

February 12, 2007

The Unmarried Women's Agenda Priorities for the 110th Congress

To: Women's Voices. Women Vote.

From: Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research

In 2006, unmarried women voted for change in dramatically large numbers. On the eve of the election, more than two-thirds of unmarried women believed the country was on the wrong track, less than one-third approved of the job Congress was doing, and 54 percent said that they used their vote to voice their dissatisfaction with politics in Washington.¹ Unmarried women were overwhelmingly against the war and the current status quo, particularly the neglect of health care and the economy.

This important new survey,² conducted after the 100 hours agenda was adopted at the outset of the new Congress, looks at the issues important to these change voters and how they could be impacted for 2008, with the goal of raising their participation.

Key Findings

- Unmarried women are optimistic that the new Congress will bring needed change; unmarried women who are politically engaged are more optimistic about the new Congress and aware of their legislative accomplishments than those who are less politically engaged.
- Getting out of Iraq and reforming health care top the agenda for unmarried women.
- On their own and financially on the edge, unmarried women seek economic relief from stagnant wages and rising costs.
- The legislative proposal receiving the most support from unmarried women was a proposal to fully fund the State Children's Health Insurance Program; other widely supported health care proposals included increasing access to prenatal care and expanded coverage for the uninsured.
- Pay equity remains a critically important issue for these women, and they widely support

¹ Democracy Corps/Campaign for America's Future Post-Election survey of 2006 voters and GQR/WVWV oversample of 568 unmarried women.

² WVWV national survey of 1000 unmarried adults women, conducted January 28-30, 2007.

new legislation to redress these inequities.

- Cost of college tuition continues to be of great concern, particularly for younger women.
- Drop-off and unregistered unmarried women tend to be younger, more racially diverse, less educated, and have an agenda that is focused more on education, job availability, and expanding health care options in low-income areas; by contrast, their older, more politically engaged counterparts have an agenda that is much more dominated by Iraq, prescription drugs, Medicare, and pay equity.
- Motivating drop-off and unregistered women requires enacting real change on the issues that matter to them most.
- Addressing the unmarried women's agenda could not be more crucial for the new Congress: among less politically engaged unmarried women, support for the new Congress's agenda was higher when it included items specific to the unmarried women's agenda.

Optimism that the new Congress will bring change

The 2006 voters are very hopeful about the new Congress, though that could be undermined by lack of progress on key issues. These voters in particular see the new Democratic Congress as positive, and they are more trusting that the new Congress will "do what is right" always or most of the time. They are optimistic about Nancy Pelosi and the new influence of women in Congress, and are also hopeful that the new Congress will address the unmarried women's agenda.

Roughly a fifth of the unmarried women we surveyed say they are registered but that they did not vote in 2006. As we shall see below, these registered non-voters are younger, less-educated and more financially pressed, though they share a common agenda that can be addressed in the House and Senate. Like other unmarried women, they want to get out of Iraq, expand health care coverage for the uninsured – especially children – deal with the rising cost of prescription drugs, and seek greater availability of good-paying jobs, with wages that keep up with rising costs. For them, their biggest motivation for voting is to bring change and have politicians who listen to them.

Among those who are unregistered, a significant number of them are under 30 years of age. They are more distrustful and skeptical and paying less attention to the new Congress. They believe "change" is the most important reason to vote, and are looking for politicians who will listen, and for straightforward information they can trust.

The agenda for all unmarried women includes changing course in Iraq and making health care more affordable. But their agenda also includes items that speak to the difficulties of being on their own economically – such as raising the minimum wage, expanding health care coverage for the uninsured, and tuition tax credits – and also items that speak to these women as women – including equal pay for equal work and expanding health care for pregnant women and prenatal care. The unmarried women whose participation is problematic are more likely to be engaged by a change agenda when it includes items that impact their lives as women.

Motivating drop-off and unregistered voters

Motivating unmarried women is not about convincing them that the stakes are high: more than 75 percent of the unregistered and drop-off women thought that it mattered who won the November election. Instead, motivating them involves showing genuine concern for these women on their own, enacting real change on the issues that matter most and explaining these changes in an uncomplicated and straightforward manner.

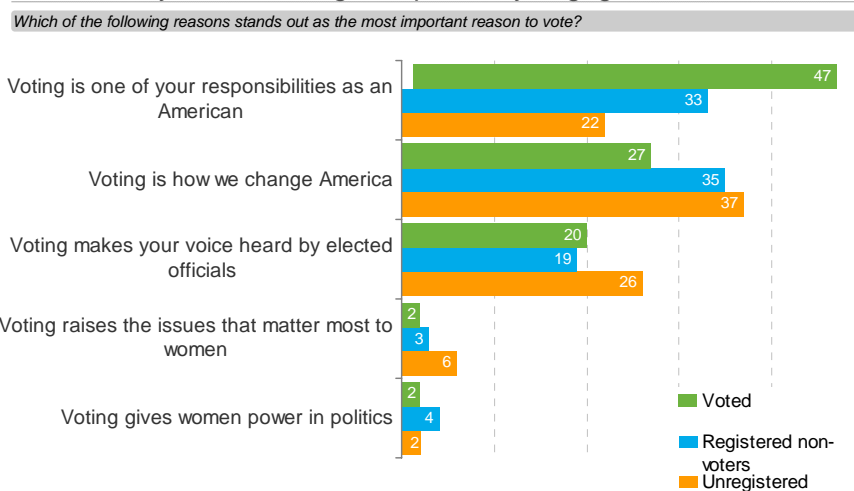
Unregistered unmarried women number nearly 15 million, and unmarried women who registered but didn't vote are roughly 5 million. It is clear that these women can and should be reached. By gender and marital status, they are the largest group on the sidelines of democracy, and they have an agenda that calls for major change.

Registered non-voters

The registered non-voters are younger, skewed towards young and young-family range: one third are under thirty and 24 percent are 30 to 45 years old, combined with a considerable number of seniors (22 percent).

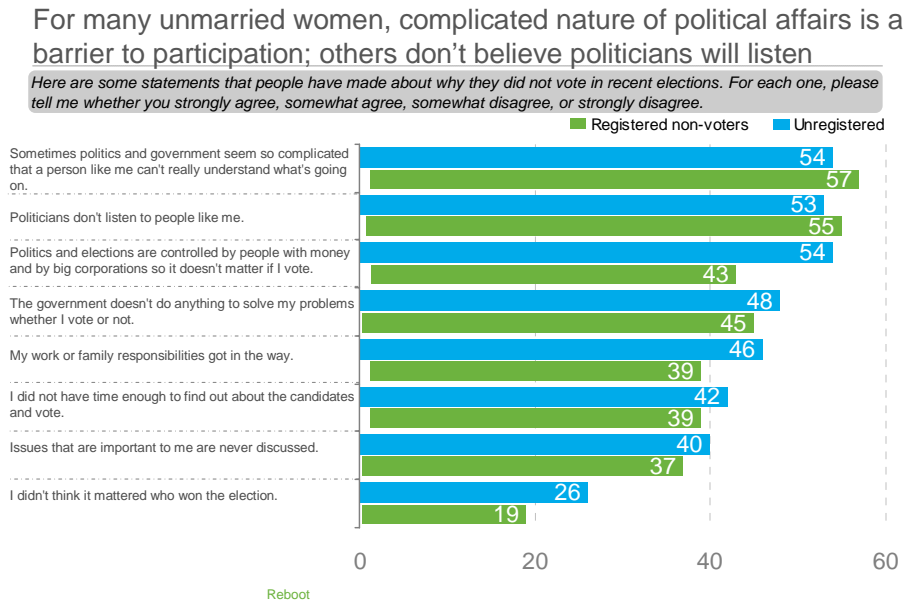
These drop-off voters are most motivated by get-out-the-vote messages centered on changing America. The desire for change, in fact, permeates this group: 80 percent thought that it mattered who won the November elections, with 63 percent caring strongly.

Civic responsibility key for motivating politically engaged; 'changing America' key for motivating less politically engaged



Addressing their agenda and showing evidence of change on the issues that matter prove critical to motivating these women. Currently, nearly 40 percent agreed with the statement that "issues that are important to me are never discussed," and 45 percent think that the government does nothing to solve their problems. Even when the government is working to solve their problems, sometimes these women remain unaware: 57 percent of drop-off women agreed with

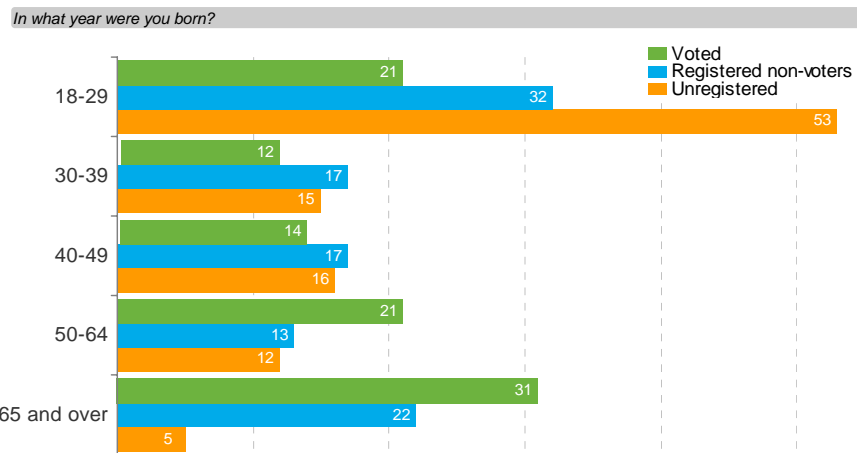
the statement that “sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on,” with 21 percent agreeing strongly.



Unregistered voters

The unregistered unmarried women in our survey are overwhelmingly young, (53 percent under 30 years), and few are seniors. The unregistered are also, unsurprisingly, less likely to report that they expect to vote in 2008, and less than one third regularly follow public affairs, reflecting the civic disengagement of younger voters more generally.

Most unregistered voters are under 30



What motivates these women is a strong desire for change. Nearly 40 percent of unregistered unmarried women said the most important reason to vote is that “voting is how we change America.”

Unregistered women have far more cynical views than the other cohorts about the role of money in politics: 54 percent agreed with the statement “politics and elections are controlled by people with money and by big corporations, so it doesn’t matter if I vote,” and 28 percent agreed strongly. Thus, in outreach to this group, it proves critical to demonstrate that the new Congress will bring real change in this key regard.

The New Congress and 100 Hours Agenda

Unmarried women are hopeful that the new Congress will address their agenda, and the first 100 hours’ agenda includes measures that unmarried women widely support. Indeed, addressing the unmarried women’s agenda can be a key motivating factor to broaden the participation of unmarried women. They need to know that promises are kept and their voices are heard.

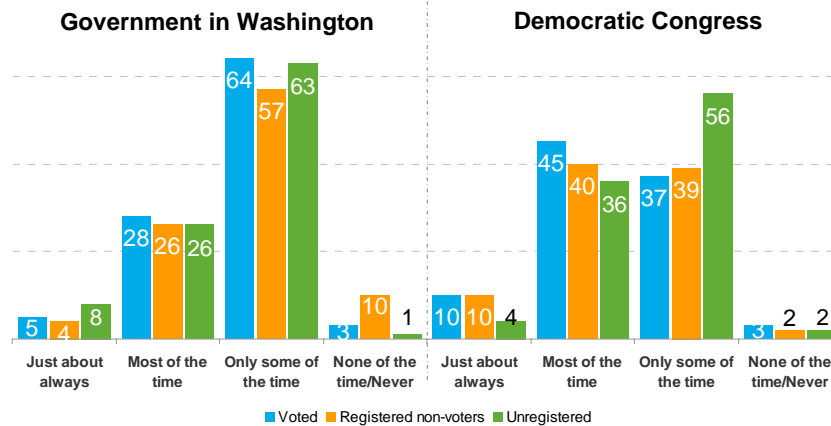
Voters

Politically engaged unmarried women are most optimistic about the new Congress: among those who voted in the 2006 election, 65 percent said they are ‘hopeful’ about the new Congress, with 43 percent feeling strongly. While only 32 percent of these women trust the ‘government in Washington’ to do what is right most or all of the time, 56 percent trust the new Democratic Congress most or all of the time.

Unmarried women trust new Democratic Congress more than 'government in Washington'

■ Politically engaged more trusting than those who are less engaged

About much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right – just about always, most of the time, or only some of the time?



These women are also the most likely to be aware of the changes the new Congress is enacting. When asked, in an open-ended question, what they have seen or heard about the new Congress, 13 percent of those who voted last year mentioned 'change,' and another 25 percent mentioned the new leadership, including taking action against Bush, inaugurating an era of bipartisanship, and the new influence of women in Congress, particularly Speaker Pelosi.

The 100 hours agenda has penetrated most with this group of women: in response to the open-ended question described above, 1 in 5 mentioned the 100 hours agenda in particular, and many mentioned specific items on the agenda, a number that is all the more impressive given the very open-ended nature of the question.

Underscoring the importance of economic issues for women on their own, the most commonly mentioned item on the 100 hours agenda was raising the minimum wage – fully 11 percent of those who voted last year mentioned this.

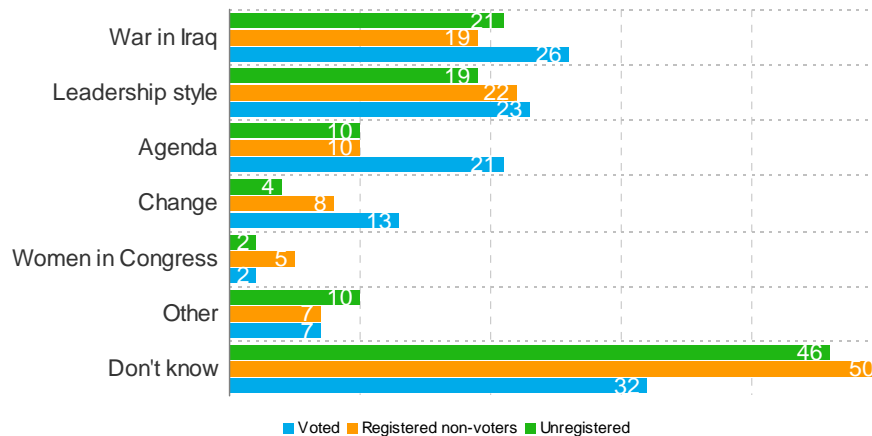
Registered non-voters

Registered non-voters are similarly optimistic about the new Congress, with 63 percent expressing 'hope' about what the Congress is doing. Like their more politically active counterparts, they are far more trusting of the new Democratic Congress than of the government in Washington generally.

These women are less aware than the voters described above about the changes the 110th Congress has enacted. In response to the open-ended question, only 8 percent mentioned change, and only 10 percent mentioned the 100 hours agenda. These women were, however, the most likely to mention the expanded influence of women in Congress.

Those who didn't vote less likely to have heard about 100 Hours' Agenda, change in Washington

Now, thinking about the new Congress and what is happening in Washington, please tell me what you have heard or read recently about the Congress. (OPEN END)

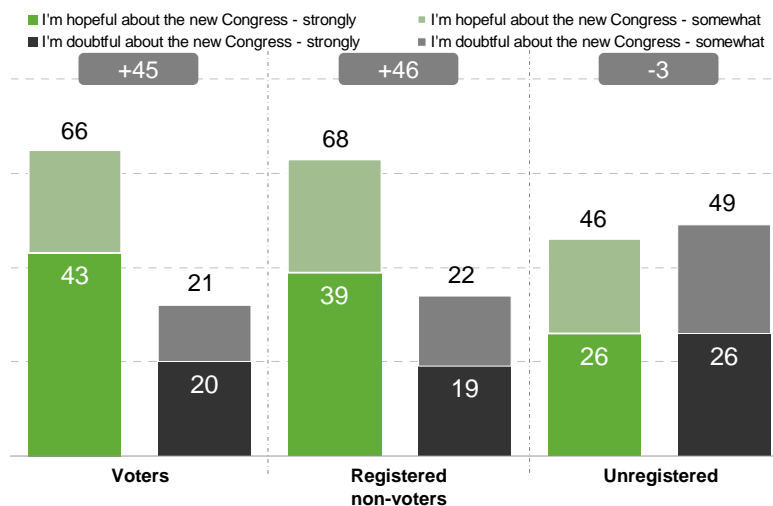


Unregistered voters

The unmarried women who are not registered are appreciably less optimistic about the new Congress than the other two groups. While both voters and registered non-voters were hopeful about the new Congress by a 2 to 1 margin, a majority of the unregistered women are doubtful about the new Congress.

Less politically engaged more doubtful about the 110th Congress

Now I'm going to read you some pairs of statements. After I read each pair, please tell me whether the FIRST statement or the SECOND statement comes closer to your own view, even if neither is exactly right.

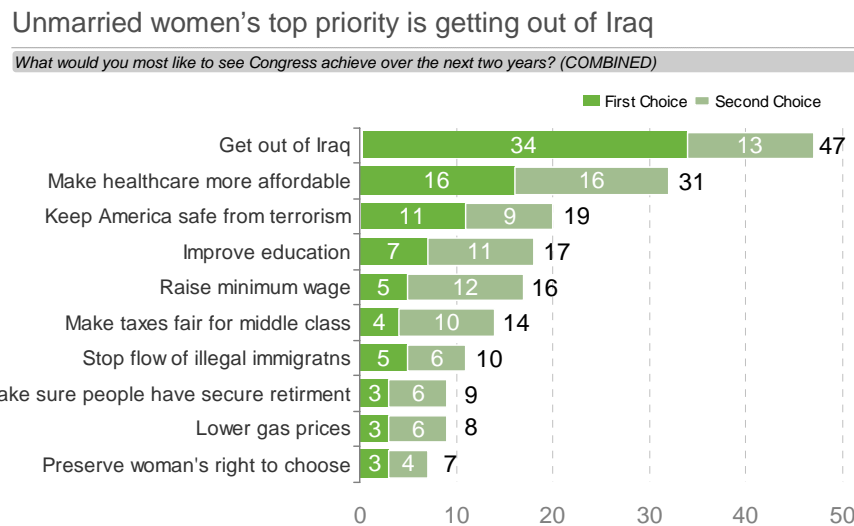


The unregistered women were significantly less likely to mention hearing about change in the new Congress or the new leadership, and only 10 percent mentioned the 100 hours agenda. When asked the open-ended question about what they had heard about the new Congress, the most common response was “I don’t know” or “nothing,” with 46 percent of these women giving such a response. Thus, reaching these women and engaging them is critical if we want to expand the universe of unmarried women in the electorate.

The unmarried women's agenda: Iraq, health care, wages, pay equity

Unmarried women in 2006 – whether they voted or not – were seeking change.

Similar to the rest of the nation, top priorities for unmarried women include getting out of Iraq, expanded health care coverage, wages that keep up with rising costs, and development of sources of alternative energy.



In addition to the priorities they share with the rest of the country, unmarried women also have another set of concerns, including the rising cost of education, health insurance for children, pay equity, and access to prenatal care.

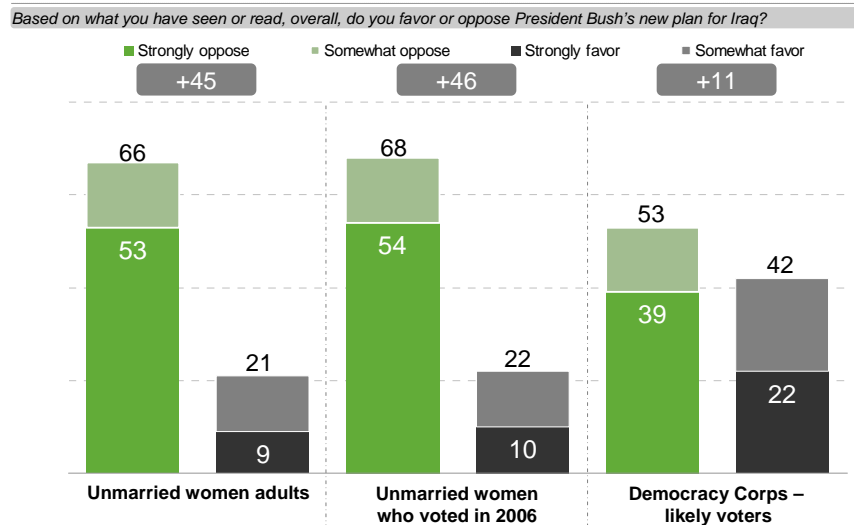
The unmarried women's agenda: pay equity, children's health insurance, prenatal care, tuition tax credits

<i>Now I am going to read you some things that the Congress may take up this year. After each one, please tell me whether it would make you much more likely, somewhat more likely, a little more likely, no more likely, or less likely to support a candidate for Congress.</i>	Much More likely	Much/Smwt/Little More likely
Enact legislation to ensure that women receive equal pay for equal work by improving legal protections for women who face wage discrimination	73	91
Fully fund the State Children's Health Insurance Program to ensure that virtually all children have health insurance	70	94
Expand health coverage so a woman who becomes pregnant and does not have health insurance can receive prenatal care, so babies can be born healthier	65	91
Increased federal loans and tuition tax credits to help low income people afford education beyond high school, including community college, technical training and four-year college programs	60	92

- Iraq:** When asked what they most hope the new Congress will do, nearly half said “get out of Iraq”, and two-thirds say they are opposed to Bush’s plan to increase troop levels, compared to barely half of all voters nationally³. Unmarried women are strongly anti-war and believe that Congress is critical to bringing about change in Iraq; when asked in an open-ended question what they have heard about the new Congress, a plurality mentioned changing course in Iraq.

³ Democracy Corps National Survey, conducted January 24-28, 2007 of 1,005 likely voters.

Unmarried women overwhelmingly oppose the war in Iraq



Democracy Corps national survey, conducted January 24-28, 2007 of 1,002 likely voters

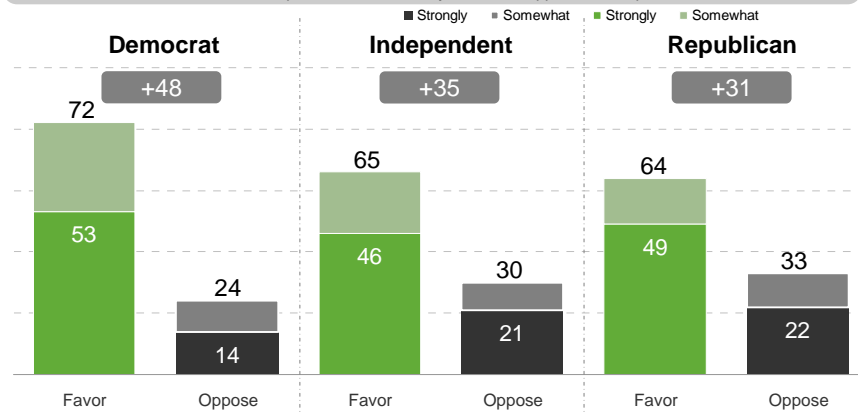
Unmarried women's anti-war sentiments remain consistent across cohorts: regardless of age, race, education, or income, unmarried women are strongly anti-war. Even among self-identified Republicans, one third are opposed to Bush's plan to increase troop levels in Iraq.

- Health care:** For women on their own, changes in the health care system are critical. Nearly 1-in-4 unmarried women we surveyed do not have health insurance, and 46 percent of unmarried women say the expansion of health insurance coverage for the uninsured should be one of the top health care priorities for the president and Congress; among unmarried women without health insurance, that number rises to 57 percent.

Unmarried women overwhelmingly favored a universal health coverage proposal similar to the one enacted in Massachusetts; 69 percent of women favored this plan, with 50 percent favoring the plan strongly.

Unmarried women of all parties overwhelmingly favor Massachusetts-style health insurance plan

To achieve universal health coverage, the government is considering a proposal that would require that everyone have health insurance, the way all drivers are required to have automobile insurance. People with higher incomes who do not have insurance would be required to buy insurance, and the government would help pay for insurance for small businesses and families with incomes up to \$40,000. Would you favor or oppose such a plan?



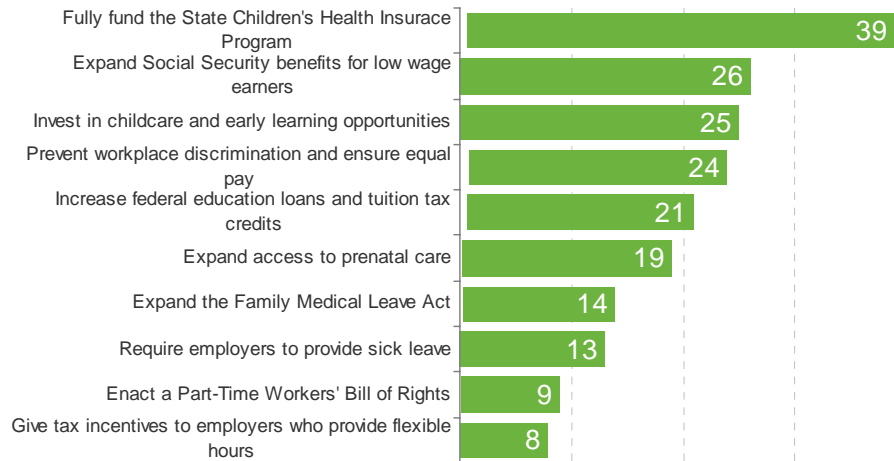
Unmarried women also very strongly favor expanding health coverage to allow pregnant women without health insurance to receive prenatal care. Support is strongest among the unregistered women, among whom 73 percent say it would make them ‘much more likely’ to support a candidate for Congress.

Changing Medicare to lower prescription drug prices also remains a critical priority for unmarried women, and seniors in particular. Among the bills passed by the House of Representatives in the first 100 hours, more than half of unmarried women – and 60 percent of senior unmarried women – thought that requiring Medicare to negotiate lower drug prices for seniors was one of the House’s two most important accomplishments, outpacing any other issue by several percentage points. Medicare remains an issue of dramatically higher importance for registered voters than for the unregistered voters, who tend to be much younger.

While voters overall are supportive of expanding the State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), with about two-thirds saying it would make them more likely to support a candidate for Congress, unmarried women support this program in truly heroic numbers: 70 percent say they are much more likely to support a candidate for Congress. In fact, not only does the support of unmarried women for this proposal exceed the support of any other marital-gender cohort, it actually exceeds the support of *self-identified Democrats* in the electorate as a whole. This proposal received more support from unmarried women than any of the other dozen proposals we tested in the survey.

Expanding State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) top priority for unmarried women

Thinking about that list, what TWO are most important for Congress to do?

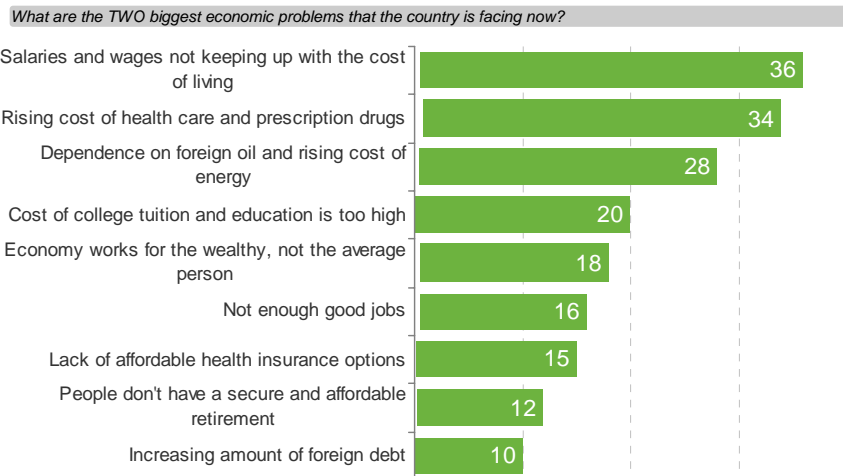


A significant number of unregistered unmarried women cite HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention as an important health care concern, with 17 percent of these women considering this their top health care priority.

- Wages:** The Bush administration may say the economy is vibrant, but for women on their own, caught between rising prices and stagnant wages, the economic outlook is not so rosy. For unmarried women, the biggest economic problem facing the nation is that salaries and wages are not keeping up with the cost of living. While less than one in three American adults makes less than \$30,000 per year, more than 40 percent of women on their own make less than \$30,000 per year. Thus, unsurprisingly, among all the bills passed by the House of Representatives as part of the 'First 100 Hours', the second most important to unmarried women (following Medicare reform) was raising the minimum wage. It remains critical for the 110th Congress to continue to focus on the economic agenda of those living on the edge financially.

Wages remain particularly salient to the unregistered voters: 41 percent of unregistered voters say that wages not keeping up with the cost of living is one of the two most important economic problems facing the country today.

Stagnant wages, rising costs hurting women on their own



- **Pay equity:** Among the legislative proposals that the 110th Congress could address, another proposal that garnered dramatic support was enacting pay equity legislation to ensure that women receive equal pay for equal work; 73 percent of unmarried women said that this legislation would make them much more likely to support a candidate for Congress. Support for this proposition was high across nearly all demographic groups, but younger and poorer women felt most strongly about this measure.
- **Alternative energy:** Unmarried women's support for alternative energy programs actually exceeds the already-high levels of support in the public generally, with 90 percent of unmarried women saying that such a proposal would make them more likely to vote for a candidate for Congress, and 58 percent feeling so strongly. Importantly, the proposal drew universal support from nearly every cohort, including drawing equal levels of support from both politically engaged and politically disengaged women.

Agendas that motivate

While there are some commonalities in their concerns, the relative importance of many of these items differs by level of civic engagement. For all three groups, getting out of Iraq and reforming health care remain the most important priorities; the specific policy proposals and importance of other issues provide important nuances in the unmarried women's political landscape.

Among voters, Iraq and health care dwarf all other concerns. They harbor stronger anti-war sentiments than either of the other groups, and strongly oppose Bush's plan to increase troops. More so than the other groups, their health care concerns center on Medicare and the cost of prescription drugs. Slightly older, they are less concerned about education policy than the non-voters. Economically better off, they are also relatively less worried about the minimum wage, access to contraception, and paid sick leave, and instead are relatively more worried about equal pay legislation, expanding coverage for the uninsured, and the development of alternative energy.

For registered non-voters, Iraq trumps all other concerns, but it is less dominant than for the voters because it is closely followed by concerns about the economy, particularly stagnant wages that do not keep up with the rising costs of health care, energy, and especially education. In fact, when presented with a list of Congressional policy proposals, 46 percent of these women said that one of the top two priorities should be to increase federal education loans and tuition tax credits. Expanding health coverage for uninsured adults and children is a top health care priority for these women, in particular expanding access to prenatal care and contraception and an expanded Family and Medical Leave Act.

For the unregistered unmarried women, Iraq again dominates, but is quickly followed by concerns about the economy and education. More than half of these women thought that the most important agenda item in the 100 hours agenda was raising the minimum wage, and more than half thought that one of Congress’s next top two priorities ought to be increasing federal education loans and tuition tax credits. Like the registered non-voters, these women overwhelmingly favor expanding health care coverage for uninsured adults and children, but also have concerns about providing higher quality medical care in low-income areas and more investment in the treatment and prevention of HIV and AIDS.

Importantly, among those who are less politically engaged – including both registered non voters and unregistered voters – support for the 110th Congress’s agenda was higher when it included items specific to the unmarried women’s agenda. Thus, addressing items of critical importance to unmarried women can mobilize and motivate support for the new Congress among these less-engaged women.

Among politically disengaged, support for new Congressional agenda slightly larger when unmarried women’s agenda items were included

<i>Now let me tell you what the Democrats and Republicans are saying are their top issues to work on in the next year. After I read them, please tell me which party’s issue priorities come closest to your own priorities, even if neither is exactly right.</i>	Registered Voted	Registered but didn’t vote	Not registered vote
(Split B) The Democrats in Congress say they will focus on ways to achieve greater energy independence, focused on alternative energy; health care by making sure all children have health insurance and allowing access to cheaper drugs from Canada, making college costs tax deductible, and for homeland security requiring that the government inspect all containers coming into America. (DOES NOT INCLUDE THE UNMARRIED WOMEN’S AGENDA)	74	60	63
The Republicans in Congress say they will focus on ways to achieve greater energy independence, focused on ethanol, coal, and U.S. oil; health care by making some insurance costs tax deductible, making tax cuts permanent for families and businesses, making No Child Left Behind more effective, and continue our resolve in the war on terrorism.	22	35	32
(Split A) The Democrats in Congress say they will focus on ways to achieve energy independence, focused on alternative energy; health care by making sure all children have health insurance and allowing access to cheaper drugs from Canada, tax credits to encourage flextime and require that men and women receive equal pay for equal work, and requiring the inspection of all containers coming into America. (INCLUDES THE UNMARRIED WOMEN’S AGENDA)	71	67	66
The Republicans in Congress say they will focus on ways to achieve greater energy independence, focused on ethanol, coal and U.S. oil; health care by making some insurance costs tax deductible, making tax cuts permanent for families and businesses, making No Child Left Behind more effective, and continue our resolve in the war on terrorism.	27	30	30

Unmarried women are one of the fastest growing demographic groups in the electorate, and motivating and engaging them remains an important challenge for elected officials and political leaders. By addressing their agenda and enacting the changes they so strongly seek, the 110th Congress can make a critical difference in the lives of these women and motivate them to become more engaged in political affairs.