting for him now – they are either supporting the Republican candidate, another candidate, are undecided, or refused to answer the question. True defectors account for 50 percent of the total defector sample.

⁴ Verbatim responses to the question “Please tell me in your own words the best reason to support Barack Obama over the Republican candidate for president.” (Post-messaging)

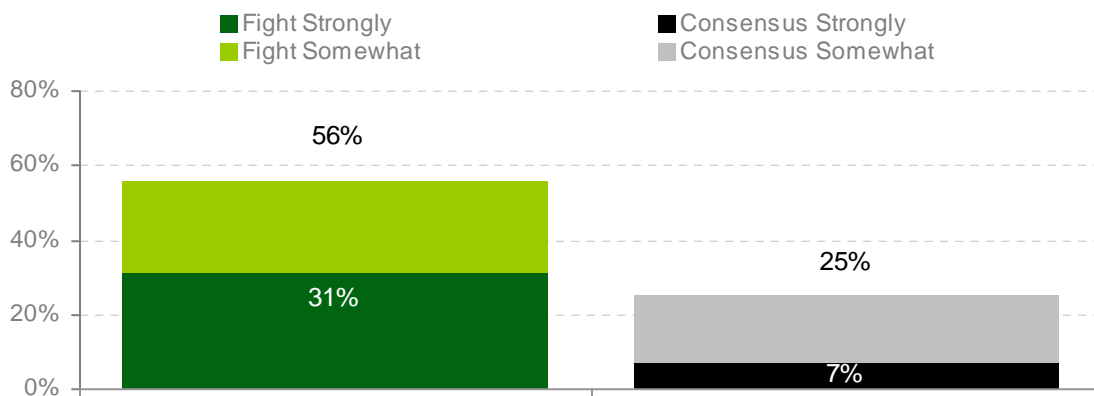
The Women Defectors

Two key characteristics of the women defectors align with the fact that they voted for him once before—a majority call themselves Democrats and they are largely pro-choice.



In addition, the women defectors in these states tend to be somewhat older (65 percent are over age 50; 34 percent are seniors), white (84 percent), and non-college educated (54 percent vs. 40 percent college graduates).

In addition to identifying heavily as pro-choice, the following chart shows that this is a group of women that is looking for President Obama to seize the opportunity choice provides by standing up and fighting hard to protect abortion rights, even at the expense of economic gains.



Even if it sometimes makes it harder to build consensus and...get the economy going, I want Barack Obama to fight to protect a woman's right to have a legal abortion by standing firm against attacks from elected officials who oppose abortion rights.

In order to help reduce the deficit and get the economy going, I want Barack Obama to build consensus with elected officials who oppose abortion rights, even if that means compromising on protecting a woman's right to have a legal abortion.

The Anti-Choice Critique

The top negatives on an anti-choice candidate feature two key elements: 1) a clear linkage to a woman's health and wellbeing, and 2) a directness on abortion that embraces the issue. The following table shows the top tier messages among these defectors:

	Very Serious Doubts	Total Serious Doubts
The Republican candidate thinks it's okay for hospitals to refuse emergency abortion care to women who would otherwise die without it.	50	81
The Republican candidate supported a bill redefining rape to be limited to "forcible rape," which would make it harder for many rape survivors to get the medical care they need.	48	82
The Republican candidate wants to cut off funding for clinics that provide more than 5 million American women with breast cancer screenings, access to birth control, and H-I-V / AIDS and S-T-I testing.	48	77
The Republican candidate wants to outlaw abortion in almost all cases, even in cases of rape, incest or when a woman's health is in danger.	46	79

Now let me read you another series of statements that could be used to describe the Republican candidate for president. For each statement, please tell me whether this description raises very serious doubts, serious doubts, minor doubts or no real doubts in your own mind about the Republican candidate for president.

Pro-choice groups like NARAL Pro-Choice America are in a solid position to deliver this message. Among the defectors, "pro-choice, abortion rights groups" receive a 44 – 28 net positive favorable-unfavorable rating, while "pro-life, anti-abortion groups" fare much more poorly, 22 – 51 percent favorable-unfavorable.

The Bottom Line

There is a group of women who voted for President Obama in 2008 but are not currently supporting him, and this data suggests many of them *should* be in his camp. Choice provides an opening for President Obama and other Democrats to create a sharp contrast with anti-choice Republicans and demonstrate a clear sense of advocacy. As the political leader of the pro-choice movement, NARAL Pro-Choice America is uniquely positioned to drive this contrast and prove to the women defectors that Obama is on their side and will fight for them, while the anti-choice candidate is misaligned with their values. While this campaign will be about the economy, NARAL Pro-Choice America's plan can add value to the president's effort by effectively expanding the number of women defectors Obama can win back.

Appendix A: Abortion and Economic Positioning Statements

Abortion Positioning

Barack Obama believes that there are many reasons a woman may consider abortion and that this profoundly difficult decision is personal, between a woman, her family, her God, and her doctor, without interference by the government. As president, Obama has signed laws to reduce the number of unintended pregnancies and he has taken strong action to protect a woman's right to have a legal abortion. But the Republican candidate takes a different position, and wants to outlaw abortion in almost all cases, even in cases of rape, incest or when a woman's health is in danger.

The Republican candidate believes abortion is ending a life, plain and simple, and that every life is equal, has potential and deserves respect. The Republican candidate strongly supports taking action to reduce the number of unintended pregnancies in the first place, and is pushing for alternatives to abortion, such as adoption. The Republican candidate says abortion is an issue that each state should decide for itself. But President Obama wants to spend taxpayer dollars on abortion, which the Republican will strongly oppose as president.

Economic Positioning

Barack Obama says that to get the economy going, we must start by cutting waste. The best way to reduce the deficit is to grow the economy and create jobs, and we need to encourage people to spend money by spurring growth. We need to get our priorities right -- instead of giving tax breaks to big oil companies and multi-millionaires, we need to cut taxes for the middle class, fight against cuts to Social Security and Medicare, and invest in education for long term growth. And we need to provide small businesses with incentives that help them create jobs now.

The Republican candidate says that to get the economy going, we need to cut government spending, get the deficit under control, and reduce taxes on people and businesses. That will lift a weight on the economy, make us more globally competitive, raise consumer confidence and give large and small businesses the confidence to create new jobs. The problem isn't that government taxes too little, but that it spends too much, and the way to a strong economy is less wasteful spending, less debt, and fewer job-killing taxes.