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TO: Interested Parties

FROM: Bob Moore & Hans Kaiser

RE: State Issues are NOT the Key to Oregon Governor's Race in 2006

The Democrat wave that rolled across the country on Election Day hit Oregon as well, contributing to Ted Kulongoski's victory in the race for Governor and the Democrat pick up of the Oregon House of Representatives. National polling data showed higher than normal loyalty among Democrats, a preference among Independents for Democrat candidates and lower than normal loyalty among Republicans. These trends at the national level were also evident in our polls of Oregon voters.

Specifically, in Moore Information's surveys conducted during the month of October in the ten most highly contested Oregon legislative races, Independents showed a preference for the Democrat candidate by a 48% to 20% margin. By contrast, in our surveys of the most highly contested races in October 2004, Independents preferred Democrats by a narrower 38-30% margin. This reveals a 20% net increase in support for Democrats in this election among Independents, compared to the 2004 election.

*Partisan Preference of Independents:
Oregon Legislative Candidates*

	Oct. 2004	Oct. 2006
Democrat candidates	38%	48%
Republican candidates	30%	20%
Undecided	32%	32%

Our statewide polls conducted during the final weeks of October this year reveal further examples of this Democrat trend. In late October we found Independents preferring Democrat candidates over GOP candidates by a margin of 40% to 20%. In October 2002, Independents preferred Democrats by a narrower 39-28% margin. Further compounding the problem for Republicans, among partisans, GOP voters were less loyal to GOP candidates, while Democrats were more loyal to Democrat candidates in the current election than they were in October 2002.

This anti-GOP sentiment among Democrats and Independents was driven in large part by complaints about the Iraq war and President Bush. Nationally, more than 80% of

Democrats and 70% of Independents believe going into Iraq was a bad idea. At the same time, in a mid-October Moore Information poll of Oregon voters we found that 87% of Democrats and 62% of Independents had an unfavorable opinion of the President. Normally national issues do not play a major role in non-presidential elections, but national exit polls this year showed that 60% considered national issues more important in their vote, while 32% said state issues were more important. This concern with national issues is typically unheard of in non-presidential year elections.

*President Bush Image in Oregon
(Oct. 9-10, 2006)*

	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
Favorable	9%	72%	35%
Unfavorable	87%	24%	62%
No opinion	3%	4%	4%

These sentiments also impacted turnout, with Democrats turning out in greater numbers than they did in the last Oregon gubernatorial election. In Oregon, Democrats have a 3% voter registration edge over Republicans statewide. Among voters who actually cast a ballot in Oregon this year, Democrats had a 3% registration margin over Republicans. By contrast, in 2002 the Democrat margin was just 1% over Republicans.

Another example of how the national political environment impacted the governor's race in Oregon is revealed when looking at how voters evaluated the gubernatorial candidates on a variety of issues. Saxton trailed Kulongoski on the ballot test in our polls, despite the fact that voters were much more likely to describe Saxton than Kulongoski as the candidate to best address taxes, change, cutting waste and bureaucracy and stopping illegal immigrants from getting drivers' licenses, and Saxton also had a narrow edge on improving schools. Given this, it appears that Oregon voters were less concerned about Oregon issues and were more concerned about keeping a Democrat in office.

*Saxton vs. Kulongoski on Issues
(Oct. 22-24, 2006)*

"Is each of the following a better description of Ted Kulongoski or Ron Saxton?"

	Saxton	Kulongoski	Both/ neither	Don't know
Has good ideas to improve Oregon schools	37%	34%	15%	14%
Will make changes we need in state government	43%	23%	19%	15%
Will cut waste and unnecessary bureaucracy	52%	15%	18%	15%
Will keep taxes down	53%	12%	19%	16%
Will stop issuing drivers' licenses to illegal aliens	60%	5%	9%	26%

Another factor that is very important in determining the outcome of a governor's race is voter sentiment about conditions in the state. This is usually gauged by asking if things in the state are going in the right direction or if things are off on the wrong track. Oregon voters have generally been pessimistic about the state since 2001. Incumbent governors are generally considered vulnerable when the electorate is pessimistic, that is when more believe things are off on the wrong track than believe things are going in the right direction. Wrong track voters want change. In October 2005, 32% of voters said they thought things were going in the right direction, while 54% said wrong track. Shortly after the primary election in May, 28% said right direction and 56% wrong track. This all changed in the past few months, and in a late October poll for KATU and *The Oregonian*,

42% were saying right direction and 41% wrong track. This shift in sentiment had a major impact on the way people look at the race for governor and that was also a major help for Ted Kulongoski's campaign.

Mood of Oregon Voters

	Oct. 2005	Jun. 2006	Oct. 28-31, 2006
Right direction	32%	28%	42%
Wrong track	54%	56%	41%

In summary, thanks to the political environment this turned out to be a good year for an incumbent governor to run for reelection in Oregon. The national environment was very bad for Republicans in general and as the year progressed Oregon voters became increasingly less likely to support a change in state government.

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