

To: Interested Parties
From: Jim Gerstein
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2012 Post-Election Jewish Surveys Summary Findings
National, Ohio, and Florida Surveys of Jewish Voters

Exit poll results and election night surveys of Jewish voters reveal that President Obama and Democrats continue to receive tremendous support from Jewish voters.¹ In addition to his 70-30 victory over Mitt Romney among Jews nationwide, Obama also won the Jewish vote in the key swing states of Ohio (69-30) and Florida (68-31) by comparable margins. After months of speculation about Obama's standing among American Jews and an unprecedented multi-million dollar campaign by prominent Republicans to appeal to Jews, one thing remains clear regarding the 2012 Jewish vote: **in an election where Obama enjoyed a narrow victory with the overall American electorate, he had an overwhelming victory with the Jewish electorate.**

Just as the economy was the dominant issue for voters nationwide, Jews cited the economy as the issue that most in determining their vote (53 percent). The next most important issues for Jewish voters were health care (32 percent), Social Security and Medicare (23 percent), and the deficit and government spending (20 percent). While much has been written about the role that Israel would play in the Jewish vote, only 10 percent cited Israel as one of its two most important issues. Notably, the least important issue for Jewish voters was Iran (2 percent).

When it comes to the high profile (but lower priority) issue of Israel, the data clearly indicate that efforts to attack Obama on Israel fell short. Jewish voters in the 2012 election trust Barack Obama more than Mitt Romney on Israel by a margin of 53-31, and a large majority want U.S. leadership to help resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict even if it means publicly disagreeing with Israelis and Arabs. And when it comes to dealing with Iran, Jews think Obama would do a better job than Romney (58-26).

Ultimately, the Jewish vote was driven by a mixture of strong support for President Obama (67 percent job approval), a growing sense that he is turning things around for the country (55 percent right direction), positive feelings toward the Democratic Party (54 favorable / 33 unfavorable), and intense opposition to Mitt Romney (29 favorable / 62 unfavorable) and the Republican Party (26 favorable / 64 unfavorable).

¹ GBA Strategies conducted 3 surveys on November 6, 2012: 1) national survey of 800 Jewish voters; 2) Florida statewide survey of 600 Jewish voters; 3) Ohio statewide survey of 600 Jewish voters. The methodology for these surveys is detailed at the end of this memo. The full survey results can be accessed at www.2012.jstreet.org.

Primary Takeaways – The Vote

- **Barack Obama’s 70 percent of the Jewish vote is in line with the 70 percent average received by Democratic candidates since exit polling began in 1972.** Compared to other base, swing, and religious constituencies, the Jewish vote exhibited similar shifts from the 2008 election.

	% Obama / % Republican		Obama Vote Shift
	2008	2012	2008 to 2012
Total	53 / 46	50 / 49	-3
Jewish	74 / 26	70 / 30	-4
Unmarried women	70 / 30	<i>awaiting exit poll data</i>	<i>awaiting exit poll data</i>
Hispanics	67 / 31	71 / 27	+4
Voters under 30 years-old	66 / 32	60 / 37	-6
College Graduate	53 / 45	50 / 48	-3
Independents	52 / 44	45 / 50	-7
Whites	43 / 55	39 / 59	-4
No religion	75 / 23	70 / 26	-5
Other religion	73 / 22	74 / 23	+1
Catholics	54 / 45	50 / 48	-4
Protestants	45 / 54	42 / 57	-3
White Evangelicals	24 / 74	<i>awaiting exit poll data</i>	<i>awaiting exit poll data</i>

- **In the national Jewish electorate and the key swing states of Florida and Ohio, Obama was seen as better than Romney on domestic and foreign policy issues.** Obama biggest issue advantages over Romney include who will do a better job on Social Security and Medicare (+40), health care (+39), terrorism and national security (+33), and dealing with Iran (+31). Obama also enjoyed big margins on advancing Middle East peace (+28), the economy and jobs (+24), and Israel (+22). The President’s smallest advantage was on the deficit and government spending (+13). Obama’s fundamental strengths with the national Jewish electorate extended to Florida and Ohio as well.
 - **Florida:** 66 percent job approval, 66 percent favorability, and big margins over Romney on who will do a better job handling Social Security and Medicare (+37), Iran (+32), Israel (+27), and the economy (+27).

- **Ohio:** 67 percent job approval and 68 percent favorability. (The Ohio survey did not ask the questions about whether Obama or Romney would do a better job on issues; instead, the comparison was made between Senate candidates Sherrod Brown and Josh Mandel. Brown's margins ranged from +23 to +42, depending on the issue).
- **Obama ran essentially even with other Democrats.** Nationally, the Democratic candidate for Congress received 69 percent (compared to 70 percent for Obama); in Florida, Senator Bill Nelson received 72 percent (compared to Obama's 68 percent) and Senator Sherrod Brown received 71 percent (compared to Obama's 69 percent).
- **Mitt Romney failed to distinguish himself from a highly damaged Republican brand, and was strongly disliked by Jewish voters.** In addition to Romney's dismal personal favorability with Jews noted earlier, his 60 percent unfavorable in both Florida and Ohio – and similar unfavorable numbers for the Republican Party in these two states – prevented Romney from gaining traction with Jewish voters.
- **Despite records amount of money targeted at undercutting President Obama's Jewish support, the critiques of Obama did not resonate.** Nationally, large numbers of Jews (45 percent) reported seeing television ads or mail that criticized President Obama for his positions or actions toward Israel, but they also reported that these ads did not move them toward Romney. Among the 45 percent who said they saw the ads, 40 percent said the ads made no difference, 38 percent said the ads made them more likely to support Obama, and 23 percent said the ads made them more likely to support Romney.
 - **In Florida,** respondents were asked if they saw the ads with Prime Minister Netanyahu talking about Iran. Nearly half of Florida's Jewish voters (45 percent) saw these ads, but again, the ads did not have the desired effect. Most Florida Jews (56 percent) said the Netanyahu Iran ads made no difference in their vote, 27 percent said the Netanyahu Iran ads made them more likely to support Obama, and 16 percent said the Netanyahu Iran ads made them more likely to support Romney.
 - **In Ohio,** the Netanyahu Iran ads did not run, so respondents were asked if they saw any television ads or mail criticizing Obama on Israel. A striking 73 percent said yes, but 63 percent of these voters said the ads made no difference in their vote, 22 percent said the ads made them more likely to support Obama, and 13 percent said the ads made them more likely to support Romney.
- **Jewish campaign contributions remained steady for both Obama and the Republican candidate from 2008 to 2012.** The same number of Jews who donated in the 2008 campaign (26 percent) made a contribution to one of the

presidential campaigns in 2012. While the total participation was the same, so was the breakdown of recipients – Obama received a contribution from 21 percent of Jews in both 2008 and 2012, and Romney’s 7 percent of contributions this year equaled the same amount of contributions that John McCain received from Jews in 2008.

Primary Takeaways – U.S. Role in the Middle East

- **American Jews are a very progressive constituency when it comes to Israel and Middle East peace efforts.** Overwhelming majorities support a two-state solution (79 to 82 percent, depending on the details), and 72 percent of Jewish voters support a comprehensive peace agreement that includes borders based on the 1967 lines with mutual land swaps, Palestinian neighborhoods in Jerusalem becoming part of the new Palestinian state while Israel retains control of Jewish neighborhoods and the Western Wall, financial compensation for Palestinian refugees and limited return to Israel, and a demilitarized state in the West Bank and Gaza.
- **Jewish voters want the U.S. to play an active role to resolve the conflict.** Even if it means “publicly stating its disagreements with both the Israelis and the Arabs, 69 percent of Jews support this type of U.S. role. Support rises to 76 percent when American Jews are asked how they feel about the U.S. putting forth a peace plan that proposes borders and security arrangements between Israelis and Palestinians.
- **American Jews welcome a renewed American-led effort to resolve the Arab-Israel conflict, and there is extraordinary support for such an effort to be led by Bill Clinton.** The former President is very well-liked by American Jews (69 percent favorable / 23 percent unfavorable), and 84 percent of Jewish voters say they would support the appointment of Bill Clinton to serve as a special Middle East Peace Envoy who is charged with bringing Israelis and Palestinians together to negotiate a final status agreement.
- **When it comes to Iran, Jewish voters exhibit mixed feelings.** A plurality (47 percent) think the U.S. needs to give diplomacy and sanctions time to work before setting red lines, compared to 35 percent who think diplomacy and sanctions have failed and it is now time to set red lines. Iran is not necessarily on American Jews’ radar (only 2 percent cited it as one of their top 2 issues determining their vote), and they do not want U.S. efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to be sidetracked by a sole focus on Iran. In fact, 61 percent want the U.S. to address both Iran *and* the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with the same priority.

GBA Strategies designed the questionnaire for these three surveys conducted November 6, 2010. The national survey of 800 self-identified Jewish voters in the 2012 election has a margin of error of +/- 3.5 percent. GBA Strategies contracted the research company Mountain West Research Center to administer the survey by email invitation to its web-based panel, which is regularly updated and consists of nearly 900,000 Americans.

The Florida and Ohio surveys of 600 self-identified Jewish voters each has a margin of error of +/- 4 percent and was conducted by landline and cell phone, calling a random sample of registered voters with Jewish names and people who self-identify as Jewish in consumer data that has been appended to the voter file.

In both the national and statewide surveys, respondents were re-screened at the beginning of the survey when they were first asked for their religion and then, if they did not identify themselves as Jewish by religion, they were asked again if they considered themselves Jewish.

The full survey results, including full question wording and crosstabs are available at www.2012.jstreet.org.