

**The original documents are located in Box 65, folder “June 29, 1972 - H.R. Haldeman - 1960 and 1968 Elections” of the Robert Teeter Papers at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.**

### **Copyright Notice**

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Gerald Ford donated to the United States of America his copyrights in all of his unpublished writings in National Archives collections. Works prepared by U.S. Government employees as part of their official duties are in the public domain. The copyrights to materials written by other individuals or organizations are presumed to remain with them. If you think any of the information displayed in the PDF is subject to a valid copyright claim, please contact the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

# Committee for the Re-election of the President

1701 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, N.W., WASHINGTON, D.C. 20006 (202) 333-0920

June 29, 1972

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

MEMORANDUM FOR: MR. H. R. HALDEMAN

FROM: ROBERT M. TEETER

SUBJECT: 1960 and 1968 Elections

This memorandum is in reply to your request for a comparison of the 1960 and 1968 campaigns and of the changes that occurred in the survey data during the two campaigns. It is based on an analysis of public polls (largely Gallup), the University of Michigan Survey Research Center's After-Election Studies, individual Market-Opinion statewide polls and my observations of the 1968 campaign. I do not have the campaign polling for either 1960 or 1968, and I was not actively involved in the 1960 campaign.

The following campaign polls<sup>1/</sup> taken during 1960 and 1968 indicate great differences between the two races:

<u>Date</u> (1960)	<u>Nixon</u>	<u>Kennedy</u>	<u>Undecided</u>
March	47%	47%	5%
June	48	46	5
Late Sept.	47	46	7
Early Oct.	45	49	6
November	48	49	3

<u>Date</u> (1968)	<u>Nixon</u>	<u>Humphrey</u>	<u>Wallace</u>	<u>Undecided</u>
April	43%	34%	9%	14%
Early May	40	36	14	10
Late May	36	42	14	8
Early June	37	42	14	7
Early Sept.	43	31	19	7
Late Sept.	44	29	20	7
Early Oct.	43	31	20	6
Late Oct.	44	36	15	6
November	42	40	14	4

<sup>1/</sup> It was impossible to obtain demographic breakdowns of the Gallup vote for 1960 in the time allotted for this paper. We are, however, making arrangements to get this information.

Determined to be an  
Administrative Marking

By CMG NARA, Date 2/8/2010



The 1960 election was neck and neck throughout the campaign. The undecided vote was considerably less in 1960 than in 1968. The undecided vote only increased from 5% to 7% following the initial Nixon-Kennedy debates, at which time Kennedy took the lead and eventually won the election.

In April of 1968 the undecided vote was high with 14% of the voters unable to make a choice. Nixon held a substantial early lead until the North Vietnamese agreed to Paris as a negotiating site. Then Humphrey surged ahead in the polls and maintained his lead until after the conventions. Later, the Humphrey lead declined and there was a corresponding increase in the Wallace strength. Apparently, the disorder at the convention caused a swing to Wallace away from traditional Democratic vote. In the closing days of the campaign the Humphrey vote greatly increased. According to Gallup, Humphrey's dramatic gains in the last days of the campaign resulted from a decline of the Wallace strength in northern states returning to their traditional Democratic vote.

It is significant to note that the Nixon strength remained fairly constant between 42% to 48% after the convention in both years. Very little switching seemed to occur to and from Nixon.

There are several significant differences between 1960 and 1968 which would make it unwise to conclude the 1960 Nixon campaign was more effective than the 1968 campaign:

1. The 1960 election was a two-way race and the 1968 election was a three-way race. The three-way race tended to delay the final decision and increase switching simply because of more choices presented to the voter. This is a characteristic of all elections with more than two candidates and we have observed this in primary elections and in Canada. Also, this was the first time that most American voters were confronted with such a situation and Wallace's candidacy caused them to be ambivalent in their choice. In order to vote for Wallace they had to break lifelong voting traditions. This explains why more older voters returned to the Democratic column than younger voters.

2. The Catholic issue was very important in 1960 and not in 1968. It caused a large number of voters to make up their minds on that basis as soon as Kennedy was nominated.

3. Another major difference is the 1968 Democratic convention which divided the Democratic party as compared to a relatively united party in 1960. Kennedy had the support of an active and united party in 1960, while Humphrey had to contend with major splits on both left and right with McCarthy and Wallace in 1968.

4. Kennedy was also a clearly more attractive and popular personality in a time when the electorate was looking for a young and dynamic leader. He also had the advantage of representing change and running against an incumbent administration, while Humphrey had the problem of having to separate himself from a very unpopular



administration of which he was a key part. Kennedy could blame the Eisenhower/Nixon administration for all the problems of the time; but, Nixon, on the other hand, was not a beneficiary of Eisenhower's personal appeal and Eisenhower got credit for all the successes of his administration.

5. The issue structure was very different in 1960 and 1968 in terms of the general attitude of the country and the specific areas of concern. The general attitude of the country was relatively positive, optimistic, and hopeful in 1960, but extremely negative and without hope in 1968. In 1960 the country was at peace, the economy was in relatively good shape, the race, crime, drug problems had not become critical and there was no major environmental/consumer issue. In 1968, however, the electorate was frustrated over the war, personally feeling the effects of inflation, frightened over the domestic unrest, and worrying about the environment. The fact that there were more serious problems in 1968 and that each of these were becoming worse combined to give the country a very negative pessimistic attitude.

There are several reasons why I believe it would also be unwise to conclude that 1972 is similar to either 1960 or 1968. First, and most important, is that each election is to a large degree unique in terms of the perception of the candidates, the general attitude of the electorate, and the specific issues. Therefore, the 1972 election with the President running as an incumbent against McGovern will not be particularly comparable to 1960 or 1968. In fact, I suspect it may be more comparable to 1956 than 1960 or 1968. The reason for this is the incumbency. In 1956, the last time an incumbent was running for re-election, voters decided how they would vote earlier than any election in recent time. 76% of those who voted had decided how they were going to vote by the week after the convention. Studies by the Survey Research Center of the University of Michigan have demonstrated that in both 1960 and 1968 the percentage deciding how to vote immediately after the convention dwindled. George Gallup wrote in 1960 that the only time there was a major shift in sentiment during 1948, 1952, or 1956 came as a result of a dramatic international event. I believe we are at such a stage now, and that most people will have made up their minds how to vote by the time of the Republican convention unless there is an international event to change their minds.

There is one recurring problem for the President which is evident throughout all of this data. We have a very difficult time moving the committed vote over 50%. The job seems to become increasingly more difficult the closer we come to the election because of the declining number of voters who are undecided. This suggests that we should be actively trying to increase the President's committed vote in the next 30 to 45 days. Once voters actually decide they are going to vote for a candidate, most of them stay committed.



Every point we can gain now will come much easier than those we have to get in the Fall. This would have to be done largely through the President's policies, programs, statements, surrogates and not through the campaign. I do not think we should do anything to lengthen the period of the actual political campaign. The shorter the actual campaign, the better for us.

Overall, we would suggest that consideration be given to increasing Presidential appearances during the next 45 days and also beginning the surrogate program earlier than originally planned.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

