



# RESURGENT REPUBLIC

**TO: Interested Parties**

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**DATE: June 26, 2014**

**RE: Democrats in Trouble in Senate Battleground States**

This survey, the second Resurgent Republic survey in this election cycle, polled 1000 likely 2014 voters in twelve U.S. Senate battleground states, with respondents evenly distributed among the states just as U.S. Senate seats are distributed. The survey was a cooperative endeavor between Resurgent Republic and Democracy Corps for National Public Radio. North Star Opinion Research conducted the calls June 6-11, 2014, and compiled the data. States included in the sample are those listed by the Cook Political Report as either toss up, lean Democrat, or lean Republican. (The survey did not include one Democrat-held seat, South Dakota, that the Cook Report lists as likely Republican.)

## ***Senate Battleground States***

The following chart lists the dozen battleground states, along with the incumbent senator, the Republican and Democratic nominees if settled by the time of the survey, and the Romney and Obama percentages in those states in 2012. Eight of these states voted for Romney and four for Obama, with an average Romney lead of 8 percentage points among the twelve states.

STATE	INCUMBENT	REPUBLICAN CANDIDATE	DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATE	ROMNEY	OBAMA	DIFF
Alaska	Mark Begich	To Be Determined	Mark Begich	55	41	14
Arkansas	Mark Pryor	Tom Cotton	Mark Pryor	60	37	23
Colorado	Mark Udall	Cory Gardner	Mark Udall	46	51	-5
Georgia	Saxby Chambliss	To Be Determined	Michelle Nunn	53	46	7
Iowa	Tom Harkin	Joni Ernst	Bruce Braley	46	52	-6
Kentucky	Mitch McConnell	Mitch McConnell	Alison Lundergan Grimes	60	38	22
Louisiana	Mary Landrieu	To Be Determined	Mary Landrieu	58	40	18
Michigan	Carl Levin	Terri Lynn Land	Gary Peters	45	54	-9
Montana	John Walsh	Steve Daines	John Walsh	55	42	13
North Carolina	Kay Hagan	Thom Tillis	Kay Hagan	50	48	2
New Hampshire	Jeanne Shaheen	To Be Determined	Jeanne Shaheen	46	52	-6
West Virginia	Jay Rockefeller	Shelley Moore Capito	Natalie Tennant	62	36	26

### *Political Environment*

The political environment in these twelve states tilts strongly toward the Republicans. Several factors create that Republican tilt:

- 1. President Obama is remarkably unpopular in these states, more unpopular than he is nationally.** Only 38 percent of the voters in these states approve of the job the President is doing, while 58 percent disapprove. Disapproval among Independent voters is almost two-to-one, at 33 percent approve and 63 percent disapprove. Presidential job approval has historically loomed large over midterm elections, and 2014 looks like no exception.
- 2. Presidential disapproval extends to the most important issue, the President's handling of the economy.** Only 39 percent of the voters in these states approve of the job the President is doing handling the economy, and 58 percent disapprove. Disapproval among Independents stands at 34 percent approve and 62 percent disapprove.
- 3. By an overwhelming margin, voters in these dozen states think the country is headed in the wrong direction.** Only 26 percent say America is headed in the right direction, while 68 percent disagree. Republicans (91 percent) and Independents (74 percent) say the country is on the wrong track, and even one third of Democrats (33 percent) agree.

**4. By more than a two-to-one margin, voters in these battleground states think the various stories about the Veterans Administration, Benghazi, IRS targeting of conservative groups, and the healthcare.gov website are real problems that raise serious doubts about the competence of the Obama Administration rather than phony scandals.** Voters were given a choice of two statements:

*The stories about the Veterans Administration, Benghazi, the IRS, and the Obamacare website are phony scandals promoted by Republicans trying to hurt the Obama Administration.*

*The stories about the Veterans Administration, Benghazi, the IRS, and the Obamacare website are real problems that raise serious doubts about the competence of the Obama Administration.*

By 57 to 25 percent, voters in these states think the stories are real problems, including 78 to 11 percent among Republicans and 59 to 22 percent among Independents. Even Democrats are relatively close on this question, at 34 percent real problems and 46 percent phony scandals.

**5. A majority of voters in these states disapproves of the Bergdahl exchange.** When asked if they approve or disapprove of “the decision the Obama Administration made to exchange five Taliban detainees at Guantanamo Bay for Army Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl who had been held by the Taliban in Afghanistan,” only 31 percent approve, while 53 percent disapprove. Among Independents, 31 percent approve and 56 percent disapprove.

**6. Battleground-state voters oppose Obamacare by an 18-point margin.** Only 40 percent of these voters approve of Obamacare, remarkably similar to Obama’s overall approval rating. Fifty-eight percent disapprove of Obamacare, identical to the President’s overall disapproval. Few voters in these states are apparently making any distinction between the President and his signature law. Independents oppose Obamacare by a massive margin, 61 to 35 percent.

**7. Philosophically, battleground-state voters look more like Republicans than Democrats. By almost a four-to-one margin, they prefer smaller government with fewer services and lower taxes to the alternative.** Fully 71 percent prefer “smaller government with fewer services and lower taxes, while only 18 percent prefer “larger government with more services and higher taxes.” Preference for smaller government and lower taxes cuts across all partisan groups: 91 to 5 percent among Republicans, 76 to 15 percent among Independents, and 46 to 37 percent among Democrats.

**8. Promoting opportunity is far more important in these states than promoting a liberal version of “fairness.”** Respondents were given an opportunity to choose between two statements:

*Government policies should promote fairness by narrowing the gap between rich and poor, making the rich pay their fair share, and reducing income inequality.*

*Government policies should promote opportunity by fostering job growth, encouraging small businesses, and allowing hardworking people to keep more of what they earn.*

By 55 to 38 percent, voters in these states want government to promote opportunity over fairness. Republicans and Independents prefer opportunity by 74 to 20 percent and 57 to 36 percent, respectively. Democrats prefer fairness by 59 to 31 percent.

**9. Lowering energy costs swamps raising the minimum wage or extending unemployment benefits as the best help for household budgets.** Seventy percent of these voters think lowering the cost of energy would help their household budget the most, followed by 19 percent who say raising the minimum wage and 4 percent who say extending unemployment benefits. Republicans, Independents, and Democrats all agree that lowering the cost of energy would have the most beneficial effect among these three options.

### ***Party Trust***

Battleground-state voters trust Republicans more than Democrats on three of the four issue areas tested, and the parties tie on the fourth.

**1. Voters in these states now trust Republicans more than Democrats on foreign policy by 16 percentage points.** Reflecting the recent foreign policy struggles of the Obama Administration, 50 percent of voters now trust Republicans more on foreign policy compared to 34 percent who trust Democrats more. Independents trust Republicans more by a two-to-one margin, 52 to 26 percent.

**2. On the most important issue in the election, voters trust Republicans more on the economy by 10 percentage points.** By a margin of 47 to 37 percent, these voters trust Republicans more than Democrats on the economy, with a 20-point margin among Independents, 48 to 28 percent.

**3. These voters even trust Republicans more on health care.** Historically voters nationally have trusted Democrats more on health care, but voters in these battleground states now trust Republicans more by 45 to 41 percent, and 44 to 35 percent among Independents. The result probably reflects the continuing unpopularity of Obamacare.

**4. Voters trust Republicans and Democrats equally on the future of the middle class.** Voters in these states split equally at 42 percent each on trusting the two parties on the future of the middle class. Independents split equally as well at 38 percent each.

## ***Congressional Job Approval***

Congress and its leaders are unpopular nationally, and these Senate battleground states are no exception.

**1. Voters in these states disapprove of the way Democrats are handling their job in charge of the Senate by a 2-to-1 margin.** By 63 to 32 percent, voters disapprove of the way Democratic leaders in the Senate are doing their job, including 85 to 10 percent among Republicans and 71 to 25 percent among Independents. Democratic voters, on the other hand, approve of the way their party leaders are handling the Senate by 66 to 29 percent.

**2. Voters disapprove even more of the way Republicans are handling their job in charge of the House, primarily because Republican voters are evenly split.** By 68 to 25 percent, voters disapprove of the way Republican leaders in the House are doing their job, led by a margin of 83 to 13 percent among Democratic voters. Independent voters disapprove of the way Republicans are running the House by 74 to 20 percent, close to the 71 to 25 percent margin by which they disapprove of Democrats running the Senate. The margin among voters overall is more negative for Republicans in the House than Democrats in the Senate because Republican voters are evenly split on their party leaders' job performance, 48 percent approve and 46 percent disapprove.

But Republican voters who disapprove of their party leaders' performance in the House are hardly closet voters for Democratic candidates for U.S. Senate. Subsequent questions will demonstrate that Republicans who disapprove of their leaders' performance in the House overwhelmingly intend to vote for Republican candidates for Senate in the fall.

**3. Voters split on the way their incumbent senator is handling his or her job, with Democrats approving and Republicans and Independents disapproving.** This job performance question used the name of the incumbent senator from the respondent's home state. Since ten of the twelve states have incumbent Democratic senators, it is hardly surprising that Democratic voters approve of their job performance by 67 to 25 percent. But Republican voters disapprove by 55 to 24 percent, as do Independent voters by 47 to 35 percent.

## ***U.S. Senate Races***

**1. Voters in battleground states prefer the next Senate be controlled by Republicans "to act as a check and balance on President Obama's agenda."** By a margin of 54 to 36 percent, these voters want the Republicans to control the next Senate "to act as a check and balance on President Obama's agenda," rather than have the Democrats control "to help President Obama pass his agenda." Independents, who hold the balance of power on this question, prefer Republican control by 58 to 29 percent.

**2. Republicans hold a three-point margin on the generic Senate ballot in these battleground states.** This question inserted the name of the Republican or Democratic candidate if known by the time the survey was conducted; otherwise the question referred

to “the Republican candidate” or “the Democratic candidate.” Voters prefer the Republican over the Democrat by 46 to 43 percent. While Republicans and Democrats overwhelmingly prefer their party’s nominee, Independents prefer the Republican candidate by eight points, 46 to 38 percent. Historically Republicans have done very well in elections when the generic ballot was even or favoring Republicans.

**3. Partisan groups show roughly equal enthusiasm for voting in the November election.** Given all the advertising that has already occurred in many of these Senate battleground states, it is not surprising that the different partisan groups show roughly equal enthusiasm about voting in the election. On a one-to-ten scale with one being “not at all enthusiastic” and ten being “extremely enthusiastic,” 52 percent of both Republicans and Democrats place their enthusiasm at a 9 or 10, and 49 percent of Independents do so as well. Twenty-eight percent of Republicans place their enthusiasm at six, seven, or eight, compared to 33 percent of Democrats and 29 percent of Independents.

### ***Overall Message***

While individual Senate candidates will have their own messages honed for their state and their candidacy, a generic Republican and Democratic message keyed to what party leaders have been saying recently shows strong preference for the Republican message in these battleground states. (Resurgent Republic wrote the Republican message, and Democracy Corps wrote the Democratic message.)

*The Republican candidate for U.S. Senate says it’s time for a new direction in Washington. Democrats have controlled the Presidency and the Senate for six years, and their policies haven’t worked. Our economy is still struggling, and too many middle-class Americans are unemployed or underemployed. A Republican Senate will pass legislation to create jobs, stop spending money we don’t have, lower the cost of energy, stop the Democratic cuts to Medicare Advantage, and replace Obamacare with reforms that will lower health care costs. Democrats have had their chance, and now it’s time to try something new.*

*The Democratic candidate for U.S. Senate says I fight for our state first and foremost and work with both Republicans and Democrats to do what’s right. The billionaire Koch brothers are trying to buy this election with all these attack ads so they can reduce taxes for oil companies and corporations that outsource our jobs. I will honor seniors by protecting Medicare and Social Security from cuts and help our small businesses and independent contractors by lifting regulations and helping with health care costs. I support raising the minimum wage and oppose any trade agreements that threaten our jobs.*

By 50 to 40 percent, these voters prefer the Republican message. While partisans of each party line up behind their party’s message, Independents prefer the Republican message by 13 percentage points, 51 to 38 percent.

## ***Overall Takeaway***

These U.S. Senate battleground states clearly tilt toward Republicans in 2014. That does not, of course, guarantee that Republicans will take control of the Senate. Republicans need a net gain of six Senate seats to do so, a tall order in any election cycle. Moreover, seven of these twelve battleground states include Democratic incumbent senators running for reelection, and incumbents are always hard to beat.

But the playing field looks as promising for substantial Republican gains in the Senate as any in recent years. Assuming that all the non-battleground states follow their current partisan leanings, and assuming Republicans pick up the Democratic-held seat in South Dakota, then Republicans can take control of the Senate by holding Georgia and Kentucky and winning half the remaining ten battleground contests. Given the rightward tilt of the playing field, that is an achievable goal in 2014.

## ***Methodology***

Respondents for this survey of 1000 likely 2014 voters were distributed equally among the twelve Senate battleground states listed as toss up, lean Republican, or lean Democrat by the Cook Political Report: Alaska, Arkansas, Colorado, Georgia, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Montana, New Hampshire, North Carolina, and West Virginia. The questionnaire was developed jointly by Resurgent Republic and Democracy Corps. Calls were conducted and data produced by North Star Opinion Research. Calls were conducted June 6-11, 2014. Respondents were selected randomly from a random-digit-dialing sample including both cellular and landline telephone numbers, and were contacted by live interviewers. Fifty percent of the interviews were completed on cell phones. All respondents confirmed that they are registered to vote in the county in which they live. Calling quotas were set for the twelve-state sample for age, race, and gender using exit polls where they were available, and either past turnout results from states with that information or registration data for the remaining states. By party the sample is 26 percent Democrat, 44 percent Independent, and 27 percent Republican.

The margins of error for responses with an even split—50 percent for one response and 50 percent for another response—are  $\pm 3.10$  percent for the entire sample at the 95 percent confidence level,  $\pm 6.03$  percent for Republicans,  $\pm 4.64$  percent for Independents, and  $\pm 6.15$  percent for Democrats. The margin of error is smaller when one response receives a higher level of support.