

The original documents are located in Box 64, folder “May 11, 1972 - John N. Mitchell - Final First Wave Analysis” of the Robert Teeter Papers at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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Committee for the Re-election of the President

MEMORANDUM

May 11, 1972

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MEMORANDUM FOR: THE HONORABLE JOHN N. MITCHELL

FROM: ROBERT M. TEETER

SUBJECT: Final First Wave Analysis

During the past several weeks we have analyzed the first wave polling results utilizing a number of the most advanced statistical techniques available. This analysis has enabled us to identify the most important independent variables which influence presidential vote and to develop a very sophisticated analysis package which can be run and interpreted rapidly on all of our subsequent polling.

While it is not necessary to have knowledge of these techniques in order to use the results, I would be happy to go over them in more detail with you anytime.

Our conclusions from this analysis are:

1. Past party voting behavior is the single most important factor which affects the presidential vote. The classification of voters into behavioral Republicans, Democrats, or Ticket-splitters accounts for almost three times as much of the variance why people vote for or against the President as is explained by any other variable. This appears to be particularly true in Wisconsin, Indiana, and California.
2. The next most important factors affecting the Presidential vote are the voters' perceptions of the President's trust and his issue handling ability. Trust is best defined by the following variables -- honesty, open minded, and just. Seemingly, these personality traits are related to perceptions of credibility. To a lesser degree the presidential vote is related to perceptions of competence -- experienced, trained, and informed.

Most voters have a general perception of how well the President handles issues and problems overall and that appears to be more important to voting than is their perception of his handling of any one or two issues. This overall issue handling ability seems to be perceived by the voters as a single personality dimension similar in many ways to the dimensions of trust, competence, etc.

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By RD NARA, Date 12/2/89



The only individual issues which appear to have any significant independent effect on voting are Vietnam, inflation, and general unrest. Vietnam and inflation were also, fortunately, the issues that the President was seen as handling well, and his ability to handle the general unrest problem was rated about equally to that of his opponents.

Those issues on which the President is rated relatively poorly -- crime, drugs, and unemployment -- do not appear to affect presidential voting to any major degree. This is particularly true of crime and unemployment. Apparently the President is seen as having done a good job on those problems that the voters think have gotten better overall, while he is seen as having done a poor job on those problems which have become worse during the last few years. There also appears to be little believability that the President will make much difference in the crime or drug problems.

3. Demographic bloc voting is significantly less important than past party voting behavior, and less important than perceptions of the candidates trust, competence, and issue handling ability. Once party behavior is taken into account there is little difference in the vote for various demographic groups. In other words, differences in the rate that various demographic groups support Nixon can be explained almost entirely by party preferences rather than membership in any particular demographic group. The factors having some but small effect on the vote are age, income, and education. Generally speaking, voters who are older, have higher incomes, and have more education seem to have a greater propensity to vote for the President, primarily because of their propensity to vote Republican more than as a result of their demographic group. Bloc voting against the President is evident only with a limited number of groups -- blacks, young voters (18 to 25 year olds especially in California), and Jewish voters in New York. All appear to oppose the President to a greater degree than would be predicted by their past voting behavior or party preference.

It appears to be possible to improve the vote for the President in several demographic groups where he is weak. We have made these conclusions from our analysis of the data from the individual voting blocs:

- A. Older voters (60 years and over) are the single most important group in the election. In Missouri and Oregon, the President is especially weak. Taxes, inflation, and the economy are the important issues.
- B. The President is running very poorly with young voters (18 to 24). Heavy turnout and registration by this group could be devastating. The percentage of Republican support among youth is very small. Vietnam and the economy are the issues. We have special weakness in California and Wisconsin.



- C. The vote for Nixon among blacks varies greatly. The President is running well with this group in the south, the border states, and New Jersey and New York. There is a severe credibility problem and racial appeals to this group are unlikely to work. Pocketbook issues will be important.
- D. Spanish-Americans are supporting the President to a greater degree than expected. The support appears to be flexible. We could expect to improve our support with this group by at least 15% in California.
- E. Ethnic support in Philadelphia is very weak and seems to be causing our poor showing there.

4. The importance of each of the vote determining factors varies considerably from state to state. Generally, the relative importance of these factors in affecting the vote is listed below:

- Party
- Nixon Trust
- Comparative Issue Handling Ability
- Age
- Opponents Competence
- Income
- Religion
- Education

After party, the voters' perceptions of Nixon trust and comparative issue handling ability are the factors which have the greatest influence on the President's vote.

The factors in the individual state studies are shown in Attachment A. Attachment B graphically shows the importance of these factors.

46
210
33 +
A

5. While the President was in relatively good shape against any of his potential opponents in January, there was a relatively small undecided vote for that point in time and there appears to be some limits on the President's potential vote. There are relatively large groups of voters who vote for the President on all of the sample ballots and who vote against the President regardless of who his opponent is on all the sample ballots. This indicates to me that once the Democratic nominee is selected the undecided vote may be very small. This, along with the probability that the Democratic candidate will increase his support and that the ratio will get closer during September and October, means that we should attempt to build as large a lead as possible between now and the national conventions on the theory that we will lose ground after the conventions. Moreover, every point we can gain between now and the conventions will come with less effort and at less cost than those percentage points needed during the fall campaign.



6. There does not appear to be any definite ideological basis for voting on any of the ballots. That is, very few people if any are voting for the President because they feel he is particularly conservative or liberal, or that people are voting against the President because they feel he is too conservative or too liberal.

7. The Vice-President's approval rating is somewhat lower than the President's in almost all of the states but follows up and down about in line with the President's. I cannot identify any particular segment of voters with whom the Vice-President is either adding or subtracting from the ticket.

8. The net effect of a Wallace third party candidacy was very small in January and has undoubtedly changed since then. We should defer any hard conclusions as to whether we want him on or off the ballot until after the second wave of polling, but my inclination at this point is that we would do better without him on the ballot.

9. There is no question but that we have a very realistic chance to carry any or all of the big states -- New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, Texas, and California and we should continue to make a maximum effort in those states. California appears to me to be the one state where we may not be doing as well as we might be at this time and where there are indications of future problems. Voters in California seem to have a more fixed perception of the President. That is, of course, logical in that California voters probably know him better than those in any other state.

Recommendations

Based on our analysis, we make the following recommendations:

1. A ticket-splitter analysis should be done in each of the priority states by precinct or ward and township. For the rest of the country, the analysis should be done by county. This is undoubtedly the most efficient way to locate ticket-splitters and to develop priority areas for both our organizational and communications efforts. Moreover, it will allow us to identify Democratic areas which have some propensity to split their ticket, and from these areas we may be able to cause ticket-splitting in favor of the President.

2. With apparently small undecided vote, a strong organizational effort will be critical. I would recommend putting a disproportionate share of our resources into organizational personnel to assure that this effort is maximized. I also think our organizational effort should be structured so that we have the flexibility to concentrate our people in a few states late in the campaign, even to the degree of assigning one to each county or congressional district for the top priority states in late September and October.



Special organizational effort should be made to improve the President's voting strength in Philadelphia (especially with ethnics), New York City (outside Manhattan), Buffalo, Los Angeles (Orange County), Baltimore suburbs, Montgomery County (Maryland), Mid-Texas (Austin), rural Missouri, and Kenosha/Racine Wisconsin.

3. As indicated before, I think the development of an overall theme or idea for the campaign is imperative and that this should be done before the Democratic convention and should center around the President's hopes and aspirations for our country. To be effective it must be positive and give people the hope that many of our problems can and will improve.

4. As the President's overall issue handling ability is more important to determining vote than his handling of any individual issue, those issues on which he is perceived as handling well should be emphasized and those he is seen as handling poorly should only be used if we have an impressive story to tell or if the appeal is designed for some particular group.

5. We should emphasize the following personal attributes in our media programs:

Trust - Just
Honest
Open Minded

Competence - Experienced
Trained
Informed
Competent

It is possible to use the President's ability to handle issues in communicating the above attributes. No special effort needs to be directed to make the President appear -- warm, relaxed, and having a sense of humor. To the extent that it is possible to convey these characteristics, we should do so, but not at the expense of the trust and competence variables.

6. Special efforts should be implemented to maximize the President's strength with specific voting blocs.

A. A campaign directed at older Americans through the voting bloc group should be given top priority. Maximum available resources should be allocated into this program. A massive turnout drive should be implemented, and a supportive direct mail effort should be considered. Because of the current high level of registration, no special effort in this regard needs to be made to register older voters. Special emphasis should be made to improve our level of support with older Americans in the following priorities:



Missouri (Primarily Rural)
Oregon
Texas
Wisconsin
Maryland
Indiana
California
Pennsylvania
New York

Taxes and inflation should be given emphasis.

- B. All registration drives among young voters should be stopped. Our primary objective with this group should be low turnout and persuasion of Democrats and swing voters to vote for the President. Areas for special emphasis to improve support among young voters should be:

Wisconsin
California
Maryland
Pennsylvania
New York

Primary issue emphasis should be made on Vietnam, jobs for youth, and pollution.

In meeting our objective of converting Democrats and independents, we must be careful not to direct our young voter campaign solely at our own voters. To keep turnout at a minimum we should attempt to keep the marijuana referenda now proposed for California and Michigan off the ballot if possible.

- C. The Jewish vote bloc should implement a program to improve the President's strength with this voter group in New York state. Careful consideration should be given to the question of parochial schools with this group. Our data indicates support of aid to parochial schools may be a negative with Jewish voters.
- D. In order to carry several critical northern states we will need to carry a greater percentage of blacks than we did in 1968. Because of our credibility problems, we must be careful in making any racial appeals so that our efforts are not counterproductive.

