



Expert Available To Discuss Religious Voters And The Mid-Term Elections

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October 31, 2006

Michele Dillon, professor of sociology at the University of New Hampshire, is available to discuss the role of religious voters in the upcoming mid-term elections. Dillon can be reached for interviews via email at michele.dillon@unh.edu. According to Dillon:

Mark Foley Congressional page scandal

" The Mark Foley Congressional page scandal may influence some religious voters to be less inclined to vote for Republican candidates but in general I don't believe it will make much of a dent. If anything, the scandal will reaffirm the stereotypical view shared by many evangelicals that gays are predatory and thus need to be excluded from various leadership, community and family roles."

Iraq War

" Mainline Protestant and Catholic voters have tended to be less pro-war all along, and so just as in the country as a whole, they are likely to show less support for candidates who strongly align themselves with President Bush and his war strategy. On the other hand, the moral dilemma raised by the current situation in Iraq does not make 'cutting and running' an easily available option for these voters. Evangelicals too are now less inclined to support the war -- but again, as with the Foley scandal and other matters (e.g. the economy), they are not likely to think that they have much of an alternative on election day other than the GOP. It's true that many evangelicals are disappointed with President Bush and the Republicans, but many of these voters are nonetheless likely to believe that the 'law and order' emphasis of the administration is better than what the Democrats might offer if they win control of the House and/or Senate. I don't think the Democrats can be complacent in assuming that they will benefit heavily from the increasing anti-war sentiment; religious voters will want to know what solutions the Democrats offer, and so far these have not been explicated by Democratic candidates."

Cultural Issues (same-sex marriage, abortion, stem-cell research)

" Last week's New Jersey court decision will likely bring renewed attention to the issue of same-sex marriage. In some states it will help galvanize conservative religious voters -- although many of the conservative states where the issue is big already have state measures in place banning same-sex marriage. Nonetheless, the issue serves to remind voters of the ongoing potential threats to 'traditional family values' that shadow American culture as a whole. The bottom line regarding these values issues is that even though they may not be the top priorities for many religious voters in this election, they don't disappear from voters' consciousness. Hence, many religious (especially evangelical) voters will not vote for candidates whose views on these cultural issues are blatantly at odds with their own moral

views, notwithstanding their agreement with the candidates' economic and other policies.”