



Lake Snell Perry Mermin Meadow Gotoff

Celinda C. Lake
President

Alysia R. Snell
Partner

Michael J. Perry
Partner

David Mermin
Partner

Robert G. Meadow, Ph.D.
Partner

Daniel R. Gotoff
Partner

Joshua E. Ulibarri
Vice President

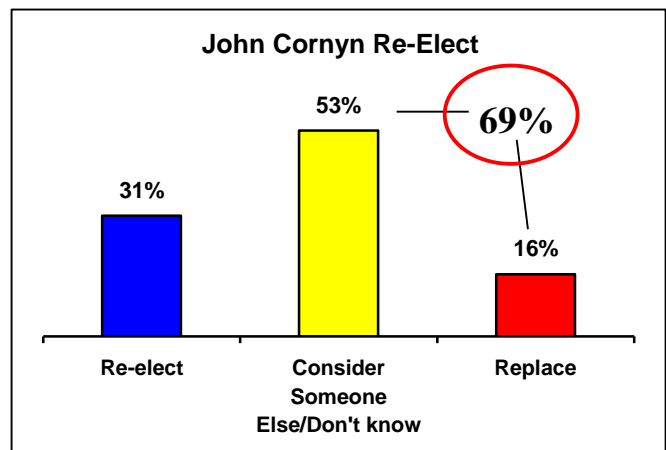
Rick Johnson
Vice President

To: Interested Parties
From: Celinda Lake, Bob Meadow, and Joshua Ulibarri
Date: November 21, 2007
Subject: Poll Findings in Texas' United States Senate Race¹

A new Lake Research Partners' survey of likely voters in Texas shows that Republican Senator John Cornyn is very vulnerable in his 2008 bid for reelection. Currently, fewer than half of voters have a favorable impression of him, his job-performance ratings are net-negative, and only a third support him for reelection. The winds of change are blowing in Texas, and John Cornyn should be on the list of endangered Republican Senators.

Senator Cornyn is vulnerable for these reasons:

- Cornyn has an extremely weak profile.** Thirty-eight percent of likely voters are unable to rate Cornyn – 24% have heard of him but have no opinion about him, while 14% have never heard of him even though he has served in the Senate for five years and as Texas Attorney General for 4 years before that. Overall, only 40% of voters rate him favorably, while 22% rate him unfavorably. A well-respected Senator would have favorable to unfavorable ratio of about 3-to 1, but Cornyn's ratio is only 1.8-to 1.
- Voters dislike the job Cornyn is doing in the Senate.** Cornyn's job performance numbers are net-negative. Forty-one percent of voters rate Cornyn's performance as either just fair or poor, while only 36% rate it excellent or good. Almost a quarter are unable to rate his performance at all (23% do not know). Conversely, the most recent publicly available data shows Senator Hutchison with a job approval rating of 58%.²
- Cornyn has weak re-elect numbers, and this race is wide-open.** Only three in ten voters (31%) say they will vote to reelect the incumbent, while 16% say they will vote to replace him. More than half (53%) will consider someone else or do not know if they would support his re-election.



¹ **Methodology:** Lake Research Partners designed and administered this survey, which was conducted by phone using professional interviewers. The survey was conducted among 500 registered voters in Texas who are likely to vote in the 2008 General Election. The survey was conducted November 13-18, 2007. The margin of error for the full sample is +/-4.4 percentage points.

² Survey USA, June 8-10, 2007, 600 adults statewide

4. **Cornyn's support has reached a ceiling and does not increase with positive information about him.** In the initial ask, against Democrat Rick Noriega, Cornyn leads 42% to 22%, with more than a third of voters undecided (36%). After voters hear a positive statement about each candidate, the lesser-known Noriega's vote share increases by nine points while Cornyn does not grow at all (Cornyn 42%, Noriega 31%). When voters hear a positive Cornyn statement against a Noriega statement that offers a direct contrast, Cornyn remains stuck (Cornyn 41%, Noriega 33%). Importantly, even when Cornyn is defined positively voters do not move toward to him.³
5. **President Bush cannot save Cornyn.** While Cornyn has been Bush's most loyal supporter in the Senate, it is unlikely that Bush can help given his poor ratings. More than half of voters (53%) have an unfavorable impression of the President, including 37% who intensely dislike him. Forty-two percent rate Bush favorably (only 20% are very favorable). In fact, voter pessimism goes beyond Bush, with 62% of Texas believing the country is off on the wrong track and only 28% believing things are headed in the right direction.⁴
6. **Undecided voters cannot save Cornyn and are likely to break away from him.** Undecided voters have a negative personal impression of Cornyn (15% favorable, 24% unfavorable), and Bush is radioactive among undecided voters (59% unfavorable, 32% favorable). They also have a distinctly negative impression of Cornyn's job performance (44% fair or poor, 18% excellent or good).

In sum, Senator Cornyn has a weak public profile that is vulnerable to further negative definition. He has a small base of political support, and he cannot count on help from a weakened president. Even in Texas, voters want change. Come next November, Cornyn could be another Republican casualty. Democrat Rick Noriega, a veteran, has a unique profile that can make this an upset race if he has the resources to communicate his message and define Cornyn.

³ The tested profile-ballot language read as follows:

_Senator John Cornyn, has served in the Senate for five years and before that was Texas Attorney General. He has worked hard on conservative principles, protecting strong family values, strengthening our national defense, and backing President Bush on the fight against terrorism, cutting taxes, and making health care more accessible. Cornyn has led the effort to reauthorize the Patriot Act, and, with his position on the Budget Committee, he has worked to cut taxes and reduce the deficit.

_ [POSTIVITE] Rick Noriega is a state representative and a father of two. He is a Lt. Colonel in the National Guard, served in Afghanistan, and coordinated the City of Houston's relief efforts after Hurricane Katrina. In the state legislature he has worked for youth programs, child health care, quality education for all children, and a bi-partisan effort to raise teacher salaries. He is running for the Senate to change the direction of the country – responsibly end the war in Iraq, make sure that our children, seniors, and veterans have affordable health coverage, and change our economic policies to help restore the American Dream.

_ [CONTRAST] Rick Noriega is a state representative and a father of two. He is a Lt. Colonel in the National Guard, served in Afghanistan, and coordinated the City of Houston's relief efforts after Hurricane Katrina. In the state legislature he has worked for youth programs, child health care, quality education for all children, and a bi-partisan effort to raise teacher salaries. He is running against John Cornyn because Cornyn has been one of the most solid supporters of President Bush. Noriega will bring independent leadership to the Senate – responsibly get us out of Iraq, fight for affordable health care, and good schools for our families.

⁴ Texas Lyceum Poll, April 26-May 7, 2007, 1,002 adults Statewide