



MORE THAN A MAGAZINE—A MOVEMENT

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**Women Voters Made the Difference in 2006 Election**

**Washington, DC** – Women voters led the way in the 2006 midterm elections. The gender gap, the difference between how men and women vote, was a key factor in changing the balance of power in Congress. Further, women’s differing views on the issues fueled the gender gap and influenced their 2006 vote according to an in-depth analysis of a 2006 post-election survey conducted by Lake Research Partners and commissioned by *Ms.* magazine and the Women Donors Network.

Women’s votes led the way in key House races. According to the *Ms.* Magazine/Women Donors Network (WDN) nationwide survey, 55 percent of women voted for the Democratic candidates while only 50 percent of men voted for Democrats, a 5-point gender gap. In close races, this was a decisive margin.

“Without the women’s vote, the balance of power would not have shifted. If only men voted, Jim Webb (D-VA), Jon Tester (D-MT), and Claire McCaskill (D-MO) would have lost, and the Republicans would still control the Senate,” said Eleanor Smeal, publisher of *Ms.* magazine. “In the 2006 election, in key races, women were the deciders.”

According to network exit polls, in the Webb/Allen race, 55 percent of the women voted for Jim Webb, and only 45 percent of the men did – for a whopping 10 percent gender gap. Furthermore, the African American women’s vote was the determining factor in Webb’s victory in Virginia.

The gender gaps were smaller, but still a determining factor in the following races:

- Tester/Burns race (Montana): 52 percent of women voted for Tester and only 48 percent of the men voted for Tester, for a 4 percent gender gap; race was not a factor.
- McCaskill/Talent race (Missouri): 51 percent of women voted for McCaskill while 46 percent of men did the same, for a 5 percent gender gap; where African American women once again led the way.
- Chafee/Whitehouse race (Rhode Island): Men broke even (50-50), while the women voted 57 percent for Whitehouse and 43 percent for Chafee.

Women’s voters were driven by both party affiliation and issues. Women, according to the *Ms.*/WDN survey, were more Democratic than men (44 percent compared to 39 percent). Even greater gender gaps emerged on how women and men prioritized issues on a scale of 0-10 (with 0 being very low and 10 being very high). Men and women ranked the following issues a “10”:

<b><u>Issue</u></b>	<b><u>Women</u></b>	<b><u>Men</u></b>	<b><u>Gender Gap</u></b>
Iraq War	54%	43%	11
Health Care	46	33	13
Economy & Jobs	41	30	11
Social Security & Retirement	40	31	9
Women’s Equality	34	26	8

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<u>Issue</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Gender Gap</u>
Minimum Wage	31	22	9
Child Care	30	20	10
Abortion	19	28	9
Rebuilding after Katrina	30	17	13
Stem Cell Research	25	16	9
Paid Sick Leave	16	10	6

Women leaders are also an important part of change, especially to women voters. According to the Ms./WDN poll, women felt more strongly about the importance of the first woman Speaker (54 percent important to 45 percent not important), while men lagged behind (43 percent important to 56 percent not important), for an 11 percent gender gap. On many of the key issues, such as the importance of the Iraq war, there were significant gender gaps. In fact, the same-sex marriage ban in Arizona went down because of women's votes (53 percent of women voted 'no' while only 50 percent of men did).

Lake Research Partners designed and administered this survey which was conducted by phone using professional interviewers. The survey reached 1,000 likely voters and was conducted between November 6<sup>th</sup> and November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2006. Telephone numbers for the survey were drawn using random digit dial (RDD). The interviews consisted of a base sample of 1,000 men and women who are likely voters nationwide. The data were weighted slightly by gender, age, race, education, union membership, parental status and party identification in order to ensure that it accurately reflects the demographic configuration of these populations. The margin of error for the survey is +/- 3.1%.

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