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How Choice Helps Obama Win the White House Issue has Power Among Pro-Choice Republican and Pro-Choice Independent Women

To: Interested Parties
From: Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research

Though it will not define the 2008 presidential election, the issue of choice has become part of the dialogue in the race in recent days. Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research recently conducted a survey for NARAL Pro-Choice America among pro-choice Republican and pro-choice Independent women in 8 key presidential states.¹ This research demonstrates that choice is a central issue for pro-choice Republican and Independent women when deciding how to vote, and it can move them in a more powerful way than other traditional Democratic issues or any of the central critiques of John McCain. Among the Republican bloc, it provides the only opening for Barack Obama to gain crossover support.

NARAL Pro-Choice America understands the role of choice in this campaign. It is not an issue that is going to shift the entire electorate, but rather one that, if used in a smart, focused manner, can provide a boost of 1 to 2 points overall that can prove critical in key states. NARAL Pro-Choice America has a track record of success in running this type of targeted campaign, and they are uniquely positioned to help drive pro-choice Republican and Independent women to Obama. In 2006, research conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner showed that NARAL Pro-Choice America's efforts moved key blocs of women and directly resulted in the election of more pro-choice members of Congress in Pennsylvania, Arizona, and Iowa.

These pro-choice women are not liberal Democratic voters, nor are they conservatives closed off to voting for Obama. Fifty-two percent describe themselves as moderate, and Obama holds a slim 48 – 44 percent lead over McCain among them, demonstrating the swing nature of this bloc. Expanding Obama's lead among this audience could provide the margin of victory in what could be a very close race.

The survey shows that among these pro-choice Republican and Independent women:

- 1. Choice plays an important role in the vote.** Two-thirds of these pro-choice Independent women and 52 percent of the pro-choice Republican women indicate that the issue of abortion is an important factor in deciding for whom to vote. Additionally, 37 percent of the

¹ This survey of 368 likely-voting pro-choice Republican and 434 likely-voting pro-choice Independent women (802 total) was conducted October 12th – 16th, 2008 in the states of Colorado, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. The sample is subject to a margin of error of +/- 3.5 percentage points.

Independents and 20 percent of the Republicans say they would never vote for an anti-choice candidate, giving Obama an opportunity to gain measurable ground.

- 2. The issue of choice provides a greater opening for Obama than other core Democratic issues.** The issue of abortion is the only issue on which these pro-choice Republican women think Obama will do a better job than McCain, by a 38 – 26 percent margin. As the table below demonstrates, Obama has a deficit of at least 27 points on every other issue tested. While the Independent women are inclined to think Obama will do a better job than McCain on all of these issues by relatively wide margins, they give him the biggest advantage on the issue of abortion.

Obama Gets Highest Marks on Abortion

	Pro-Choice Rep Women, Obama – McCain	Pro-Choice Ind Women, Obama – McCain
Abortion	38 – 26 (+12)	72 – 6 (+66)
The war in Iraq	13 – 79 (-66)	57 – 31 (+26)
The economy and jobs	19 – 62 (-43)	69 – 16 (+53)
Energy and global warming	17 – 60 (-43)	63 – 16 (+47)
Health care	24 – 51 (-27)	70 – 12 (+58)

Do you think Barack Obama or John McCain does a better job with this issue?

- 3. Choice trumps the central critiques of McCain.** As demonstrated below, the anti-choice negative on McCain is the top critique of him, generating serious doubts for 67 percent of this population, and the intensity is high—42 percent say it creates very serious doubts. Among pro-choice Independent women, the anti-choice attack trumps the other negatives by at least 5 percentage points. Among the Republican women, it is the only critique that wields any power, creating serious doubts in the minds of 51 percent and trumping the second-closest attack (health care) by 13 points.

Anti-Choice Critique of McCain Trumps Other Core Negatives

	Pro-Choice Independent Women		Pro-Choice Republican Women	
	Very Serious Doubts	Serious Doubts	Very Serious Doubts	Serious Doubts
McCain wants to outlaw abortion in all cases, even if women died as a result.	57	81	23	51
McCain has voted repeatedly against allowing women to obtain birth control.	51	75	12	37
McCain supports taxing people's health care benefits, which would increase health care costs and cause as many as 20 million Americans to lose their coverage.	49	76	17	38
McCain has proposed giving the wealthy and big corporations over 3 trillion dollars in new tax breaks, but no middle class tax cuts.	47	75	13	31

Does this raise very serious doubts, serious doubts, minor doubts, or no real doubts in your own mind about McCain?