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Date: March 11, 2004

To: Friends of Democracy Corps

From: Stan Greenberg
Matt Hogan

RE: HISPANICS AND THE 2004 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Hispanic voters are winning the attention of both parties and for good reason: they are a growing portion of the electorate and will play a critical role in battleground states. That is why Democracy Corps conducted this unprecedented national survey of over 1,500 Hispanics (1,564 likely voters), including large over-samples in southwestern swing states (Arizona, New Mexico and Nevada) and with non-Cuban Hispanics in Florida.¹

While George Bush is not an unpopular figure, there is no evidence that the Republican's concerted efforts have yet born fruit nationally or in the battleground states. Bush has made no appreciable gains among Hispanic voters since the 2000 election, except possibly in California, though these results do not preclude Bush making gains at a later point.² Democrats still have considerable work to do to ensure a high turnout, to realize their fullest support among Hispanic Democrats and to fend off ever-more intense Republican appeals, though Democrats do so confident that Hispanics remain one of the most Democratic groups in the electorate. It is not out of the question that Bush's vote could be eroded in the months ahead.

The Republicans have made no secret of their intentions to cut into the Democratic advantage among Hispanic voters. Back in the summer of 2001, when President Bush was still enjoying job approval ratings in the high 50's, Bush pollster Matthew Dowd said that if African Americans, whites and Hispanics each voted in 2004 as they had in 2000, the President would not be re-elected. Due to Hispanics growing share of the electorate,³ Dowd asserted that the

¹ We greatly appreciate the insights provided by Michael Alvarez of the California Institute of Technology and Jonathan Nagler of New York University who helped with the research design and analysis.

² Democracy Corps conducted a national survey of 1,564 Hispanic likely voters February 5-16, 2004. The survey contained an oversample of 559 Hispanic likely voters in Southwestern swing states (Arizona, New Mexico and Nevada) and an oversample of 363 non-Cuban Hispanics in Florida.

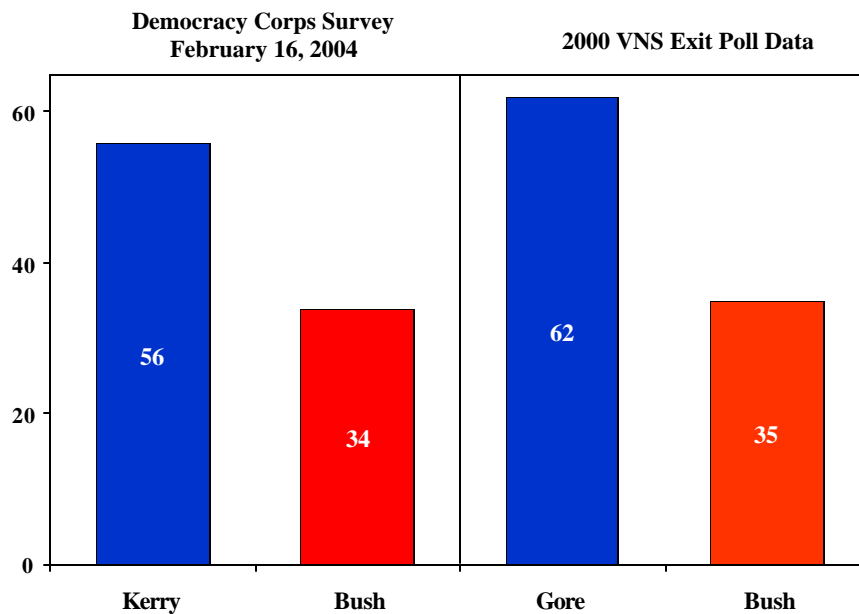
³ The number Hispanics within the U.S. electorate is expected to expand significantly in 2004 with the number of registered Hispanics voters projected to increase from 7.5 million in 2000 to as many as 10 million this year. (The United States Hispanic Leadership Institute, "The Latino Vote in 200, 2002 and 2004.") The growth of the Hispanic

President would have to expand his share of the Hispanic vote from 35 percent to between 38 and 40 percent in order to win re-election.⁴ Unfortunately for Bush's prospects, he has not yet won increased support and these will have to be hard-won gains in the campaign ahead.

Bush Fails to Make Inroads

In the presidential ballot in this national survey, the president gains only 34 percent of the vote and Kerry takes 56 percent, winning by 22 points. While that represents a small decline in the margin compared to Gore's in the 2000 election, Kerry's lead is on a trajectory to replicate that result.⁵

National Hispanic Presidential Vote: 2004 vs. 2000



electorate will be especially crucial in Nevada and New Mexico, where the Hispanic share of the vote is expected to increase by 3 and 5 percent respectively. (Current Population Survey: United States Census).

⁴ Edsall, Thomas B. "U.S. Electorate Moving Steadily to the Left," *Washington Post*. July 8, 2001.

⁵ VNS/MSNBC exit poll data. The national Hispanic vote was 62 to 35 in favor of Gore, a 27-point advantage.

The key finding is Bush's 34 percent, shaped by the following points of interpretation:

- Well-known incumbents, particularly polarizing ones, rarely receive a higher percentage of the vote than they receive in the final polls, and *Bush's vote level among Hispanics is no higher than it was in 2000.*
- Even if one allocated the undecided vote (9 percent of the total) based on people's party identification, the Bush vote nationally would rise to only 36 percent, just a point above his 2000 total. A similar allocation in the Southwestern states and in Florida puts him one point above his 2000 performance in the former and one point below in the latter.
- In any event, Hispanics and African Americans consistently under-poll in their support for Democrats, as undecided and Democratic minority voters tend to break overwhelmingly for Democratic Presidential candidates. In 2000, for example, African Americans in the final two weeks supported Gore 84 to only 8 percent for Bush, but in the actual election, gave Gore an even larger win, 90 to 9 percent.⁶ The same pattern seemed to hold for Hispanics: in mid-September, Gore held a 58 to 35 percent lead but won by 62 to 35 percent on election day, with Bush's vote stuck at its polled level.⁷

For these reasons, it is better to measure any Bush gains among Hispanics since 2000 by focusing on shifts in the level of his support, rather than by the vote margin. Comparing current support for Bush with 2000 exit polls, there is no evidence that the President has expanded his support among Hispanics over the past three years.

The evidence for stability is especially strong in the battleground states. The Hispanic vote is growing steadily in the southwest, particularly in Arizona, Nevada and New Mexico, and here Bush's vote is stable. Across these three states, just 32 percent of Hispanic voters support Bush, one point below the 2000 result. (With the undecided allocated by partisanship, Bush's support rises to just 34 percent.)

In Florida as well, where the growing number of non-Cuban Hispanics could impact this contested state, Bush gets 40 percent of the vote. But that is lower than Bush's 43 percent among this group in 2000 and his brother's 55 percent in 2002.

⁶ Data compiled from four Greenberg Quinlan Rosner polls of likely voters, conducted October 22 – November 3, 2000; African American 2000 election data from VNS/MSNBC exit polls.

⁷ Poll of 547 likely Hispanic voters conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner for the Gore campaign, September 11 to 21, 2000.

Intensity of Support Favors Democrats

Not only does Kerry boast a sizable advantage over Bush among Hispanics, his base support is significantly stronger, with 28 percent of Hispanics being “loyalist” Kerry voters. That is twice the number of Bush loyalists, which impacts the mood in these communities.

The contrast in voter intensity is even more distinct in the southwest, where the size of fervent Kerry supporters grows to nearly three times the size of its Bush counterpart (35 to 13 percent), while 49 percent of Hispanics indicate that they will not even consider voting for Bush.

California

The one place where there might be some evidence of Bush gains is California. Whether this is a hangover from the Davis period or real gains under Schwarzenegger, Bush has edged up in this community. Bush is currently getting 37 percent of the vote, an 8-point improvement from 2000, though Democrats are still winning Hispanics with overwhelming majorities (54 to 37 percent).⁸ That is reflected in the latest statewide Field and Los Angeles Times Polls, with Kerry beating Bush by 12 and 13 points respectively among all registered voters.⁹

Lukewarm Support for Bush Immigration Proposal

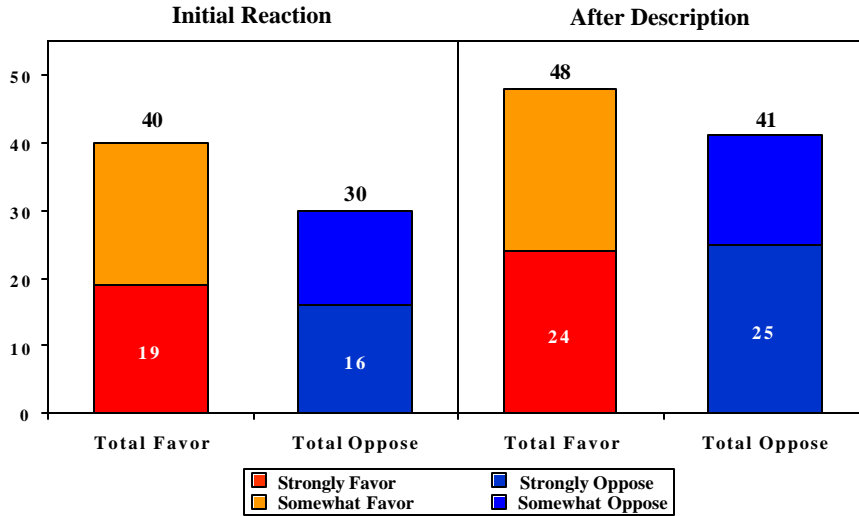
Last January’s immigration proposal was a key component in the Bush Administration’s continuing effort to attract Hispanics. However, the proposal (which would allow some undocumented immigrants to stay in the U.S. as long they worked and agreed to leave the U.S. after no more than six years) does not appear to have generated the support that the Administration had hoped for.

When asked whether they supported Bush’s proposal on immigration without a description of the proposal’s details, only 40 percent of Hispanics indicate they favor it while 30 percent are opposed, with a very large 31 percent unsure. After hearing a neutral description of the proposal, support for it increased to 48 percent, but opposition to it rose 11 points to 41 percent. Among independents the shift was more pronounced, as a 22-point margin in favor of the proposal shrunk to 8 points after the description.

⁸ According to VNS/MSNBC exit poll data, Bush won 29 percent of the Hispanic vote in California in 2000.

⁹ The Field Poll surveyed 958 registered voters in California from February 18-22, 2004. The Los Angeles Times conducted a poll of 1,521 registered voters in California from February 18-22, 2004.

Support for Bush Immigration Proposal
Likely Hispanic Voters Nationwide



Initial question: "Do you favor or oppose President Bush's recent proposal on immigration?"
Question with description: "Now as you may know, President Bush recently proposed a plan that would allow some undocumented immigrants currently in the U.S. to stay in this country for several years as long as they are working. The plan would require them to return to their countries after no more than six years. Do you favor or oppose this plan?"

Support for the proposal post-description is stronger among non-Cuban Hispanics in Florida, with 51 percent favoring it while only 37 percent were opposed, but the proposal looks like it will have little benefit for Bush in the southwest, where Hispanics are divided on the issue (46 percent in favor and 48 percent opposed).

Demographic Trends Among Hispanics

Republican thinking about the Hispanic community is not without some foundation in the socio-political patterns and long-term trends. The Democrats' advantage in party identification, overwhelming with the least educated and lowest income, does fall with rising education and income. The Democratic advantage on partisanship declines from a 57-point advantage among Hispanics with a family income under \$20,000 a year, to 37 points among those making between \$30,000 and \$50,000, to just 11 points among those making over \$75,000. The trend is similar by education level, as Hispanic voters with a high school degree or less support Democrats by a 44-point margin, while those with a college degree prefer Democrats by 23 points. This is distinct from the African American community where the Democrats' advantage in party identification carries across all socio-economic groups.

But there are two problems in bringing these patterns into play in this election. First, the great majority of the Hispanic community earns less than \$75,000 (86 percent) and have less than a college degree (90 percent).¹⁰

Second, Kerry, like Clinton, defies this pattern. Bush does relatively well only among Hispanics making over \$75,000 a year, a group that constitutes only 16 percent of the Hispanic electorate. Across all other incomes Kerry's advantage ranges from 24 to 32 points, and he still leads by 11 points among those making over \$75,000.

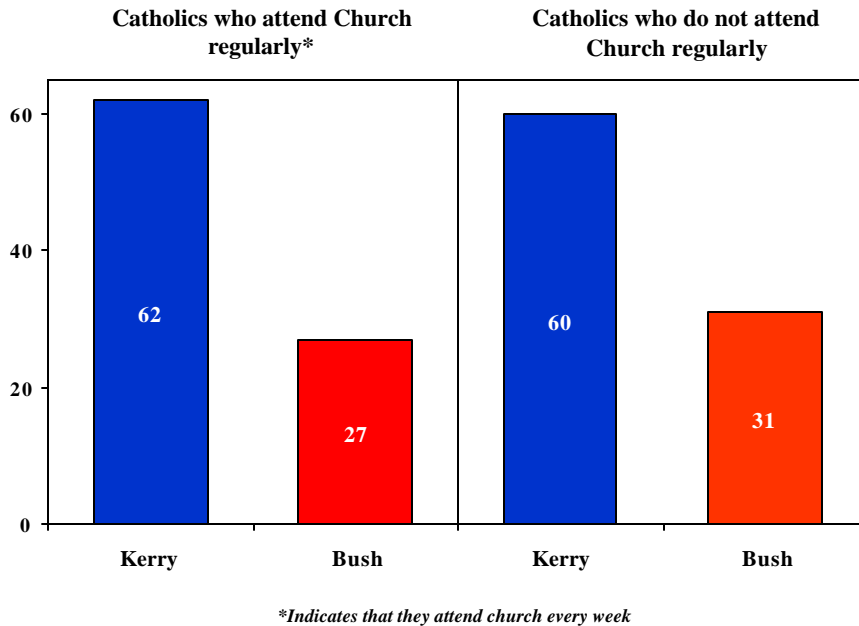
A fairly significant gender gap exists in the Hispanic electorate, and while Democrats enjoy a distinct advantage among both men and women, their support is significantly stronger among women. Kerry's lead over Bush among Hispanic women is double the size of his lead among men, and Democrats enjoy a 43-point edge on partisanship among women compared to 25 points among men.

The majority of Hispanic voters are either first or second generation Americans, and they are a patriotic community. Despite their relatively short time in the U.S., 22 percent of Hispanic voters have either served or have a family member who has served in the military. Those Hispanics who have a connection to the military are more likely to lean Republican than the population overall, as non-military Hispanics favor Kerry by 24 percent, but those with connections to the military favor him by only 13 percent.

On the other hand there is no evidence that the Republicans have made headway among Hispanics among more traditional and religious voters. Whether regular Catholic church attenders or not, Bush is not fairing well, losing 62 to 27 percent among the former and 60 to 31 among the latter. More analysis on this point is needed, including examining the impact of gay marriage, but for now, the religious/cultural divide is not decisive electorally.

¹⁰ United States 2000 Census data

Presidential Vote by Church Attendance



Realizing Democratic Gains

To get the biggest possible vote for Kerry – indeed, to potentially erode the Bush vote – progressive and Democratic organizations need to target a number of Democratically-inclined groups where Bush has been outperforming his party. That is true now and likely reflects the gains that Bush made in 2000 when he performed 10 points better than previous Republican presidential candidates. But while Bush is trying to push up his vote in 2004, Democrats have a strong incentive to push back these gains.

- Lower income Hispanics.** Voters earning under \$30,000 make up almost one third of the Hispanic electorate and they are, by far, the most attached to the Democrats. Indeed, 69 percent identify as Democrats, but only 62 percent are now voting Kerry. Bush, with 33 percent of the vote, is outperforming Republican identification, which is only at 14 percent. From these raw results, it is hard to tell whether Bush has created a special relationship here or whether he is in fact exposed as partisan sentiments gain greater force in the months ahead. But this is a major battleground.

- ***Less educated Hispanics.*** The same pattern holds for other Hispanic groups on the lower-end of the socio-economic ladder. Among those with a high school diploma or less, forming half the Hispanic electorate, Kerry runs 3 points behind party identification, which is at 62 percent. Bush gets 30 percent support, despite only 18 percent identifying as Republican.
- ***Rural Hispanics.*** At 17 percent of the electorate, this group does not offer quite the opportunities for gains that the two groups above do, but Kerry is noticeably underperforming among this group as well: he is getting only 54 percent of the vote when 61 percent of these rural voters identify as Democrats. Bush, with 36 percent of the vote, has almost doubled Republican identification.
- ***Working women.*** These women make up one-third of the Hispanic electorate and 65 percent identify with Democrats, but Kerry is getting 61 percent of the vote. Bush, with 32 percent, again has more than doubled party identification.
- ***Unmarried women.*** This group is a key target group among non-Hispanics and our data suggests they could have an important influence on the Hispanic vote as well. In this group, which represents 22 percent of the Hispanic electorate, 63 percent identify with the Democrats, with Kerry slightly behind at 60 percent. Bush gets 31 percent, well above the 14 percent who identify with the Republicans.

Despite major efforts, President Bush has yet to make visible gains with Hispanic voters. But the Republican ad war is just beginning and they are committing major resources to shifting Hispanic voters in target states. If Democrats engage the battle, they have every opportunity to maintain their strong support among Hispanic voters, and perhaps even make further gains.

Democracy Corps will conduct more comprehensive Hispanic research in the next several months, exploring deeper strategies and opportunities with this dynamic and pivotal constituency.