



Lake Snell Perry Mermin Meadow Gotoff

CELINDA C. LAKE
President

ALYSIA R. SNELL
Partner

MICHAEL J. PERRY
Partner

DAVID MERMIN
Partner

DR. ROBERT G.
MEADOW
Partner

DANIEL R. GOTOFF
Partner

SUSAN KANNEL
Vice President

JOSHUA ULIBARRI
Vice President

To: Interested Parties

From: Lake Research Partners

Re: Key Findings from a Recent Nationwide Survey of Voters¹

Date: August 16, 2006

Recent research indicates intense support for candidates who stand for privacy from government and politicians' intrusion into personal decision making, along with those who emphasize practical prevention measures like access to birth control and comprehensive sex education. Support for abortion rights is anchored by the key values of personal decision-making, freedom, privacy, liberty, and personal responsibility. Voters react negatively to candidates who oppose commonsense prevention measures, such as making emergency contraception available in emergency rooms for rape and incest victims, as well as those who favor allowing pharmacists to refuse to fill birth-control prescriptions. The research reveals an opportunity for pro-choice candidates to capitalize on the public's opposition to divisive attacks on a woman's right to choose, while communicating a positive, values-based message about real solutions to prevent unintended pregnancies and reduce the need for abortion.

Among the key findings from the survey:

Values of Personal Decision-Making, Freedom, Privacy, and Prevention

- **The statement that as pro-choice Americans, we value freedom, privacy, and liberty – and the personal responsibility that comes with each – resonates broadly with voters** (77 percent agree overall; 56 percent strongly agree). Voters across demographic groups – including majorities of Republicans and anti-choice voters – agree with this sentiment.

¹ Lake Research Partners designed and administered this survey for NARAL Pro-Choice America. It was conducted by phone using professional interviewers. The survey reached 1,000 registered likely voters ages 18 or older nationwide, as well as a national sample of 100 drop-off unmarried women who voted in 2004 but not in 2002. The survey was conducted between July 11th and July 16th, 2006. Telephone numbers for the survey were drawn from a random digit dial sample (RDD). The sample was stratified geographically based on the proportion of voters in each region. Data in the base sample of 1,000 likely voters were also weighted slightly by gender, age, education to reflect the attributes of the actual population of registered likely voters. The margin of error is +/-3.1%. Data from the drop-off unmarried women sample were weighted by party identification and race to reflect the attributes of the actual population of unmarried female registered voters. The margin of error is +/-9.8%.

- ❑ **Voters express a strong preference for the candidate who supports women making personal decisions without intrusion from government and politicians, coupled with a strong emphasis on prevention, over the competing anti-choice culture of life point of view from a candidate who is anti-choice (54 percent to 27 percent).² Taking on government and politicians who interfere in people’s personal decisions is an important element that adds to the salience of the pro-choice candidate message.**
 - Even voters who believe abortion should only be available in extreme cases like rape, incest, and the health of the woman support the privacy and prevention argument to some degree and split between the two sides (39 percent prevention/privacy to 41 percent culture of life).
- ❑ **There is also strong agreement around the idea that government and politicians should stay out of a woman’s personal and private decision of whether or not to have an abortion (77 percent agree overall; 56 percent strongly agree).**
- ❑ Half of likely voters say they would be much more favorable toward a pro-choice candidate who stated that politicians and government should not interfere in a decision best made by a woman, her family, her doctor, and her God (64 percent more favorable overall; 50 percent much more favorable). With somewhat less intensity, but similar numbers overall, voters also feel more favorable toward a pro-life candidate who takes this view (65 percent more favorable overall ; 44 percent much more favorable).
- ❑ **Additionally, a majority of voters say it would raise serious doubts for them if they heard that a candidate supports right-wing extremists who promote policies that take personal decisions away from women and doctors.³**
- ❑ **Voters also express strong intensity around candidate statements focused on the need for commonsense prevention measures like comprehensive sex education and access to birth control and contraception.⁴**

² Now let me ask you something slightly different. I am going to read you two statements that might be made by a candidate. Please tell me which one comes closer to your point of view. **Candidate A** says we need to keep politicians and government out of women’s personal decisions about whether or not to have an abortion, which should be made by a woman, her doctor, her family, and her God. We also need to be more actively involved in preventing unintended pregnancies and reducing the need for abortions by increasing access to family planning and comprehensive age appropriate sex education. **Candidate B** says he opposes this approach because he believes in a culture of life that recognizes the importance of every human life. He believes life begins at conception and that we should work to make all life valued. We need to severely restrict abortions that are being used irresponsibly and repeatedly as birth control even though it is murdering a child. (Split sampled question)

³ The candidate has repeatedly supported right-wing political extremists, making divisive attacks on abortion, and promoting policies that would take personal decisions out of the hands of a woman and her doctor, and put those decisions into the hands of politicians. (Split sampled question)

⁴ **SSA:** I am pro-choice, but I believe we need to focus on commonsense prevention measures such as comprehensive sex education and access to birth control and other forms of contraception in order to reduce the need for abortion (42% much more favorable; 69% more favorable overall). **SSB:** I am pro-choice, but I believe we need to reduce the number of unintended pregnancies and reduce abortions by focusing on commonsense prevention measures such as comprehensive sex education and access to birth control and other forms of contraception (45% much more favorable; 67% more favorable overall).

- **Lastly, voters today are tired of the divisiveness and overly political nature of the abortion issue.** A majority strongly agrees (and eight in 10 agree) with the statement that Americans are tired of divisive political attacks around the abortion issue. They want their leaders in Washington to work toward real solutions aimed at preventing unintended pregnancies and reducing the need for abortion. There is a good deal of agreement with the idea that by banning abortions and refusing to support better access to birth control, anti-choice politicians in Washington put women's health at risk (63 percent agree; 46 percent strongly).

Candidates on the Issues

- Voters are most intensely negative toward a candidate who supports pharmacist refusal for birth control (65 percent less favorable overall; 48 percent much less favorable) and who opposes emergency contraception in the emergency rooms for rape and incest victims (61 percent less favorable overall; 48 percent much less favorable), followed by a candidate who opposes public funding of birth control and family planning (61 percent less favorable overall; 45 percent much less favorable).
 - Significant proportions of all voters – including Republicans and anti-choice voters – say they would feel less favorable toward candidates with these views.
- With somewhat lower intensity but still strong majorities overall, voters also feel less favorable toward a candidate who opposes requiring insurance companies to cover birth control (58 percent less favorable overall; 42 percent much less favorable) and who supports laws, such as the South Dakota and Louisiana laws, that ban abortion in all cases except to save the life of the woman (55 percent less favorable overall ; 40 percent much less favorable).
- **Voters strongly disapprove of the laws passed in South Dakota and Louisiana that would ban all abortions, even for victims of rape and incest and for the health of the woman.** Two-thirds of voters (65 percent) disapprove of these laws, with 50 percent expressing strong disapproval.⁵
- **There is also strong disapproval among voters when they hear that Congress has voted 145 times in the last 10 years to restrict reproductive health services, including abortion, birth control, and other forms of contraception.** Six in 10 disapprove and 41 percent disapprove strongly.

⁵ As you may know, South Dakota and Louisiana recently passed laws that would ban all abortions – even for victims of rape and incest and for the health of the woman – the only exception would be to save the life of the woman. Do you approve or disapprove of these laws? [If approve/disapprove ask: Is that strongly or somewhat approve/disapprove?] (Split sampled question)