

**How Arab Americans Will Vote in 2006**  
**Poll Findings on Arab American Battleground Voters**  
**October 6-10, 2006**



**Conducted by Zogby International**  
*for*  
**The Arab American Institute**

**Analysis by AAI President Dr. James J. Zogby**

## **How Arab Americans Will Vote in 2006**

Arab American frustration with the Bush Administration's foreign and domestic policies, in evidence in the 2004 elections, continues into 2006. This anti-Administration tilt appears to be playing a significant role in shaping Arab American voter preferences in several of November's contests.

This is an overview of findings by a **Zogby International (ZI)** poll of Arab American voters commissioned by the **Arab American Institute**. The AAI/ZI poll conducted during the second week in October 2006 surveyed 701 Arab American voters in four battleground states: Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Florida. Each of these states feature important gubernatorial and Senate contests. Collectively, they represent a likely voter turnout of 510,000 Arab American voters who represent up to 5% of Michigan voters, 2% in Ohio and Florida, and more than one and one-half per cent in Pennsylvania.

## **Overall Preference for Democratic Candidates**

In all four states, Arab American voters show preference for the Democratic candidates for governor and senator [*Table 2*]. While the margin of error in each of these individual state sub-samples is a high  $\pm 8\%$ , the Democrats' margin is so large (in most cases two or three to one over the Republican), as to indicate a clear trend.

In Pennsylvania, for example, Arab Americans favor incumbent Democratic Governor Ed Rendell by a margin of 67% to 22%. In Ohio, Democratic gubernatorial candidate Congressman Ted Strickland is favored by a 60 to 21% margin. Michigan's incumbent Governor Jennifer Granholm, also a Democrat, holds a strong 61 to 29% lead over her Republican challenger. The only close race is in Florida where the Democrats' gubernatorial candidate, Congressman Jim Davis, is favored by only 45% to 39%.

This Arab American preference for Democrats carries over into the four senate races covered in the poll. In three of the four races, the Democratic candidates lead by a substantial two-to-one margin. Only in the Michigan senate contest where Arab American Republican Michael Bouchard is challenging incumbent Democratic Senator Debbie Stabenow is the margin somewhat lower, with Stabenow holding a 54-31% edge.

## **Troubled by Administration Policies**

All of this appears to reflect the national trend among Arab Americans deeply troubled by Bush Administration policies [*Table 3*]. Among Arab Americans, only 22% approve of the President's job performance, with a high 76% disapproving. Even 41% of Arab American Republicans disapprove of the job the President is doing.

When asked which party they would prefer to control Congress [*Table 4*], 57% of Arab American choose Democrats while only 26% prefer Republicans. **Arab American voters echo the general electorate's discontent with Congress** with only 30% of Arab Americans saying their representatives deserve reelection and 49% saying "it's time for someone new"—not a good sign for the governing party [*Table 5*].

This is not merely an anti-incumbent trend since in the elections in the four states in which incumbents are up for reelection (the governorships and senate seats in Michigan and Pennsylvania); the three Democratic incumbents hold strong leads over their challengers. Only the Republican incumbent in Pennsylvania, Senator Rick Santorum, is targeted for defeat by Arab American voters.

When asked to rate the importance of several issues in determining their votes [*Table 6*], "corruption" rates the highest, followed closely by Iraq, civil liberties, and the wars in Lebanon and Palestine, in that order. By a strong margin of three-to-one, Arab American say Democrats would do a better job of protecting civil liberties and dealing with Iraq than the Republican Party [*Table 7*]. Arab American confidence in the ability of Democrats to deal with Lebanon, Palestine, and corruption is lower, but here too Democrats maintain a two-to-one edge over Republicans.

### **Trend Line**

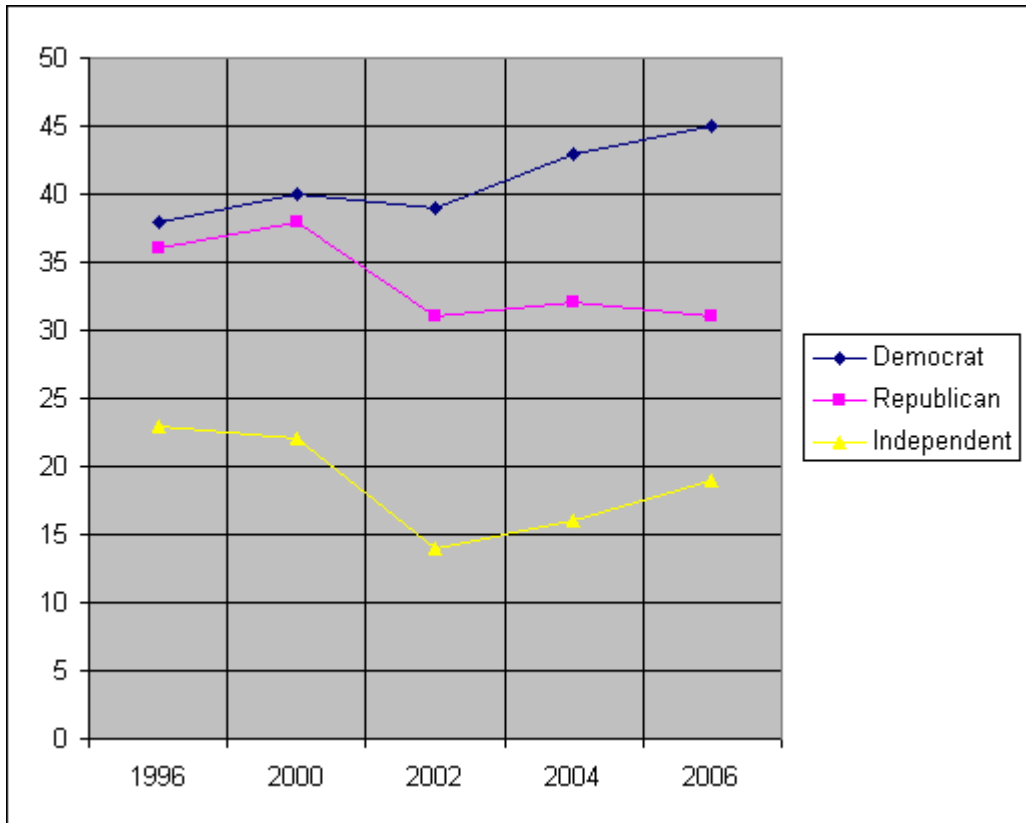
All of this points to a significant shift in Arab American voting patterns. AAI has been polling Arab American voters since the early 90s. Up until 2002, Arab Americans demonstrated only a slight preference for the Democratic Party, usually by a margin of three to eight percent. In 2002, reflecting early alienation by Bush Administration policies, the Democratic edge grew to 39% to 31%. By 2004, the margin had increased to 43% to 32%. Now, in 2006, the percentage of Arab American who self-identify as Democrats has grown to 45% as opposed to only 31% who see themselves as Republicans [*Table 1*].

Does this make a difference? In Michigan, where the Arab American vote can be as high as 5% of the statewide total, and with Granholm holding only a slight lead over the Republican opponent, the Arab American vote can account for a significant portion of her margin of victory. The same can be true in Pennsylvania. If that Senate race tightens, as some suspect it may, the dramatic lead Democratic challenger Bob Casey has over Santorum among Arab American voters can help provide a portion of his margin of victory.

It is too early to tell whether this trend line will continue through 2008. Is this shift tied solely to frustration with Bush Administration policies in Iraq and the Middle East and threats to civil liberties, or is it change that will be in evidence as long as these issues are of paramount concern to Arab American voters? If Republicans choose a nominee in 2008 who dramatically breaks with the current Republican approach to these matters, it is conceivable that the 20 to 30% of Arab American Republicans who are currently disaffected by their party's policies will return home. If Democrats provide no alternative foreign policy and no defense of civil liberties, they may squander the advantage they currently hold with Arab American voters. It is too early to tell. But what is clear is that the trend line among Arab American voters in evidence in 2004 will continue into November's elections, with the advantage being in the Democrats' corner.

**Table I:  
Party Identification**

|                    | 2006 | 2004 | 2002 | 2000 | 1996 |
|--------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| <b>Democrat</b>    | 45   | 43   | 39   | 40   | 38   |
| <b>Republican</b>  | 31   | 32   | 31   | 38   | 36   |
| <b>Independent</b> | 19   | 16   | 14   | 22   | 23   |



**Table 2:**

**If the election for Governor/Senate were held today, whom would you vote for?**

|                   | FL  |        | MI  |        | OH  |        | PA  |        |
|-------------------|-----|--------|-----|--------|-----|--------|-----|--------|
|                   | Gov | Senate | Gov | Senate | Gov | Senate | Gov | Senate |
| <b>Democrat</b>   | 45  | 52     | 61  | 54     | 60  | 53     | 67  | 61     |
| <b>Republican</b> | 39  | 24     | 29  | 32     | 21  | 27     | 22  | 28     |

**Table 3:**

**Overall, how would you rate President Bush's performance on the job?**

|                    | Overall | US-born | Immigrant | R. Catholic | Muslim | Dem | Repub | Ind |
|--------------------|---------|---------|-----------|-------------|--------|-----|-------|-----|
| <b>Favorable</b>   | 22      | 22      | 23        | 28          | 6      | 9   | 49    | 18  |
| <b>Unfavorable</b> | 76      | 77      | 74        | 70          | 92     | 90  | 51    | 80  |

**Table 4:**

**Which party do you prefer to control Congress?**

|                   | Overall | US-born | Immigrant | R. Catholic | Muslim | Dem | Repub | Ind |
|-------------------|---------|---------|-----------|-------------|--------|-----|-------|-----|
| <b>Democrat</b>   | 57      | 55      | 64        | 50          | 80     | 87  | 19    | 53  |
| <b>Republican</b> | 26      | 27      | 21        | 31          | 7      | 4   | 67    | 17  |

**Table 5:**

**Do you think your Congressional representative deserves to be re-elected?**

|            | Overall | US-born | Immigrant | R. Catholic | Muslim | Dem | Repub | Ind |
|------------|---------|---------|-----------|-------------|--------|-----|-------|-----|
| <b>Yes</b> | 30      | 32      | 23        | 33          | 21     | 25  | 41    | 26  |
| <b>No</b>  | 49      | 47      | 54        | 45          | 57     | 58  | 37    | 48  |

**Table 6:**  
**How important are the following issues in your vote for Congress?**

**(a) Iraq**

|                | Overall | US-born | Immigrant | R. Catholic | Muslim | Dem | Repub |
|----------------|---------|---------|-----------|-------------|--------|-----|-------|
| Very Important | 77      | 80      | 69        | 81          | 77     | 77  | 73    |
| Not Important  | 6       | 5       | 12        | 6           | 7      | 10  | 4     |

**(b) Civil Liberties**

|                | Overall | US-born | Immigrant | R. Catholic | Muslim | Dem | Repub |
|----------------|---------|---------|-----------|-------------|--------|-----|-------|
| Very Important | 76      | 74      | 80        | 69          | 88     | 83  | 63    |
| Not Important  | 5       | 5       | 3         | 9           | 1      | 1   | 9     |

**(c) Palestine**

|                | Overall | US-born | Immigrant | R. Catholic | Muslim | Dem | Repub |
|----------------|---------|---------|-----------|-------------|--------|-----|-------|
| Very Important | 68      | 67      | 72        | 60          | 83     | 71  | 62    |
| Not Important  | 9       | 9       | 9         | 11          | 4      | 9   | 10    |

**(d) Lebanon**

|                | Overall | US-born | Immigrant | R. Catholic | Muslim | Dem | Repub |
|----------------|---------|---------|-----------|-------------|--------|-----|-------|
| Very Important | 73      | 74      | 73        | 73          | 84     | 76  | 63    |
| Not Important  | 8       | 8       | 10        | 9           | 7      | 8   | 10    |

**(e) Corruption**

|                | Overall | US-born | Immigrant | R. Catholic | Muslim | Dem | Repub |
|----------------|---------|---------|-----------|-------------|--------|-----|-------|
| Very Important | 80      | 81      | 76        | 79          | 86     | 83  | 70    |
| Not Important  | 5       | 6       | 5         | 4           | 3      | 4   | 11    |

**Table 7:  
Who would do a better job on the following?**

**(a) Iraq**

|            | Overall | Democrat | Republican | Independent |
|------------|---------|----------|------------|-------------|
| Democrat   | 57      | 78       | 28         | 53          |
| Republican | 26      | 10       | 57         | 21          |

**(b) Civil Liberties**

|            | Overall | Democrat | Republican | Independent |
|------------|---------|----------|------------|-------------|
| Democrat   | 63      | 86       | 31         | 65          |
| Republican | 23      | 6        | 57         | 12          |

**(c) Palestine**

|            | Overall | Democrat | Republican | Independent |
|------------|---------|----------|------------|-------------|
| Democrat   | 53      | 75       | 23         | 47          |
| Republican | 21      | 6        | 52         | 11          |

**(d) Lebanon**

|            | Overall | Democrat | Republican | Independent |
|------------|---------|----------|------------|-------------|
| Democrat   | 52      | 76       | 23         | 45          |
| Republican | 20      | 8        | 49         | 9           |

**(e) Corruption**

|            | Overall | Democrat | Republican | Independent |
|------------|---------|----------|------------|-------------|
| Democrat   | 49      | 76       | 17         | 45          |
| Republican | 21      | 6        | 49         | 14          |

## Survey Methodology

This is a telephone survey of Arab Americans in Florida, Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania conducted by Zogby International. The target sample is 701 interviews with approximately 38 questions asked, Oct. 6 – 10, 2006. Samples are randomly drawn over four states using Zogby International's list of Arab surnames.

Zogby International surveys employ sampling strategies in which selection probabilities are proportional to population size within area codes and exchanges. Up to six calls are made to reach a sampled phone number. Cooperation rates are calculated using one of AAPOR's approved methodologies<sup>1</sup> and are comparable to other professional public-opinion surveys conducted using similar sampling strategies.<sup>2</sup> Weighting by [country of origin, religion, born in US, age and gender] is used to adjust for non-response. The margin of error is +/- 3.8 percentage points. Margins of error are higher in sub-groups.

Zogby International's sampling and weighting procedures also have been validated through its political polling: more than 95% of the firm's polls have come within 1% of actual election-day outcomes.

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<sup>1</sup> See COOP4 (p.38) in *Standard Definitions: Final Dispositions of Case Codes and Outcome Rates of Surveys*. The American Association for Public Opinion Research, (2000).

<sup>2</sup> *Cooperation Tracking Study: April 2003 Update*, Jane M. Sheppard and Shelly Haas. The Council for Marketing & Opinion Research (CMOR). Cincinnati, Ohio (2003).