
We surveyed 1,000 midterm election voters on the night of the 2006 election. In this election, voters across the country make clear their desire for change, and in doing so created a new political playing field in Washington. Because of these changes, it's very important to understand what these midterm voters thought and felt about any number of issues.

Among our results:

- Three-in-five midterm voters (61%) say that political candidates' focus on hunger and poverty issues during the 2006 election was inadequate.
- Three quarters of the midterm electorate (73%) approve of an expanded effort to reduce hunger, regardless of the increase in federal expenditure.
- Two-thirds of midterm voters (65%) say that a candidate's stand on hunger and poverty issues was "important" to how they cast the vote this year.
- By a 4-1 margin (80%), midterm voters say that a presidential contender's stand on hunger and poverty issues is important to how they'll vote in the 2008 presidential election.

Voters want to make sure their fellow Americans have enough to eat, and this survey provides ample evidence that political leaders who ignore this issue will do so at their peril.

Throughout this memo, please note the difference between "Republican voters/Democratic voters" who cast ballots for each party's candidates this year, and "Republicans/Democrats" who are self-described party members.

Midterm Voters Call Focus on Social Issues Inadequate; Urge New Emphasis on Hunger

Across the board, midterm voters were dissatisfied with the lack of emphasis placed on hunger and poverty issues by candidates in the 2006 election cycle. When asked if political candidates spent an adequate amount of time discussing hunger and poverty issues, 61% of voters disagreed.

Political leaders should be concerned about Independents, of whom 70% found fault with candidates on hunger issues. Throughout 2006, Independents thought like Democrats – opposed the war, disliked President Bush – and Democratic victory within this group created their majority in the upcoming Congress.

Even a majority of Republicans (54%), who tend historically to favor economic and defense issues over social issues, believe that candidates spent an inadequate amount of time on hunger and poverty issues in this 2006 cycle. Two thirds of Democrats (61%) disagree.

The 18% of voters who see terrorism as the most important issue of 2006 (when compared to the war, the economy, and corruption) were split down the middle, 42% agree to 43% disagree. For these voters, the threat of terrorism is so important that it blots out many other issues they'd otherwise support.

As you may know, hunger and poverty have been campaign issues in this election. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Political candidates have spent an adequate amount of time discussing hunger and poverty issues."

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Vote GOP</u>	<u>Vote Dem</u>	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Independent</u>
Agree	30	35	26	38	27	20
Disagree	61	54	66	54	64	70
Don't know/Refused	9	11	51	9	9	1

Three-quarters of midterm voters (73%) approve of an expanded effort by the next Congress to reduce hunger worldwide, even if it means new federal expenditures.

Independents as a whole are a crucial group, and 74% approve of hunger efforts. Many Republicans are furious with Congress over wasteful spending and pork barrel issues, but Republicans as a whole still support hunger programs by a 2-to-1 margin (64%).

Would you approve or disapprove of an expanded effort to reduce hunger in the United States and around the world in the next two years, even if it meant new expenditures by the federal government?

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Vote GOP</u>	<u>Vote Dem</u>	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Independent</u>
Approve	73	66	78	64	81	74
Disapprove	18	25	12	27	10	16
Don't know/Refused	9	9	9	9	9	10

Hunger & Poverty A Priority For 2006, 2008

Most voters considered candidates' positions on hunger and poverty before going into the voting booth this year. Two thirds of midterm voters (65%) said these issues were "important" to them in deciding their vote.

Hunger and poverty issues were important to 60% of Republican voters and 69% of Democratic voters. As before, Republicans' historical emphasis on other issues shouldn't fool political leaders in ignoring hunger and poverty in their appeals to Republicans in the future.

When you decided whom to vote for today, how important was a candidate's position on issues of hunger and poverty?

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Vote GOP</u>	<u>Vote Dem</u>	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Independent</u>
Important	65	60	69	60	73	58
Not important at all	29	33	25	33	23	33
Don't know/Refused	6	7	6	7	4	10

The 2006 election was defined by the war in Iraq, corruption, and dissatisfaction with the Republican leadership in the White House and in Congress. The 2008 election has yet to be defined, but voters overwhelmingly say they'll consider hunger and poverty when evaluating 2008 candidates. By a 4-to-1 margin (80%), midterm voters say that hunger and poverty issues will be "important" in deciding their vote in 2008. This includes 75% of Republicans and 86% of Democrats.

Thinking ahead to 2008, how important is a candidate's position on reducing the hunger and poverty problem to you when deciding your vote for president of the United States?

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Vote GOP</u>	<u>Vote Dem</u>	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Independent</u>
Important	80	73	85	75	86	77
Not important at all	18	25	12	23	11	21
Don't know/Refused	3	2	3	2	3	2

Methodology

McLaughlin & Associates conducted this national poll of 1000 respondents who voted in the 2006 midterm election. This universe includes both voters who cast their ballots yesterday, and those who took advantage of early voting periods where applicable. The poll took place on the evening of November 7, 2006. All interviews were conducted via telephone by professional interviewers. Interview selection was random within predetermined election units – in this case, the fifty states. These units were structured to correlate with actual voter turnout in this general election. The margin of error is +/- 3.1% at a 95% confidence interval.

Sample Demographics

Party -- Republican 39%, Democrat 42%, Independent 16%.

Race – 82% White, 9% Black, 7% Hispanic.

Gender -- Male 49%, Female 51%.

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