



New Poll: Republicans Divided On Iraq, Accountability

In an important development paralleling the Vietnam-era split in the Democratic Party base, a split is developing among Republican Party base voters around the war in Iraq and the credibility of Republican Party leaders who initiated the war. In post-election polling done by Courage Campaigns and MyDD.com in the Republican-leaning California 50th district, we found that only 19% of Republican voters believe that the Republican Party will hold Bush accountable for mistakes made in Iraq, versus 48% of Republican voters who believe that the Democratic Party will hold Bush accountable.

Other findings include:

- 63% of Republican voters believe that Bush has made some or a lot of mistakes in Iraq. 24% of Republican voters believe that Bush has made ‘a lot of mistakes in Iraq’, and another 39% believe that Bush has made ‘some mistakes in Iraq’.
- 34% of Republican voters believe that Bush has definitely or probably not told the truth about the situation in Iraq. 14% believe that Bush has ‘definitely’ not told the truth about the situation in Iraq, and another 20% believe that Bush has ‘probably’ not told the truth about the situation in Iraq.
- 34% of Republican voters believe that Bush should probably or definitely be held accountable for the situation in Iraq. 19% of Republican voters believe that Bush should ‘definitely’ be held accountable, and 15% believe he should ‘probably’ be held accountable.
- 48% of Republican voters believe that the Democratic Party is likely to hold Bush accountable for mistakes in Iraq, versus only 19% who believe that the Republican Party is likely to hold Bush accountable.

It is clear that a substantial minority of Republican base voters no longer trust their leadership on issues of war and peace, and that President Bush’s lowered credibility has lowered the credibility of Republican Party leaders in general. At the same time, without skillful exploitation of these vulnerabilities on the part of Democratic candidates, Republican candidates can hold on to their voters, as Brian Bilbray did in his special election victory. A previous polling memo showed that both withdrawal messaging or ignoring the war allows Republican candidates to solidify their voter base and depress turnout among independents.

Voters and likely voters in the bright red California 50th Congressional District believe that George Bush made mistakes with regard to the conduct of the war in Iraq, is not truthful about that war and that Democrats, not Republicans, are the only force that can hold him accountable.

This poll demonstrates clearly that the occupation in Iraq matters to voters and that progressive candidates have the obligation to assure that Congress will be in charge of holding the president accountable.

These stunning findings are from a new poll commissioned by the [Courage Campaign](#), a non-partisan, progressive 527 based in Los Angeles, and MyDD.com, a progressive blog devoted to analysis and commentary on political campaigns and infrastructure. This poll was conducted as a follow-up to the polling memo the two organizations released on August 2nd, which examined reasons for Francine Busby's loss in the special election in the district. The poll was conducted from August 2nd-3rd by Wright Consulting, and surveyed 308 registered voters who participated in the July 5-26 Courage Campaign / MyDD poll. The poll has a margin of error of 5.8% for the entire sample, with smaller subgroups have a larger margin of error.

Full questionnaire can be found here:

<http://www.mydd.com/images/user/217/followupquestions.pdf>

Complete crosstabs can be found here:

http://www.mydd.com/images/user/217/CA_50_Additional_Questions_Crosstabs_1.htm

For further information, contact Chris Bowers of MyDD at chris@mydd.com, or CJ Frogozo of the Courage Campaign at cj@couragecampaign.org

OTHER MAJOR FINDINGS

Bush Has Made Mistakes--A Lot of Mistakes (Question #1)

While President Bush has had a difficult time admitting he has made any mistakes during his time in office, registered voters in the CA-50 hold a very different view. 53% of voters said that President Bush has made "a lot" of mistakes; 21% said he has made "some" mistakes, and 21% said he has made "a few mistakes." Only 3% said President Bush has made no mistakes, and another 2% were not sure. While partisans had very differing views on how many mistakes Bush has made, even 24% of Republicans in the district indicated that Bush made "a lot" of mistakes, and 39% indicated that he has made "some." 82% of Democrats and 60% of Independents said that Bush has made "a lot" of mistakes.

Bush Has Not Told the Truth On the War (Question #2)

Most residents of this conservative district also feel that President Bush has not told them the truth on the Iraq war. Only 41% of registered voters in this district believed that President Bush has either "definitely" or "probably" told the truth on the war in Iraq. By contrast, 55% of people surveyed said that President Bush has either "probably not" or

"definitely not" told the truth on Iraq, with the largest percentage (32%) of those surveyed falling into the "definitely not" category. Again, this finding cuts across party lines, as a full 34% of Republicans and 61% of Independents do not think President Bush has told the truth on Iraq.

Bush Needs To Be Held Accountable, But Republicans Won't Do It (Questions #3 and #5)

Most importantly, by a clear margin of 57% to 34%, those surveyed felt that Bush must be held accountable for mistakes in Iraq, and only 17% of those surveyed felt that Republicans in Congress were likely to do that. By contrast, 61% believed Democrats were likely to do that. Even among Republicans, Democrats in Congress held a huge edge on this question, 48% to 19%. In the California 50th, where Republicans outnumber Democrats 3-2, these findings make it clear voters overwhelmingly view the Republican Congress as a rubber stamp for the Bush Administration, and as impotent when it comes to conducting their traditional oversight role on matters of national security. This issue alone might motivate swing voters who otherwise stayed at home in the Busby race to show up and vote for progressive candidates who demand accountability and oversight.

Commentary from Chris Bowers and Rick Jacobs

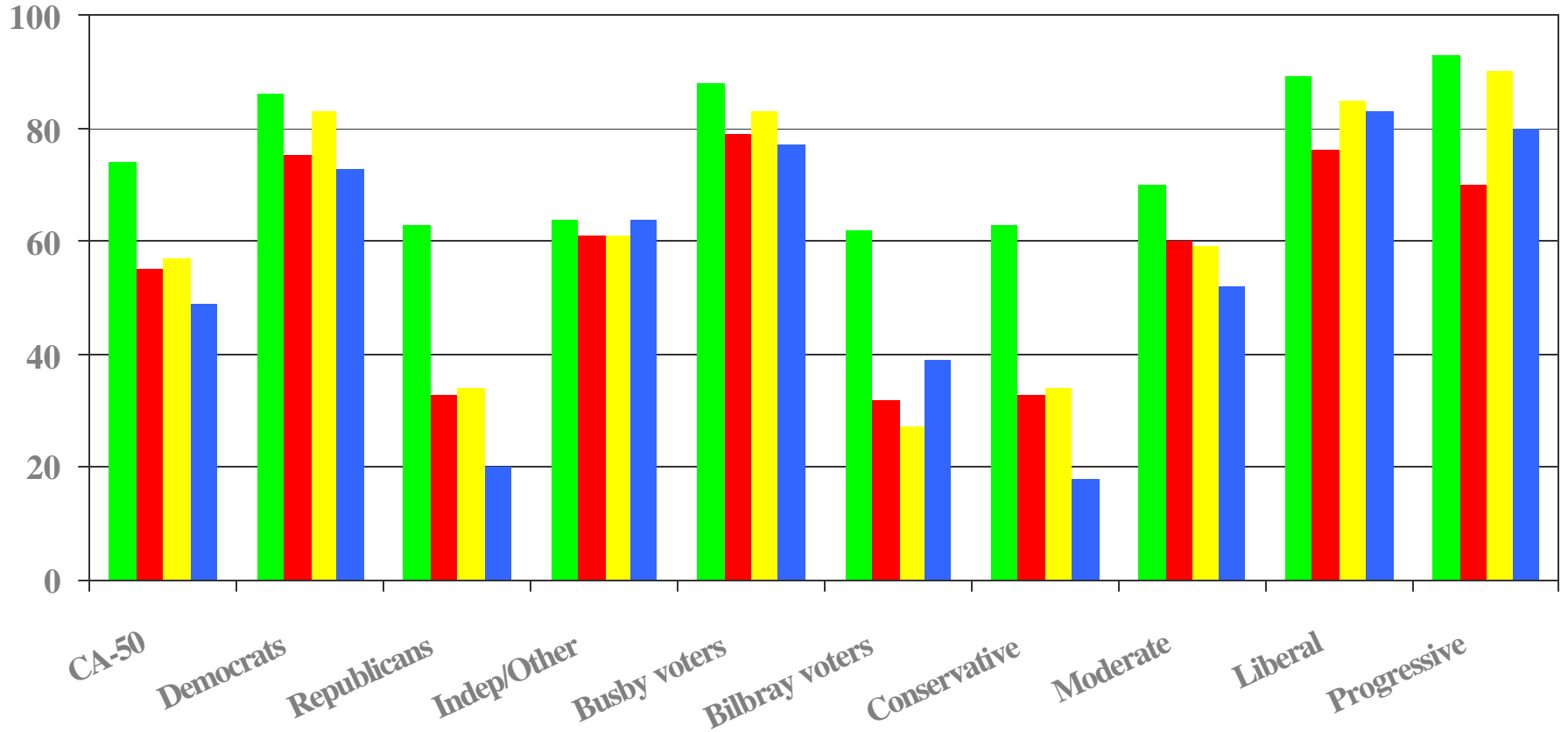
Chris Bowers of MyDD:

"Our first poll showed that the culture of corruption message did not work for Busby, that the district was not right-wing on immigration, and that the famous Busby "gaffe" did not swing the election. Instead, Busby lost because Independents turned out at low rates, and those who did turn out voted for third-party candidates. This follow-up, however, shows that communicating a message to hold the Bush administration accountable for mistakes in Iraq should find wide-ranging appeal. Even large numbers of Republicans believe that Bush has not told the truth, that he needs to be held accountable for his mistakes, and that a Democratic Congress is the most likely way that he will be held accountable. The key for challengers this year will be to focus on accountability, not policy fixes voters do not believe anyone would be able to enact."

Rick Jacobs of the Courage Campaign:

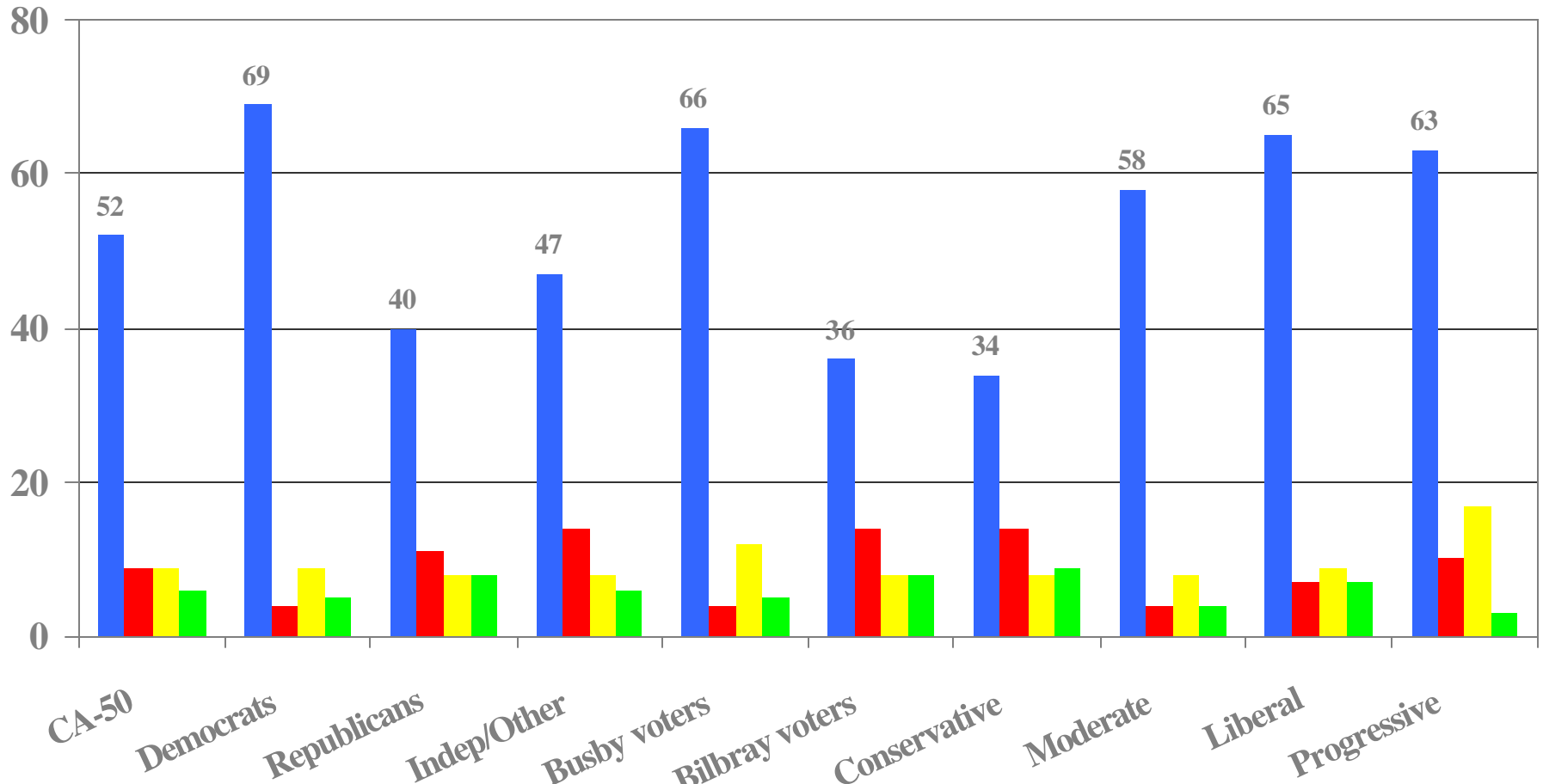
"The message is very clear. North San Diego County is very Republican by registration and heavily military by background. People do not trust George Bush on his conduct of the invasion and occupation of Iraq. They believe that a strong opposition party, the Democrats, is the only viable means by which true oversight and thereby accountability can be injected into a bloated government run amok. This poll shows Democrats a clear path by which to talk about Iraq, to demand an independent oversight role similar to what Senator Harry Truman led in World War II. The people of San Diego country, more generally conservative than the nation as a whole, want answers. A new majority in Congress is their only path to those answers. It's not a laundry list of policy aspirations. It's not pointing fingers. It's adults in the room who will ask the tough questions."

Key Aspects of Bush Accountability



- Made A Lot/Some Mistakes as President**
- Def. Not/Prob. Not told truth re Iraq**
- Def./Prob. Hold accountable re Iraq**
- Def./Prob. Hold accountable re profiteering**

Most Likely to Hold Bush Accountable



■ Congress. Dems. ■ Congress. Reps. ■ Both ■ Neither