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CRITICAL POLLING UPDATE

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Alan Secrest
DATE: September 26, 2006
RE: Make This Race (NY29) A Priority... Kuhl Sagging

**AGAINST ALL ODDS... ERIC MASSA IN POSITION TO DEFEAT HAPLESS, STUMBLING
RANDY KUHL**

SURVEY DETAILS:

- ⊗ 503 interviews with likely general election voters, distributed in accord with prior turnout;
- ⊗ error margin, plus or minus 4.4 points;
- ⊗ conducted September 19-21, 2006.

THE BASIC FACTS:

- ⊗ Five months after an initial survey found Kuhl and Eric Massa statistically tied (April: 40% Massa, 43% Kuhl), fresh polling data yields the same result (39% Massa, 43% Kuhl); 18% are undecided.
- ⊗ A 52% majority prefer a Democrat as a “balance to the Bush Administration’s programs and policies” vs. 34% who prefer a Republican

“to support the programs and policies of President Bush.” *The result among undecideds?... 51% to 22% for the Democrat.*

- ⊗ Randy Kuhl’s *personal appeal* (favorability score) among the 83% who recognize him is pathetic: 45% positive, 38% negative; more telling, his *job performance ratings* are worse: 35% positive, 47% negative. This puts him in familiar company (Bush job ratings: 37% positive, 62% negative... including ‘41% ‘poor’).
- ⊗ Among those who recognize him, just 39%, Massa is far more well regarded: 51% positive, 18% negative.
- ⊗ INDEED, AMONG THE 37% WHO RECOGNIZE BOTH CANDIDATES, ERIC MASSA ENJOYS A 2:1 LEAD (60% to 31%).
- ⊗ Finally, Eliot Spitzer’s monster lead over Faso here – 61% to 24% – cannot and must not be discounted as a key contextual indicator, simply because he’s been the presumed winner for so many months!

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FAQS

But Kuhl is running on three lines – Republican, conservative and Independence; doesn’t this give him a big advantage?

Not this year. In April, we were not giving Kuhl the ‘Independence Party’ line. Now we are, and he doesn’t improve a bit. When voters want change, they want change.

Are you saying Massa would lead if he were even 20-25 points better known, say 60-65% name identification?

Absolutely.

Explain?

A solid 42% plurality of undecideds are Democrats... but just 19% of undecideds have ever heard of Eric Massa (!) and most of those are merely neutral toward him. And, as noted earlier, a majority of undecideds prefer a 'balance Bush' candidate.

What else of note about undecideds?

Well, 58% describe this part of NY as 'off on the wrong track' (just 17%! right direction); 42% are moderate, 33% liberal, 25% conservative; a 64% plurality give Bush negative job ratings; a 44% plurality give Kuhl negative job ratings; and 54% choose Spitzer over Faso (11%).

But isn't this a GOP district?

In 1994, plenty of "Democratic" districts flipped. Republicans are very dispirited here, and with good reason (Bush, Spitzer, economy, war...). Even as some Republicans have drifted back onto the playing field (re-entered this year's electorate), Massa and Kuhl are virtually tied. Right now, in terms of turnout, the parties are at parity, though generic preference favors the Democrat.

Why?

Because Independents are fed up and have had enough.

But polls seem to vary....

It's very likely that, for whatever misbegotten methodological reason, other polls are either pre-quota'd to, or weighted after the fact to, party registration. This is methodologically unsound. And, looking back, it is one reason so many Democrats were surprised by the scope of the '94 results.

CONCLUSION

Eric Massa is a retired naval officer and former staff member of the House Armed Services Committee who, as a Republican, had the moral courage and political determination to switch to the Democratic Party and take on incumbent Randy Kuhl in a sprawling district covering 5,761 square miles and three media market.

While money has been tough to come by in this economically battered region, Massa has been a tireless and enthusiastic challenger, raising his name identification 24 points through sheer will and doggedness... and remaining tied with his better known opponent in the process.

The “face,” the composition, of the ‘06 electorate is different. Bush has collapsed. Here, the economy is much worse than elsewhere. Kuhl is a negligent steward, a toadie for the GOP leadership and special interests.

A win here – imminently achievable – is not only more likely than in other, perhaps better known, races in the Northeast, but would deal a body blow to GOP efforts nationally.

It all boils down to 4-5 weeks worth of fundraising. That’s how Bishop did it. That’s how Slaughter did it in ‘86. That’s how Hinchey did it. That’s how Brian Higgins ultimately prevailed in ‘04. All were Cooper & Secrest Associates clients when they prevailed.

And that’s how Eric Massa can do it as well.