

THE PEROT PROJECT

The Democratic Leadership Council

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The 1992 presidential election shattered the George Bush presidency and ended an era of Republican governance. It gave a "new kind of Democrat," Bill Clinton, the opportunity to forge a new Democratic coalition and a new era. Yet the collapse of Republican rule and the disaffection with politics have left many voters cautious about the new and clinging to Ross Perot. In this period of uncertain change, the Perot bloc represents an important indicator of our country's direction.

The Perot voters are deeply alienated and cynical about nearly all leaders and institutions -- political and economic. They are watching Bill Clinton to see if he succeeds, though they are predisposed to doubt the genuineness of anything that happens in politics. They fully expect a corrupt gridlock system to keep any leader from succeeding and helping people. Underlying that skepticism and pessimism are values and attitudes that present a distinct world view. This project offers a glimpse of that world and its meaning for our politics.

Perot voters are likely to be around for some time to come. Their vote was not a momentary response to a quixotic candidacy; it was a statement, and remains a statement about alienation -- from conventional parties, big institutions, politics and government. The Democrats and Bill Clinton will not reach these voters through conventional appeals. They are clearly open to Clinton as a "new kind-of-Democrat" who governs successfully, but only if he changes government first.

This report is based on the largest national survey yet of Perot voters, 1200 interviews conducted across the country in proportion to the Perot vote in 1992. That survey was supplemented by a national sampling of Bush and Clinton voters (800 interviews) and by a series of six focus groups with key segments of the Perot bloc: under 30 voters in San Bernardino, California; older non-college Perot voters in Bangor, Maine; and under 50, non-college voters in Akron, Ohio (where one group consisted of just union workers). The national survey was conducted April 12 to 19, and the focus groups were conducted between May 13 and 18. While the results for political figures are somewhat dated, the research emphasis is on underlying attitudes that will prove more enduring.

The principal findings about the Perot voters and their future are set out below:

The Perot bloc is for real and has considerable staying-power. Perot voters remain committed to their 1992 vote and, for the moment, want to stick with Perot in 1996 -- even if he were to run as a Republican. That is a measure of their independence and alienation which will remain **important** in **our** future national elections.

Perot voters are extremely skeptical about Bill Clinton, but they are open to him succeeding. A majority say they are "hopeful." But the test is breaking gridlock, movement on the economy, and changing the way government does things. In that context, many Perot voters consider moving over to Clinton in 1996.

A re-inventing government agenda is virtually a pre-requisite for reassuring and reaching the Perot bloc. These voters want to see their leaders cut waste and bureaucracy, search for efficiencies, limit special interest influence, and reform welfare.

The world view of Perot voters is deeply anti-political, represented above all by their deep antipathy to Congress. Indeed, Congress and Perot are defined in direct opposition to one another: the Congress, self-seeking and deadlocked; Perot, honest, for people and results-oriented.

The Democrats will win over Perot voters only when Democrats are

seen to represent the people and to oppose greed, privilege and special interests. To win over Perot voters, Clinton must emerge as a reformer -- even as he seeks to govern successfully.

The deficit is a symbol of the mess in Washington, and therefore has powerful meaning to Perot voters. It represents problems growing out of control that threaten to bankrupt and ruin the country, in the absence of leaders willing to act responsibly.

The symbolic meaning of the deficit should not be confused with policy priority. Just one-fourth of Perot voters believe the deficit is the first or second most important problem facing the country. Many Perot voters give a higher priority to the economy, jobs and health care.

Perot voters are anti-government and anti-establishment which distinguishes them from both Clinton and Bush voters. These attitudes are less about ideology and more about a failure of public trust **that characterizes on almost all big institutions -- from big big business to Congress to big labor.**

The Perot bloc has a largely Republican voting history, but they are refugees and up for grabs. **They represent the radical middle -- split evenly between conservatives and liberal/moderates.** They give Ronald Reagan extremely low ratings (just above Congress), they divide evenly between the parties on most issues, and they are open to voting for Bill Clinton.

Doubts about Ross Perot are very close to the surface, even among Perot voters, and center on the very attributes that make him attractive to people -- an independence that can produce gridlock and a temperament that can produce unpredictable and undependable leadership.

Perot voters **say they are** willing to support higher taxes and government initiatives, **though that is clearly conditioned by deep skepticism about government and a strong demand for government reform. In that context, Perot voters are willing to entertain increased revenue for deficit reduction and health care .**

The Perot voters are very secular and libertarian and extremely uncomfortable with the social conservatism and Christian right dominance of the Republican Party. Perot and Clinton voters hold virtually identical views on abortion. Continued focus on abortion in the Republican Party makes it difficult for Perot voters to turn back to the GOP.

Perot voters look more like Clinton voters on economic issues. They look more like Bush voters on middle class values. **There is a sense of**

grievance -- that hard work goes unrewarded -- a sentiment that must be addressed if Clinton is to reach Perot voters broadly.

THE POLITICS OF PEROT VOTERS

The Perot bloc, counterpoised to the establishment and the established parties, is likely to prove an important part of our politics for the foreseeable future. These voters will not disband easily, as they hold firmly to their political independence. For the moment, they are wedded to Perot and follow him into 1996. They remain detached from the parties -- alienated from the Republicans who provided so many of them with a home for many years and closely watching Bill Clinton whose success will determine their future.

The Established Parties

The Perot voter, excepting the under 30 group, have a largely Republican voting history. Among those over 50, 73 percent had voted for either Reagan or Bush, falling to a very respectable 67 percent for those 30 to 50 years of age; a good 55 percent of all these over 30 voters voted Republican in all but one presidential election. Among all Perot voters, 62 percent had voted for Reagan at least once and 62 percent for Bush in 1988.

It is striking then that these voters think so badly of Ronald Reagan: 31 percent warm and 49 percent cold overall. But among the large center bloc of independent Perot voters, just 25 percent offer warm feelings and 56 percent, cold; that is a mean temperature of 37.5 degrees -- just above the Congress. These voters are refugees from a Republican era that they have largely rejected, represented by Reagan's low esteem.

The Perot bloc is radical in its alienation from the established parties -- forming a kind of "radical middle" bloc -- divided evenly between conservatives (44 percent) and liberal/moderates (25 and 27 percent, respectively).

That leaves the Perot bloc largely split in partisan terms and up for grabs. On key policy questions, the Perot voters split evenly between the parties, including the economy (35 percent Democratic and 33 percent, Republican), cutting wasteful government spending (33 to 31 percent), and improving family values (31 to 32 percent). On taxes, the Perot voters, at the moment, tilt toward the Republicans (27 to 38 percent).

On values questions, the Perot voters tend to look more to the Republicans, particularly on the question of "discipline" (18 to 36 percent); the split is less marked on "responsibility" (26 to 31 percent) and "moral standards, knowing right from wrong" (24 to 29 percent). But the most interesting pattern is not the party split but the tendency of Perot voters to have pulled away from both parties on questions of values -- over 40 percent indicating neither party or do not know which party.

These are unsettled voters -- loosed from their moorings in the Republican camp -- who are still trying to come to terms with new political realities. They split between the parties on policy and seem largely detached on values. When thinking about which party to "trust" on addressing the country's problems, they both split (29 to 26 percent) and detach themselves (44 percent neither or don't know). These are clearly voters who have not yet settled on a direction, as they watch the new administration.

The Electoral Context: 1996

When forced to put themselves in a 1996 electoral context, these Perot voters largely stick to their man at this point. Three-quarters of the 1992 Perot voters reaffirm that vote in this projective election against a Republican nominee, described as "a serious candidate, like Jack Kemp or Bob Dole," and Democrat Bill Clinton. A small group, 13 percent, splits off and goes back to the Republicans, and a similar bloc, 9 percent, shifts to Bill Clinton.

Since both Clinton and the Republican candidate also hold three-quarters of their votes, the 1996 election, at this point, looks very much like a re-run of 1992. Clinton wins again with 40 percent of the vote, trailed by the Republican with 31 percent and Perot with 24 percent. Obviously, a great deal will change before 1996, but for now, the Perot bloc looks like an enduring element of our political future.

If Perot were to make the trek over to the Republicans, the 1996 race would tighten to a dead heat: 47 percent for Perot and 46 percent, Clinton. This simulation is obviously artificial, as Perot's standing would be greatly affected by assuming a partisan and political mantle. But the result is an important indicator of the strength of existing Perot loyalties which seem to hold up against these political currents. Perot carries 85 percent of the Perot vote as a Republican, including 72 percent of the Perot bloc that is Democratic-leaning. There is every reason to believe, therefore, that the Perot bloc will have some durability under pressure.

THE WORLD VIEW OF PEROT VOTERS

Congress versus Perot

Perot voters reserve their deepest and richest criticism for the Congress of the United States. They give the institution a feeling thermometer score of just 35 degrees, the lowest of any individual or institution tested in this survey; just 13 percent held warm feelings (above 50 degrees), and 61 percent, cold. That is the starting point for Perot voters because Congress seems to represent everything these voters dislike about our politics in this age.

Upon hearing the simple word, "Congress," the Perot participants in the focus groups offered rapid-fire negative associations: among the Bangor women, "spending," "liars," "crooks," "they don't live in the real world," "they're all lawyers," "we have too many of them," "and they have no idea how to compromise and get things done," "they look out for themselves as individuals before they look out for the citizen"; Bangor men, "corrupt," "greed," "Tower of Babble," "part of the system," "ripoff," "crooks"; San Bernardino women, "rich men," "jerks," "insensitive jerks," "spending money," "I think of them as a big block wall, stopping everything from happening," "liars and cheaters"; San Bernardino men, "thieves," "waste," "bad checks," "I wish I could do what they did," "special interests," "total waste of money," "tax and spend"; Akron union men, "too much confusion," "stalemate. They don't get nothing done. All they do is just sit there and collect our money and don't get anything settled," "special interests, filibuster," "payola," "they're controlled by lobbyists and special interest groups completely,"; Akron non-union men, "ineffective," "corrupt," "overpaid," "not in touch."

People have focused their political anger on Congress. They think the Congress is dominated by special interest groups, gridlocked before the country's problems, peopled by members who are enriching themselves and out-of-touch with the lives of average Americans. Little wonder that the Perot voters have so little confidence that Washington can address the country's problems.

When asked about "the mess in Washington," Perot voters generalize their conclusions from **their views of Congress** Congress¹:

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	Category	TOTAL
Gridlock		11
gridlock, partisan bickering	9	
too many chiefs, not enough Indians		2
Corruption		19
corruption, dishonesty, greedy politicians	13	
special interest influence, PACs		4
lobbyists		2

¹Respondents were asked "Some people say there is a mess in Washington. What is the biggest problem with Washington?". Answers were written verbatim, then coded into relevant categories.

	TOTAL
Category	
Politicians	14
politics, politicians	9
career politicians, term limits	3
politicians breaking promises	1
lawyers	1
Out-of-touch	6
Waste and Spending	17
government bureaucracy, red tape	6
wasteful spending, waste	11
Congress	5
Miscellaneous	23
Clinton/breaking promises	3
deficit	2
economy	1
health care	1
other	16

Washington, like Congress, is a place where politicians are corrupted by special interests and their own greed and they show little interest in the welfare of ordinary citizens. Instead of addressing real problems, they bicker and fight to a stalemate and offer the country just more bureaucracy and wasteful spending. The union men in Akron summed it up, "They're out of touch with reality. There's no common sense." And the final indignity, pointed out by a man in San Bernardino, "give themselves a raise, and then tax us for it."

For Perot voters, Perot is the antidote to Congress. The character of Perot in their mind is the diametric opposite of the character of Congress; in their opposition and polarity, Perot and Congress form a dimension of thinking at the center of Perot voter

consciousness. Perot voters have a world view that places the Democrats and allied institutions to one side (along with Bill Clinton) and the Republicans and their institutions to the other (along with Reagan and Bush). But directly opposite from Perot and negative is the Congress. (See the Perception Map.)

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The Congress is, in fact, on a negative dimension with a host of big institutions **distrusted** by Perot voters -- big business to the Republican side and labor unions on the Democratic side.

It should not be surprising then that Perot voters ascribe to Perot a whole range of traits that directly counter what they dislike about the Congress and the mess in Washington. First, they believe Perot is honest. He is "sincere" and a "straight shooter, tells it like it is, exposing special interest groups"; he "speaks his mind" and "didn't seem to be bought." The union men in Akron believe, "he doesn't seem like he's a puppet, like somebody's going to control him," and another responded, "he's his own man." In San Bernardino, the women reiterated that sense of honest independence: "he had the guts enough to do it without all the favors."

Second, they believe Perot cares about people. These voters think of him as somebody who "cares" and is "concerned about the people" and "for the people." One of the Bangor men personalized it: "he seems to be for us." That contrasts with the prevailing practice, "He's more for the people, understands what the people are trying to say, versus the other ones that really aren't so much for the people. They've been so high up for so long that their heads in the clouds." Perot, one of the San Bernardino women believes, "wanted to use his money to do good for us." His actions will shift the balance, "taking it out of lobbyists, taking it out of the people that are in there that are making hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars to make decisions that, you

know, we should make" and putting "the power in the people's hands." (Akron, non-union men)

Third, they believe Perot can take charge, break gridlock and get things done. Perot is seen as "aggressive," "takes charge," "hard driving," indeed, somebody who is "not afraid to take on Congress" (Bangor women) and "gonna get in the trenches and make something happen." (Akron, non-union men) There is a real sense of hope in these discussions: "I really think he'd have a great opportunity to break the gridlock because he's not one of them." (Bangor men)

Fourth, they believe Perot will cut out the frills, waste and overspending. These voters think of him as "down to earth", bringing business sense to spending; he "knows how to handle money." (San Bernardino women) He would "cut waste" and "cut government spending." He would "cut off ... these Congressmen [who] take all these free trips and stuff. He'd cut all that out"; he would "take them off of pork barreling and government spending, \$100 toilet seats and stuff like that." (Akron, union men) He "would cut spending where we need it cut in the White House; get rid of some of that loose rubbish." (Bangor women)

Finally, they believe Perot will stand up for America. His voters think of him as "patriotic", "puts America first" and "wants to help the people in the USA," "totally for the country"; he is concerned for "the welfare of the country," "cares about the American people." One of the Bangor men observed, "he's trying to bring the pride back to America." Specifically, that means Perot will try to "keep the money here to help our own" (San Bernardino woman); "he would really take a real good look at foreign aid." (Akron, union men) These voters think Perot would give priority to America, something that Congress has failed repeatedly to do.

The Perot voters think of him as a "businessman," a "good businessman." But that means above all that Perot is "not a politician," that he embodies "change." "He can break the mold in Washington, D.C." (Bangor men) Ross Perot, unlike the politicians who now run the place, will respect the tax dollars people pay, tackle the country's problems and help people, and against the tenor of the times, succeed at governing. The politicians who tell people what they want to hear always break their promises, but Perot they think is different, somebody who will "keep his promises" and restore the public trust.

But for all the positive sentiment about Perot, the doubts are very close to the surface. Later, we shall see that Perot voters can be moved to consider Clinton, given a number of advances on the economy and political reform.

The doubts center on the very attributes that make him different from Congress. He is inexperienced and independent, thus, belongs to no party. "He's not with the party," a non-union Akron man concluded, "and the parties have been around for so long." His independence is personalized as a "temperamental" rigidity, "somewhat dictatorial" and "paranoid." A Perot presidency, even these Perot voters fear, could produce a political mess and a new form of gridlock. "Perot has zilch to fall back on if he got in," one of the San Bernardino men observed. There "might be total chaos in the government and in Congress because of his inexperience in dealing with politicians."

(San Bernardino woman) One of the Bangor men summed up the underlying concern:

I think ... there seems to be some of a dictatorial attitude there, and that will never work in the political field in Washington, D.C. ... You can try anything you want to try, but unless Congress and the rest of the politicians and the lobbyists and the business and the special interests will let you do it, he's gonna get hurt really quick.

A non-union man in Akron concluded, "I'm afraid there'd be chaos in Congress."

Perot "quit" the race in 1992, reflecting his temperamental quality. That was the most frequently mentioned doubt: "quitting and coming back like that"; "walked away last time"; "unreliable, he backed out"; "unpredictable"; "quitter." A Bangor women observed, "when he backed out of the campaign, I lost a little hope." Right below the surface is a fear that Perot's temperament will lead him to quit and to fail to keep his promises.

The National Debt

The federal deficit is a powerful symbol of the mess in Washington and has a great deal of meaning to Perot voters. They use the deficit to talk about a broad range of things that are wrong in the country. But we should not confuse symbolism with policy prescription. The deficit is very important, but it is not the first **policy** concern of Perot voters: nearly three-quarters fail to mention the deficit as either the first or second most important problem facing the country.

More important for Perot, like other voters, is the economy. Almost 4 in 10 mention the economy (37 percent), compared to 27 percent who cite the deficit. But other problems, like health care (25 percent) and jobs (23 percent), get virtually the same level of attention. These voters have broad policy concerns that belie a simple focus on the deficit.

The one-fourth of Perot voters who mention the deficit as a major problem facing the country are distinctly hostile to government and much more satisfied than other voters with their economic circumstances. They form the most conservative and Republican segment of the Perot bloc.

But nearly all Perot voters believe the deficit is a serious problem; three-quarters say the federal budget deficit is one of the most important, or a very important, problem facing the country (78 percent). For them, the deficit is not so much an immediate policy focus but an expression of something very wrong in the country. The deficit is not so much about austerity. It is about responsibility. But Perot voters are quite diverse in their thinking, as the deficit represents a broad range of ills.

There are some Perot voters who think of the deficit as a bottom line, an inability of government to think sensibly about money and to operate in the black. There is an indifference to "wasted money," with "poor control" and "nobody to oversee," nobody "managing the country's money in the right way." There is "no control" and no discipline. A San Bernardino man observed, "like the people managing this country's money don't know what they're doing." There is a constant tendency to "overspend on everything"; "too many people, spending too much money and too many cuts"; "they're not even beginning to cut." A Maine woman concluded, "it's just like they've got a plastic card, and they can go crazy."

But the "green eye shade" view of the deficit is subsumed by more emotional assessments where the deficit emerges as a metaphor for broad problems facing the country. For many Perot voters the deficit represents the country's problems growing out of control and outside the capacity of man to solve. They are left, consequently, feeling overwhelmed and scared and impotent. The focus group participants reflect on the deficit, and write, "too overwhelming," "bottomless pit," "a deep hole," "large and endless," "huge," "out of control," "it's snowballing," "astronomical, absurd and out of control,"

The scale of the problem "scares me" and leaves some with "no hope in my life." They think of the ballooning deficit as beyond their control: "it's not anything we have control of"; "1000 dollar bills stacked 200 miles in the sky. It's still growing, and nobody seems to care," "will never get balanced" (Bangor men); "it'll never happen," "we'll never get it eliminated" (Bangor women); "they're in the hole, and nobody can figure how to get out of it" (Akron union men); we are a company losing vast amounts of money. No hope of it being solved" (San Bernardino men); "impossible to solve" (Bangor women) That Congress watches the problem worsen yet fails to act only heightens their alienation: "out of control and lack of concern by Congress" (Akron, non-union men); "the politicians pretend it isn't there." (Bangor women) The politicians simply won't take responsibility.

For many, the rising debt presages national bankruptcy and the decline of the country. The country is going to "run out of money" and "end up bankrupt"; "the country will run out of money and go into a total depression real soon, real soon"; "we're gonna be a third world country" (San Bernardino women); "the bank is broke" (San Bernardino men); "it's just making us a weaker nation" (Akron non-union men); "if you're only making so much and you're spending more, you're going to go under," "will lose power as far as our nation ... If it happens, we've lost," "this country could shut down" (Akron union men); For some the fall is slow -- "the country is going to fall apart slowly but surely" -- and for others, more rapid -- "sinking fast," "the Titanic." Our nation is watching its "credit rating" drop while other countries are approaching "profitability." A non-union worker in Akron laments, "We should be a country on the rise, not on the decline."

The impending bankruptcy of the country leaves many of the Perot voters worrying "for the future"; the "future is going to be worse for our children and getting

old"; "what's the country going to be like when my kids grow up? Are they going to have to struggle to get by?"; "children's future and won't be able to afford education or medicine or basic necessities." (San Bernardino women)

Some of the Perot voters are very tax sensitive, and a growing deficit constitutes a steady pressure to raise taxes. Many of these voters simply associate the deficit with higher taxes. "Well, if our deficit was lower," a man from San Bernardino observed, "I think our taxes would be too." But regrettably, **some believe**, the converse is also true: the deficit cannot "be balanced without more taxes," yet "the taxpayer can't cope with the excess tax." (Bangor women)

There is, however, a very strong current among Perot voters that bemoans the **reckless spending, creating an incapacity of government to address genuine human needs, to do the right things. They believe** the growing national debt swallows up money that could be used to make things better in society. For these voters, concern with the deficit has little to do with a philosophic aversion to government. These voters want the government to do more, but its hands are tied by mounting taxes and interest payments: "the money's so staggering with the taxes, that we're putting everything back to the deficit to pay it off. You're taking away from everything else," "we pay millions every day just in interest that we wouldn't have to pay that could go to create jobs and good schools" (Bangor men); "we'd have money for the elderly, the hospitals. We'd be able to educate our people better, we'd have a cleaner environment" (Bangor women); "we got to get out of debt here, so we're going to start making some cuts ... Everybody looks at education, 'make the cuts in education'"; "if we didn't have the deficit, we could take care of our elderly and health care stuff" (Akron non-union men); "That money would be going toward the things we need -- programs as far as education, medical and all the other," "where it's supposed to go" (Akron, union

men); "that's why we don't have the money to get, like cops and all that stuff out for crime" (San Bernardino men); "we could invest a lot more money in our children and in our future and wouldn't have to worry about getting old" (San Bernardino women); "it's affecting jobs, unemployment, the crime, everything. The school cuts. The teachers don't want to do nothing for us. Everything." (San Bernardino men)

For this important segment of Perot voters, cleaning up the deficit is a precondition for a renewed government that is better able to address priority needs.

Given the diverse meaning in the deficit, it should not be surprising that the Perot voters in the focus groups do not rush to any of the obvious solutions. They are unwilling to pay down the deficit so rapidly that it would risk an economic slowdown. Indeed, almost to a person, they reject any association between deficit reduction and **slowing** the rate of economic growth. While some of the men were willing to put off health care reform, most felt changes in the health care system could not wait 5 years: "No, I think health care's very important" (Bangor women); "something has to be done," "... but I don't know about health care" (Akron union men); "health care is health care," "everybody needs medical care" (San Bernardino men); "you can't stop getting sick or breaking bones or growing old" (San Bernardino women).

They were unwilling to contemplate a range of spending cuts, including freezing social security and cutting Medicare and Medicaid: "not at all ... I just think about my folks and people like that"; "why mess with Social Security"? (Bangor women); "how is they supposed to make it"? (San Bernardino women); "you're punishing the good people and not taking it away from the bad" (Bangor women). They were flat-out opposed to a big tax increase for deficit reduction -- "no, no, no" -- though many were willing to entertain taxes proposed by Perot, particularly the gas tax. But even here,

participants were squirming and wondered whether this "would put me out of work" or force me to "go on unemployment" (Bangor men). In the survey, 53 percent of Perot voters supported higher taxes to reduce the deficit, but 44 percent were opposed.

In the end, most of the Perot voters, like almost all voters across the spectrum, hesitated before the tough choices. The men in San Bernardino captured the sense of relief when the discussion shifted from taxes and spending to Congress and the politicians: "let's start with the politicians' paychecks. I'm all for it," "there you go. Number one answer."

DIMENSIONS OF POLITICAL THINKING

Using an extensive battery on values and attitudes, we sought to identify the primary dimension of political thinking among Perot, as well as Bush and Clinton voters. The battery of questions represents an updated version of questions used by the University of Michigan and by Times-Mirror to explore the thinking and consciousness behind political choices. **Our research used a "factor analysis" methodology to explore which opinions correlated with one another, enabling us to identify five distinctive attitudinal dimensions:**

Middle class consciousness. A sensitivity to middle class grievances; a belief that a well-behaved and industrious middle class gets a raw deal, particularly as the poor and others use special claims to get around the rules and gain advantage. (See Table A for a discussion of the specific questions.)

Anti-government. A feeling that you cannot trust the government to do the right thing and not screw things up; a belief that politicians are corrupt.

Anti-establishment. A belief that the system rewards those who get around the rules and that public officials and corporations are indifferent to the public interest.

Secular. A belief that government should be tolerant of different views and lifestyles and that government should not interfere with abortion.

Financial pressure. A sense of economic distress, particularly the inability to keep up with prices and make ends meet.

The Perot Voter Profile

The Perot voter holds a distinctive set of views that make the Perot bloc a distinctive phenomenon in our politics and a factor shaping the parties. On some dimensions -- like secularism and tolerance -- the Perot bloc is drawn toward the Clinton voters. On others -- like middle class consciousness -- it is drawn toward the Bush voters. But the Perot bloc stands out from all other political groupings in its alienation from government and other powerful institutions in society. That is what defines the group and sets the tone for its politics.

The Clinton voter in 1992, as we can see from Figure 1, is very secular and financially pressed. (The scores range from -100 to +100, with 0 representing the mean score for all respondents in the survey.) These voters were motivated by the economy and their discomfort with a Republican Party focusing on "family values" during a recession. Drawn largely from the more traditional Democratic base, Clinton voters had little sympathy for the notion of middle class grievance. The Clinton voters were positioned neither against the establishment nor against government; if anything, they were somewhat predisposed to trust government.

Those who voted for Bush in 1992 are nearly the polar opposite on a number of dimensions. They were doing just fine economically, feeling little real financial pressure. They were committed to moral values playing a bigger part in public life, and hostile to the tolerance that has come to characterize society. Bush voters also had a highly developed middle class consciousness -- believing that hard working people get little reward these days. But Bush voters were not particularly distinguished on being anti-government or anti-establishment. Having co-chaired the government with the Democrats for the past couple of decades, Bush voters were cautious about political

corruption and distrust. And there was little affinity for the populism of the anti-establishment dimension.

Perot voters are quite libertarian and lean toward Clinton voters on secularism and tolerance (+10.6). Indeed, on abortion, Clinton and Perot voters hold almost identical views, distinguished from the Bush voters who stand apart and are strongly opposed to legal abortion: 68 and 72 percent of Perot and Clinton voters, respectively, believe abortion should be legal, compared to just 44 percent of Bush voters. (See Figure 2) In the focus groups, Perot voters repeatedly said government should keep its hands out of such private matters: "I don't know about government getting involved in it" (Akron union men); "the government doesn't belong in this issue at all," "it's not the government's business and it's not the neighbor's business and it's not anybody's business" (Bangor men); "why should the government get in on it"?; "I don't think the government should be involved in it one way or the other" (San Bernardino men). The Perot voters are distinguished by their secular and libertarian views and worried about a Republican Party pre-occupied with abortion and the Christian right.

The Perot voters, on the other hand, lean toward the Bush voters on middle class consciousness (+17.3): there is a strong sense that those who play by the rules get little recognition today. To expand beyond the traditional Democratic base, Clinton will have to reach out to voters on middle class values. We shall see later that older non-college women and younger non-college men -- two key Perot blocs -- score very high on middle class consciousness.

The Perot voters were not as pressed financially (+.6), and thus, less moved by Clinton's focus on the economy.

The defining difference between Perot voters and the rest of the electorate, however, is the simultaneous alienation from politics and the system. These voters are strongly anti-government (+14.3) and anti-establishment (+17.6).

About one-fourth of the Perot voters (24 percent) lean toward the Democrats; that is, they identify with Democrats or vote for them at the local level. This is the first bloc that could potentially break off for the Democrats. These voters stand out from the other Perot voters by their economic distress which is very pronounced (+26.3) and their pattern of alienation: they are anti-establishment (+13.2) but not particularly anti-government (+1.9).

The Republicans also have a shot at about a quarter of the Perot voters (28 percent) who have Republican leanings. These voters are financially well-off (-16.0), not strongly secular (+1.6) and distinguished, above all, by intense middle class consciousness (+40.2).

In the middle are the straight independents who constitute 43 percent of the Perot voters. They are secular (+15.7) voters which is bad news for the Republicans; they are little concerned with finances (-2.9) which is bad news for the Democrats. They stand out for their intense anti-government (+27.4) and anti-establishment (+24.2) views. Neither Democrats nor Republicans will reach these voters unless they find a way to break through the fog of political alienation. Republicans have positioned themselves as anti-taxes and anti-government, but, as we saw above, that hardly captures the complexity of these voters who are quite populist and looking for an end to gridlock and for major changes in society. However, Democrats will only reach these voters if they can position themselves as outsiders against the establishment and if they can find ways to advance their own unique critique of government.

Demographic Profiles

The Perot bloc is internally diverse and comprised of a number of distinct sub-groups with distinct views of the world:

COMPOSITION OF THE PEROT BLOC

<u>Key groupings</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Bush-Clinton</u>	<u>1992 Vote No Perot</u>
Young voters: under 30 years of age	19.3	39-38	
Non-college, younger men (30 to 50 years)	16.9	41-33	
Non-college, younger women (30 to 50 years)	14.6	32-41	
Non-college, older women (over 50 years)	12.6	38-33	
Non-college, older men (over 50 years)	10.0	33-33	
College younger men (30 to 50 years)	8.8		51-30
College younger women (30 to 50 years)	8.1		36-43
Older college (over 50 years)	8.1		46-29

The younger, under 30 voters are the largest sub-group of the Perot bloc (19.3 percent) and emerge as the most rootless and open to the political process. Their party history is quite short and non-partisan by comparison with other Perot voters: 60

percent have never voted for a Republican (compared to 37 percent of all Perot voters). They are among the most financially pressed Perot voters (+19.4) which drives their disaffection. They are anti-establishment (+11.7) but not anti-government (+4.4) which suggests a greater receptivity to populist Democratic appeals. (See Figures 4 - 6)

The non-college younger men comprise 17 percent of the Perot electorate and embody the intense alienation that characterizes the Perot bloc as a whole. They are the most opposed to the establishment (+33.8) and do not like the government much either (+22.4). They share with the Republicans the belief that middle class America gets little respect (+23.2), and like almost all the non-college voters, there are signs of economic distress (+14.1). The strong middle class and anti-government tone tilt these voters toward the Republicans who, indeed, would have broke for Bush in 1992.

The non-college younger women comprise 15 percent of the Perot bloc and should be open to appeals from the Democratic side. These are the most financially pressed voters in the Perot bloc (+27.3). They are anti-government (+17.8) but stand out as strongly populist and anti-establishment (+27.6). Absent Ross Perot in 1992, these non-college younger women would have broken decisively for Clinton. These non-college younger women, along with their male counterparts and the under 30 group, comprise about half the Perot electorate.

The non-college older women, forming 13 percent of the Perot bloc, are distinguished by their strong sense of middle class consciousness (+37.4). These are voters concerned about bad values and the lack of recognition for the middle class and its hard work. In the context of 1992, these voters tilted toward Bush, absent a Perot candidacy.

The non-college older men, just 10 percent of Perot voters, seem unapproachable for Democrats. These are the most anti-government of voters (+41.9), yet not particularly anti-establishment (+14.3). They feel financially more secure than other Perot voters (-16.8) while identifying strongly with middle class grievances (+39.5). That is a formula for a Republican future, though these voters would not have broken decisively for Bush in 1992.

The younger college-educated men, 9 percent of the Perot bloc, are doing very well economically, feeling little financial pressure (-52.1). They are not particularly distinguished on other dimensions. They would have broken decisively for Bush in 1992. The younger college-educated women, a comparable 8 percent, are very anti-establishment (+31.3) and show no signs of being anti-government (+.4). They are very secular (+25.3), with a little-developed middle class consciousness (-17.3). They would have broken sharply for Clinton in 1992. Looking back on these younger college-educated blocs, it is hard to imagine how they manage to marry one another.

The older college-educated Perot voters, both men and women, comprising 8 percent of the bloc, are the most financially secure (-60.3) and least alienated: anti-government (+8.6) and anti-establishment (-6.4). They would have broken strongly for Bush in 1992.

POLICY PRIORITIES: THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION

Reinventing Government

With independent Perot voters so focused on the failure of government and all powerful institutions, the Clinton administration has a special need to reinvent government -- to show that government can be an honorable place where efficiency and responsiveness to people are the highest priorities. Indeed, this national survey shows that Perot voters respond uniquely to the re-inventing government agenda.

REINVENTING GOVERNMENT AGENDA

(% much more likely to vote for a candidate who advances each position)

	Perot Voters	Clinton Voters	Bush Voters
The candidate wants to radically change the way government does things -- cut bureaucracy, make government more efficient, and give ordinary people better service and more choices.	72	59	57
The candidate wants to cut the salaries of members of Congress by 25 percent.	65	51	56
The candidate wants to cut the federal bureaucracy by 20 percent.	51	40	42
The candidate wants to ban any lobbying for foreign governments or companies and severely restrict the ability of lobbyists to talk or meet with government officials.	50	39	31

The Perot bloc shows modest interest in Perot's lobbying proposals and proposals to simply cut bureaucracy. There is intense interest, however, in "radically changing government" (72 percent much more likely) and in cutting perks and salaries (65 percent). On every issue, the Perot voters are much more supportive of reform than the Clinton and Bush supporters. The independent Perot bloc -- the most important swing segment -- is even more supportive of reform, with 76 percent much more likely to support a candidate pushing radical change in the way government does things.

It is important to contrast the levels of support for radical change versus cutting bureaucracy. The former scores 21 points higher (72 versus 51), suggesting that the Perot bloc is looking for creative reform, rather than slash and burn.

Policy Priorities

Conventional wisdom believes that Perot voters are fiscal conservatives, focused on the deficit, and philosophically committed to limited and small government. Ross Perot seems to accept that interpretation, and the Republicans are acting as if Perot voters only cared about such budgetary issues narrowly defined. But they are wrong. At the outset, we found that only a fourth of Perot voters saw the deficit as a top concern. It is evident from the reinventing government discussion that Perot voters want to wipe out privilege and remake government so that it responds to people rather than simply cut the size of bureaucracy.

When Perot voters look to Clinton, they dwell on the question of trust and promise, not specific policy differences. These voters want to see Clinton succeed in breaking gridlock and in advancing his agenda.

We told voters to imagine that it was 1996 and asked voters to assess a range of possible Clinton policy accomplishments. The results would, perhaps, surprise Ross Perot. These voters want Clinton to succeed on a broad range of fronts -- creating 8 million new jobs (65 percent, matters a great deal), radically changing government (62 percent), reducing the deficit (60 percent) and reforming health care (59 percent). For the independent swing bloc among the Perot voters, radically changing government scores at the top (67 percent) -- essentially even with job creation (66 percent).

Perot voters, in addition, are looking for changes, that will ease their financial pressures and produce rising living standards: cut middle class taxes (57 percent), keep inflation low (57 percent) and produce rising incomes (56 percent).

CLINTON ACCOMPLISHMENTS: 1996

(Percent Matters a Great Deal)
(Rank Order)

Top Tier Accomplishments

Creates 8 million jobs	65
Radically changes government	62
Reduces the federal deficit	60
Reforms health care	59
Cuts middle class taxes	57
Keeps inflation low	57
Produces rising incomes	56

Second Tier Accomplishments

Expands immunization/Head Start	52
Cuts middle class taxes/raise for rich	50
Creates national apprenticeship	48
Creates national student loan	48
Reforms welfare	47
Forms National Service Corps	47
Reforms campaigns/PACs	46
Acts against unfair trade, opens trade	45
Reduces lobbyist influence	43

Third Tier Accomplishments

Achieves democratic reforms -- Europe	37
Achieves less ethnic violence in Europe	34
Achieves more free trade	30
Achieves increased diversity	30

There is broad support for a range of second tier planks in the Clinton platform, like immunization, welfare reform, apprenticeships and National Service. Welfare reform, however, scores higher for the Perot independent bloc. In the focus groups, Perot voters saw welfare reform as possible and telling, about Bill Clinton. **It is an important vehicle for addressing the middle class values -- rewarding those who play by the rules -- central to reaching Perot voters more generally.**

The issue agenda shifts somewhat when the focus expands to Clinton voters -- what they are looking for from the Clinton administration by 1996. Here, health care reform, immunization and Head Start take on added importance. Health care reform is dead even with creating 8 million jobs (each at 75 percent) at the top of the top tier accomplishments. When the focus is on providing health care security, never losing coverage, the issue tops the list: 79 percent say it would matter a great deal. Clearly, a Clinton success in health care reform will allow him to consolidate his Democratic base. The top tier for Democrats also includes expanded immunizations and expanded Head Start (70 percent) -- accomplishments that Perot voters showed less interest in. The deficit (65 percent) and radically changing government (63 percent) are further back but nonetheless important even to the Democratic base. Expanding student loans regardless of income (60 percent) is nearly a top tier accomplishment for Democratic voters.

The ability of Clinton to succeed is checked somewhat by the deep skepticism among Perot voters. They are reluctant at first blush to admit that change is real. Obviously, focus groups are an artificial exercise but they bring out the near structural skepticism that diminishes the imagination. These voters, for example, were strongly responsive to the reinventing government initiative, yet inclined to think "it is too good to be true." They have trouble believing that government can be changed. Some are ready to believe that Clinton may be serious about the deficit, but they are worried that he will do it with higher taxes on the middle class: "who gets hurt"? Part of the power of welfare reform is the belief that Clinton is serious and that it can be done. It does open up the imagination: "it's about time," "if he can do it, I bless him."

JUDGING BILL CLINTON

The Perot voter is skeptical, watching Bill Clinton closely to see if he succeeds in breaking gridlock and changing the direction of the country. These voters are uncertain about Clinton personally. One-third express negative views (34 percent cold), but that is matched by the 37 percent who hold warm feelings and the 30 percent who do not yet know what to make of Clinton. Just 19 percent cannot rate Reagan and 12 percent, Perot, suggesting that these Perot voters are waiting to see what Clinton does as president. **At the time of this survey,** 54 percent describe him as a "different kind-of-Democrat" (compared to 37 percent "typical") and 54 percent say they feel mainly "hopeful" about him (compared to 40 percent "doubtful"). But clearly, the jury is out.

The doubts among Perot voters center, not on the direction Clinton wants to take the country, but on whether Clinton can succeed in governing and deliver on his promises. Some Perot voters worry about taxes (6 percent) and spending (3 percent) and gays in the military (5 percent). However, the dominant line of questioning focuses on whether Clinton can succeed and whether he can restore the public trust by doing in government what he spoke about in the campaign. Fully one-third of the Perot voters are worried that he will not deliver or succeed and, when combined with concerns about inexperience, the worry is evident for 40 percent of Perot voters.

DOUBTS ABOUT BILL CLINTON

<u>Success/Performance</u>	32
promises more than he can deliver, breaking promises	15
trying to do too much too soon	3
ability to implement his programs	6
ability to work with Congress	5
ability to carry out health care	3
<u>Inexperience</u>	8
inexperienced	5
inexperience: foreign affairs	2
inexperience: military	1

<u>Fiscal issues</u>		14
taxes		6
spending		3
controlling deficit		5
<u>Liberal issues</u>	7	
too liberal		1
gays in the military	5	
abortion		1
<u>Character issues</u>		12
flip/flops, holding firm		5
not trustworthy		4
politician		1
influenced by special interests		2

Many of the Perot voters are watching Bill Clinton to see whether he succeeds. And success has two meanings, given the Perot voters' general disaffection with politicians and political institutions. First, success means breaking gridlock and making things happen that could improve the country. In that context, many Perot voters say "we haven't really seen him take the control he needs to push this thing through," "may fall on his ass" (Bangor men); "stalled, missing his own program," "ineffective" (Akron non-union men); "he doesn't produce," "I believe in what you've promised, but I don't see anything happening," "can he really do it"? (San Bernardino men). In the first sense, then, success is technical -- proposing and getting the program through Congress.

Success in its second sense means doing what you said you would do, "keeping your promises." Perot voters feel politicians have lied to the people and given in to the special interests. Success, then, is a question of public trust, keeping the contract with the American people. Many Perot voters begin by assuming that Clinton, like any politician, will break his promises. That is a primary point of evaluation and where Perot

voters worry about Clinton: "made too many promises he couldn't keep," "he is not following through on his promises," "broken promises and higher taxes" (San Bernardino women); "not one promise kept," "all words and no action," "keep your promises, do your best for the people," "please live up to your promises -- fix the deficit ... don't raise taxes for the middle class" (Bangor women). To succeed with these voters, Clinton has to create a trust that he is working to honor his commitments.

Despite the deep skepticism, these Perot voters are ready to respond to a President Clinton who moves the country in a different direction. During the course of the survey, we read respondents various accounts of Clinton policy accomplishments (discussed below), including economic, health care and political reform. Almost 70 percent of Perot voters said that mattered "a great deal." Almost one-fourth (23 percent) then voted for Clinton in a 1996 rematch, with Perot holding 64 percent. But that scale of defection to Clinton would produce a major electoral shift to the Democrats. Perot is able to win much of that back by attacking Clinton for phony policies and taxes but the shifts suggest a potential volatility and an openness to the Clinton presidency.

In the focus groups, the Perot voters discussed at length the range of things a Clinton presidency might accomplish. When the groups concluded, half the participants shifted their vote preference to Clinton. That is obviously overstated but reinforces the judgement that Perot voters are watching Clinton to see what he accomplishes and whether he keeps his promises. That is evident in these concluding written comments:

It seems if Clinton did what he said, of promises he would do.

I would vote for Bill Clinton because facts are better than words. I would know that his plans are helping, and I would feel more secure. (Akron, union men)

In the past few years, he had touched on every issue I feel is of major importance, and he has achieve things no other president in my lifetime

ever has.

Because he made the important changes that we need -- more jobs, welfare reform, and lowering the deficit. And helped pull our country out of the recession.

He proved that he was a man of truth, and he really did care for the people and what they wanted. (San Bernardino women)

Because he made things work.

"If" change comes about, I would vote for Bill. (San Bernardino women)

If he actually got these things accomplished, I feel I could trust him to continue to do the job.

Because he kept promises and gave America something to be proud of.

Because he kept his promise after all.

I believe President Clinton has kept his word. (Bangor women)

Perot voters are extremely disillusioned with politics and politicians, yet they are watching Bill Clinton closely. They are ready to presume that he will fail them like the rest, but there is also a kernel of hope that Bill Clinton can relieve them of their anger and take America in a different direction. That conclusion depends on how Bill Clinton governs. These voters are deeply angry about government and big institutions, but they are ready to open up to a Bill Clinton who will change the course of government.

TABLE A
POLITICAL CULTURE - UNDERLYING ATTITUDES
Dimensions

		Factor Score
<u>Dimension One:</u> Middle Class Consciousness		
47.	Too many of the poor are trying to get something for nothing.	.661
45.	It's the middle class, <u>not</u> the poor, who really get a raw deal today.	.659
49.	Too often, equal rights is just used as an excuse for not being good enough to succeed.	.652
62.	We have gone too far in pushing equal rights for different groups in this country.	.525
39.	People who work hard for a living and don't make a lot of noise never seem to get a break.	.446
44.	People have bad values today.	.359
<u>Dimension Two:</u> Anti-government		
53.	You really can't trust the government to do the right thing.	.777
51.	Government always manages to mess things up.	.747
54.	Most politicians are corrupt.	.730
55.	Individual freedom has gotten out of hand.	.404

Factor
Score _____

Dimension Three: Financial Pressure

61. I often don't have enough money to make ends meet.	.758
63. It is almost impossible to keep up with the cost of living.	.743
59. Things always seem to turn out pretty good for me.	-.545

Dimension Four: Secular/Tolerance

60. Abortion should be legal and generally available and subject to only limited regulation.	.726
48. We should be more tolerant of people who choose to live according to their own moral standards and life-styles, even if they are very different from our own.	.706
57. The government should do more to reenforce moral and family values.	-.503

Dimension Five: Anti-establishment

43. Business corporations generally strike a fair balance between making profits and serving the public.	-.644
42. Public officials usually care what people like me think.	-.616
40. The system favors people who try to get around the rules.	.540
56. The special interests, not the people, get their way in government.	.378