

MEMORANDUM

To: Republican Candidates, Campaigns and Consultants
From: John McLaughlin
Re: National Survey Results
Date: May 23, 2008

Methodology: *McLaughlin & Associates and Peter D. Hart Research Associates conducted a national survey of 1,213 likely general election voters on February 15th through 24th, 2008. All interviews were conducted online or via telephone by professional interviewers. Interview selection was random within predetermined election units. These units were structured to correlate with actual voter turnout. The national survey of 1,213 likely general election voters has an accuracy of $\pm 2.8\%$ at the 95% confidence interval. Additionally, McLaughlin & Associates conducted two focus groups in Cincinnati, Ohio on April 9th, 2008. The first group was comprised of ten swing voters with less than a college education. The second group consisted of ten registered Republican voters. All respondents resided in Ohio Congressional District 8, which is Minority Leader John Boehner's district.*

Key Points from Research

- Protecting the national parks is a broadening issue that appeals to voters across the electorate.
- The research shows strong public support for national parks and pro-parks candidates.
 - Better than four in five voters believe that it is important for the federal government to protect and support national parks and national historic places.
 - Voters are more likely to vote for a candidate who supports protecting and preserving our national parks. More specifically, three in four voters say they would be more likely to support a presidential candidate who has a strong commitment to protecting our national parks.
- Being pro-parks is a significant indicator not just of a candidate's position on the environment, but also of other qualities that voters would like a candidate to possess.
- The centennial of the National Park System in 2016 is a good organizing principle. Having the parks restored and ready for the next 100 years is a goal that voters support.

Part I: The Data

2008 Presidential Election

At the time of this poll, the political environment favored the Democratic candidate in this year's presidential election. Overall, a generic Democratic candidate (49%) had a 15 point advantage over the Republican candidate (34%) on the generic ballot for president. The Democratic candidate retained a slightly higher percentage of the partisan base (92%) than the Republican candidate (85%). Independent voters favored the Democratic candidate by nearly a two to one ratio (37% to 19%). However, a plurality of Independents (43%) was still undecided and up for grabs.

In this November's election for president do you think you will vote for the Democratic candidate or for the Republican candidate, or is it too soon for you to say? (IF "TOO SOON," ASK:) Well, all other things being equal, would you lean more toward voting for the Democrat or for the Republican in this year's presidential election?

	Total	Rep.	Ind.	Dem.
Democrat candidate	49	4	37	92
Republican candidate	34	85	19	1
Too soon to say, no leaning	11	9	26	6
Other	1	0	3	0
Not sure	5	1	14	1

Important Qualities of the Next President

By ratings on a scale of one to 100, Republican voters said it is important for the next president to be someone who is "patriotic" (87.6), is "forward looking and thinks about the future" (82.8), "understands what makes America special" (81.6) and "will protect our heritage for future generations" (80.8). More than two-thirds of Republican voters thought that a candidate who puts a strong priority on protecting our national parks would be patriotic (68%) and understand what makes America special (67%). More than seven in ten Republican voters thought this candidate would be someone who is forward looking and thinks about the future (71%) and will protect our heritage for future generations (75%). Although Republican voters did not rank being pro-environment (60.2) as important as other presidential qualities tested, putting a strong priority on protecting the national parks was viewed by Republican voters as pro-environment (71%).

Independent voters said it is important for the next president to be someone who is "forward looking and thinks about the future" (81.6) and a "good steward for the nation's resources" (79.9). Eight in ten Independent voters thought that a candidate who puts a strong priority on protecting our national parks would be someone who is forward looking and thinks about the future (81%) and is a good steward for the nation's resources (78%). Independent voters placed a higher importance on the next president being "pro-environment" (70.4), and were more likely to view a candidate who puts a strong priority on protecting national parks as pro-environment (78%).

Let me read you a series of different words to describe qualities in people who might become president. Using a scale from one to one hundred, on which a one means not important at all and one hundred means extremely important, please rate how important it is to you personally for our next president to be each of the following. You may choose any number from one to one hundred, depending on how you feel.

Mean Rating	Total	Rep.	Ind.	Dem.
Someone who is patriotic	81.9	87.6	78.5	78.1
Someone who is forward looking and thinks about the future	84.4	82.8	81.6	86.3
Someone who understands what makes America special	79.3	81.6	74.4	78.9
Someone who will protect our heritage for future generations	80.4	80.8	78.4	80.9
Someone who is a good steward for our nation's resources	80.1	76.8	79.9	82.8
Someone who focuses on issues that unify the country	80.1	76.4	80.5	82.6
Someone who will restore America's reputation in the world	80.3	72.9	82.0	84.9
Someone who is pro-environment	70.9	60.2	70.4	79.2

*How likely do you think it is that a candidate who puts a strong priority on protecting our national parks would be (**READ ITEM**)—very likely, fairly likely, just somewhat likely, or not that likely?*

% Very/Fairly Likely	Total	Rep.	Ind.	Dem.
Someone who will protect our heritage for future generations	79	75	75	84
Someone who is a good steward for our nation's resources	80	74	78	87
Someone who is forward looking and thinks about the future	80	71	81	88
Someone who is pro-environment	78	71	78	84
Someone who is patriotic	67	68	58	68
Someone who understands what makes America special	71	67	62	78
Someone who focuses on issues that unify the country	63	57	56	71
Someone who will restore America's reputation in the world	61	50	59	71

Candidates and the National Parks

The majority of both Republican (54%) and Independent (64%) voters was very or fairly interested in learning about a candidate's stands and positions on the issue of protecting our national parks. More than seven in ten Republicans (71%) and Independents (74%) were more likely to support a candidate who has a strong commitment to protecting our national parks. Republicans voters were more likely to support a candidate who has a strong commitment to protecting the national parks than a candidate who pledges never to raise taxes as president (69%). Independent voters were also more likely to support a candidate who is a strong environmentalist (74%) and has a strong commitment to fighting global warming (69%).

How interested would you say you are in learning what a candidate's stands and positions are on the issue of protecting our national parks?

	Total	Rep.	Ind.	Dem.
Very interested	37	25	40	44
Fairly interested	28	29	24	31
Just somewhat interested	23	27	22	19
Not that interested	12	19	14	6
Not sure	0	0	0	0
VERY/FAIRLY INTERESTED	65	54	64	75
SOMEWHAT/NOT INTERESTED	35	46	36	25

Now let me read you some things you might learn about a candidate for president. For each one, please tell me whether knowing this would make you much more likely, somewhat more likely, somewhat less likely, or much less likely to support a candidate for president. If it would not make a difference either way, please just let me know.

% More Likely	Total	Rep.	Ind.	Dem.
The candidate has a strong commitment to protecting our national parks	76	71	74	82
The candidate pledges never to raise taxes as president	59	69	49	58
The candidate pledges to increase funding for roads, highways, and bridges	69	63	67	76
The candidate is a strong environmentalist	69	50	74	83
The candidate has a strong commitment to fighting global warming	67	47	69	83

There is virtually no downside and a strong upside to a presidential candidate supporting the national parks. Knowing that a candidate has a strong commitment to protecting national parks and important historic places made 73% of Republicans and 77% of Independents more likely to support that candidate. Hardly any voters (5% Republican/5% Independent) were less likely to support this candidate. A quarter of Republican voters (27%) and 42% of Independent voters said they would actively support a national campaign to build support for policies to protect the national parks. Although another 58% of Republicans and 50% of Independents would not take any direct action on behalf of the national parks, they agreed with the goals of the campaign. Here too, very few voters (12% Republican/6% Independent) disagreed with the goals of the campaign.

Based on everything you have heard throughout this survey, would knowing that a candidate has a strong commitment to protecting national parks and important historic places in America make you much more likely, somewhat more likely, somewhat less likely, or much less likely to support a candidate for president, or would it not make a difference either way?

	Total	Rep.	Ind.	Dem.
Much more likely	33	23	32	41
Somewhat more likely	46	50	44	45
Somewhat less likely	2	3	4	1
Much less likely	1	1	1	1
No difference	17	23	17	12
Not sure	1	0	2	0
MORE LIKELY	79	73	77	86
LESS LIKELY	4	5	5	2

Suppose there were a national campaign to build support for policies to protect our national parks. The campaign would recruit volunteers to participate in grassroots efforts to promote the importance of this issue and would ask presidential candidates from both parties to commit to providing needed funding to the parks and to support clean air legislation. Realistically speaking, how likely would you be to get involved with this campaign--would you say you would most likely (A) actively support the campaign, either volunteering your time or contributing money, (B) agree with the goals of the campaign but not take any action, or (C) disagree with the goals of the campaign?

	Total	Rep.	Ind.	Dem.
Actively support	37	27	42	44
Agree with goals / Not take action	53	58	50	51
Disagree with goals	7	12	6	3
Not sure	3	3	2	2

Importance of Protecting National Parks

More than three in four Republican (76%) and Independent (79%) voters thought it was extremely or quite important for the federal government to protect and support the major national parks such as Yellowstone National Park, Grand Canyon National Park and the Everglades National Park. Among Independent voters, nearly half (49%) thought it was extremely important for the government to protect and support these parks. Similarly, eight in ten Republican (81%) and Independent (81%) voters thought it was extremely or quite important for the federal government to protect and support historic places and monuments that are part of the National Park System such as Gettysburg National Battlefield and the Statue of Liberty.

When you think about the major national parks such as Yellowstone National Park, Grand Canyon National Park, and the Everglades National Park, how important do you think it is for the federal government to protect and support those parks—extremely important, quite important, somewhat important, not that important, or not important at all?

	Total	Rep.	Ind.	Dem.
Extremely important	55	44	49	64
Quite important	28	32	30	24
Somewhat important	15	20	19	10
Not that important	1	2	1	1
Not important at all	1	1	1	1
Not sure	0	1	0	0
EXTREMELY/QUITE IMPORTANT	82	76	79	88
SOMEWHAT/NOT IMPORTANT	17	23	21	12

And when you think about the historic places and monuments that are part of the national park system, such as Gettysburg National Battlefield, the Statue of Liberty, or Golden Gate National Recreation Area, how important do you think it is for the federal government to protect and support those historic places and monuments—extremely important, quite important, somewhat important, not that important, or not important at all?

	Total	Rep.	Ind.	Dem.
Extremely important	53	47	45	59
Quite important	31	34	36	28
Somewhat important	14	17	17	11
Not that important	1	1	1	1
Not important at all	1	0	1	1
Not sure	0	1	0	0
EXTREMELY/QUITE IMPORTANT	84	81	81	87
SOMEWHAT/NOT IMPORTANT	15	19	18	13

Specific Priorities within the Parks

More than eight in ten Republican (82%) and Independent (86%) voters thought that ensuring that we protect and preserve animal and plant life within national parks such as Yellowstone, the Everglades and Grand Canyon so the animal and plant species survive for future generations should be a very high or somewhat high priority for the government. Additionally, 74% of Republicans and 86% of Independents thought requiring that power plants use the best available pollution control technology to reduce air pollution in the national parks should be a high priority.

Now I would like to read you some different goals for government on dealing with protecting our national parks and historic places in America. For each one, please tell me whether this should be a very high priority, somewhat high priority, just somewhat of a priority, not much of a priority, or not a priority at all for the government to work on.

% Very/Somewhat High Priority	Total	Rep.	Ind.	Dem.
Ensure that we preserve and protect animal and plant life within national parks such as Yellowstone, the Everglades, and Grand Canyon, so the animal and plant species survive for future generations	88	82	86	92
Increase accessibility and encourage learning in the parks by ensuring that there are adequate numbers of park rangers and educational staff in the parks	78	76	73	82
Require that power plants use the best available pollution control technology to reduce air pollution in our national parks	83	74	86	90
Improve transportation within parks by fixing roads and bridges and maintaining pedestrian and bike trails, so the parks are accessible to visitors	74	72	70	77
Make sure that America's national parks have a reliable and sustainable source of funding, both now and in the future	79	69	81	87
Protect existing parks by buying private land within the parks as it comes on the market to prevent it from being sold to private developers	77	66	81	84
Upgrade technology in the parks so that interpretive rangers, law enforcement, and park planners are using the latest tools and technology to educate and protect park visitors	73	65	69	79
Conduct scientific research to inform decisions about park protection so that these decisions can be based on science as much as possible	66	55	61	76
Invest in new park sites to ensure that the National Park System continues to grow and evolve to represent nationally significant landscapes, ecosystems, and the full diversity of American history and culture	65	55	48	75

Parks Proposals

Several proposals have been suggested to help protect the national parks. The majority of both Republican (59%) and Independent (64%) voters felt very favorably toward making sure that historical sites that are part of the National Park System, such as the Statue of Liberty and Gettysburg Battlefield Park, are adequately staffed so schools and students can experience our nation’s history for themselves. Additionally, 50% of Republicans and 63% of Independents felt very favorably toward making sure that adequate funding is available for park maintenance so that small projects will not be put off and become large, expensive projects.

Now I'm going to mention some proposals that people have suggested to help protect National Parks. For each one, please tell me whether your reaction is very favorable, somewhat favorable, neutral, or unfavorable.

% Very Favorable	Total	Rep.	Ind.	Dem.
Make sure that historical sites that are a part of the National Parks, such as the Statue of Liberty and Gettysburg Battlefield Park, are adequately staffed so schools and students can experience our nation's history for themselves	64	59	64	68
Make sure that adequate funding is available for park maintenance so that small projects will not be put off and become large, expensive problems	60	50	63	66
Address critical maintenance that has been put off in national parks to stop the decline of park infrastructure	56	50	56	63
Require that parks be adequately staffed so that they can remain open and accessible to visitors	56	49	51	64
Make environmental protection a priority to prevent the extinction of plants and animals	60	47	59	71
Make funds available for park completion and expansion so that when real estate within park boundaries or a historically significant site comes up for sale, parks can afford to acquire that land	48	37	47	57

A Timeframe for Implementing Proposals

In 2016, the National Park System will be one hundred years old. More than seven in ten Republicans (72%) and Independents (78%) thought it was a very or fairly important goal for the next president to ensure that parks are fully restored and ready to serve the country for another hundred years by the National Park System’s centennial in 2016.

Our National Park System will be one hundred years old in 2016, just eight years from now. How important a goal is it for the next president to ensure that parks are fully restored and ready to serve the country for another hundred years by the National Park System's centennial in 2016—a very important goal, a fairly important goal, just a somewhat important goal, or not that important a goal?

	Total	Rep.	Ind.	Dem.
Very important goal	49	37	46	59
Fairly important goal	31	35	33	27
Just a somewhat important goal	16	22	16	11
Not that important a goal	4	6	5	3
Not sure	0	0	0	0
VERY/FAIRLY IMPORTANT	79	72	78	86
SOMEWHAT/NOT IMPORTANT	20	28	22	14

Themes and Framing Statements

When it comes to reasons why it is important to protect our national parks, several themes consistently resonate with voters. The beauty of the parks, preserving the parks for our children, and the importance of the parks as a refuge for plant and animal life are themes that repeatedly test strongly with voters throughout the survey. Framing statements about these themes are especially effective when they include language about the value of the national parks as national treasures and that national parks are the legacy we leave our children.

The majority of Republican (63%) and Independent (68%) voters thought it was very important to protect the national parks because they provide us with some of the most beautiful, majestic and awe-inspiring places on earth. Similarly, 61% of Republicans and 68% of Independents thought it was very important to protect the national parks because they should be honored, cherished, and cared for, and not left to crumble in disrepair. Additionally, six in ten Republicans (61%) and Independents (58%) thought it was very important because the national parks are the legacy we leave our children. Of the reasons why protecting the national parks should be a top priority for the next president, the majority of Republicans (58%) and Independents (62%) thought the most convincing reason was that the national parks are a legacy we leave our children.

Now I'm going to read you some reasons why people have said that it is important to protect our national parks. Please tell me how important each of the following reasons is to support our national parks--a very important reason, fairly important reason, just somewhat important reason, or not that important a reason.

% Very Important	Total	Rep.	Ind.	Dem.
National parks provide us with some of the most beautiful, majestic, and awe-inspiring places on earth	70	63	68	77
National parks should be honored, cherished, and cared for, not left to crumble into disrepair	68	61	68	76
They are the legacy we leave our children	64	61	58	68
By attracting visitors from all over the country and all over the world, national parks bring billions of dollars in economic benefits from tourism to regions with national parks	57	54	60	60
National parks can be used to excite America's youth about learning. They are classrooms for teaching the next generation about science, math, civics, and American history	59	51	58	66
They are extended backyards for generations of American families where many families have special experiences and take away lasting memories	54	48	56	60
National parks provide a home for America's diverse populations of plants and animals	60	46	54	71
It is difficult, if not impossible, to fix our national parklands once they are damaged	51	43	47	59
They are beacons of democracy and places where Americans of all races, creeds, colors, religious heritage, and party affiliation come together in a common purpose	44	34	35	53
They are gathering places for local communities and contributors to civic awareness and responsibility	39	33	38	44
They are routes to a healthier lifestyle	37	27	28	47

Getting near the end of the survey, I'd like to read you several reasons that people have given for why protecting our national parks should be a top priority for the next president. Please tell me how convincing each of the following reasons is to support our national parks--very convincing, fairly convincing, just somewhat convincing, or not at all convincing?

% Very Convincing	Total	Rep.	Ind.	Dem.
Our National Parks are the legacy we leave our children. It is our responsibility to protect our parks now so that our children and their children can enjoy the beauty of our parks, learn about nature, and visit historical places within our park system just like we did when we were children	64	58	62	70
Our National Parks are the face of America. They are showplaces for our nation's triumphs that honor our past, but also places of sorrow that commemorate fallen soldiers and document some of our nation's greatest mistakes, such as the Trail of Tears	53	50	51	57
At a time when change is high on the national agenda, it is equally important to remember where we came from and who we are as Americans. We only need to look to our National Parks to see examples of our nation's intertwined past, present, and future. Our parks are places that connect us and shape our national identity	46	42	42	52
Our National Park System was the first national park system in the world and many have called it "America's Best Idea." Visited by three million people every year, our National Parks have been a great success and the system is used as a model for other countries	46	40	41	53

Part II: Why Republicans Should Talk about the Parks and How to Do It Effectively

Why Talk about the National Park System?

1. At the time of this poll, the political environment was partial to a generic Democratic candidate in this year's presidential election, and Independent voters favored the Democratic candidate by nearly two to one. To achieve victory, candidates will need to gain the support of a significant portion of these swing voters. Supporting and protecting the national parks is an issue that appeals to this group of voters.
2. Voters were interested in learning about a candidate's position on the issue of protecting the national parks. Although voters recognized that the National Park System faces problems, candidates have the opportunity to further educate voters on the extent of these problems.
3. With the vast majority of voters saying they would be more likely to support a candidate who has a strong commitment to protecting the national parks, there is virtually no downside and a strong upside to lending support to this issue. Very few voters would be less likely to vote for a candidate based on this issue or disagreed with the goals of a pro-parks campaign.

4. Republican and Independent voters thought it was important for the next president to be forward looking and protect our heritage for future generations. Voters thought putting a strong priority on protecting the national parks embodied these qualities. In addition, protecting the national parks will help candidates to portray themselves as pro-environment, which was an important quality to Independent voters.
5. Supporting national parks is associated with patriotic values. The parks represent what it means to be an American and voters take pride in our national parks. Republicans have the opportunity to leverage the perception that parks are patriotic in their campaigns and can capitalize on this idea in 2008.
6. The parks are a broadening issue and talking about them appeals to a wider audience than does talking about the environment alone. Talking about the parks allows candidates to address pollution, plant and animal life, and our nation's history and future along with the environment, thereby appealing to more voters, including independent voters.
7. Being a supporter of our national parks says a lot about who a candidate is and their character. Beyond associating the support of national parks with being patriotic and forward looking, voters think a pro-parks candidate would unify the country, be pro-environment, share their values, and protect our heritage for future generations.

How to Talk about the National Park System

1. Most voters have recently visited a national park, and have a strong connection to the parks from personal memories and family trips. Voters view the national parks as a legacy for future generations, and messages that conjure personal memories and emphasize sharing these experiences with future generations resonated with voters.
2. The overwhelming majority of voters thought it was important for the federal government to protect and support the major national parks as well as historic sites and monuments within the National Park System. It is important to remind voters that historic sites such as the Statue of Liberty and the Washington Monument are part of the National Park System as it helps them to recognize the full breadth of the issue.
3. Voters were very concerned about the consequences of inadequate funding for the National Park System. Protecting animal and plant life, controlling air pollution and discouraging private development within park boundaries were top priorities for voters.

4. To maximize the potential of talking about the national parks, keep in mind that the parks represent values, not just policies. Candidates should talk about what our national parks mean to them and what they mean to the country. Protecting the parks means looking toward the future, being patriotic, and protecting our children's memories. Good framing statements include: what it means to be an American, the parks as America's legacy or heritage, the parks as national treasures, and protecting the parks for our children.

5. The upcoming centennial of the National Park System in 2016 is a good organizing principle to increase awareness of national parks issues. It is a deadline, an eight-year countdown to the future of our parks. It is interesting to note that the next president will preside over the centennial if reelected in 2012. Voters strongly support fully restoring our national parks so that they can serve the country for another 100 years by the National Park System's centennial.