

November 8, 2012

## Cultural Sea Change National Post-Election Survey Measures Impact of LGBT Issues

**To:** Interested Parties

**From:** Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research  
The Human Rights Campaign

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In 2004, the conservatives believed that placing "gay marriage" initiatives on the ballot would drive turnout among their base voters and help propel George Bush to re-election. Eight years later, there has been a nearly complete shift in our political culture. Four states either passed initiatives affirming the right of same sex couples to marry or defeated efforts to outlaw marriage for same-sex couples. And, in Wisconsin, voters elected the first openly gay member of the U.S. Senate. These victories reflect a shift in public opinion where a majority of Americans now favor marriage equality. Equally as important, there is evidence that holding a pro-equality view helped President Barack Obama rather than dragging down his support as some pundits predicted.

The following memo is based on the results of a survey of 1,001 voters nationally who participated in the 2012 election. This survey was conducted between November 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>, 2012 among those who had already voted or were almost certain they would vote in the 2012 election. The survey, commissioned by the Human Rights Campaign and conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research, carries an overall margin of error of +/- 3.10.

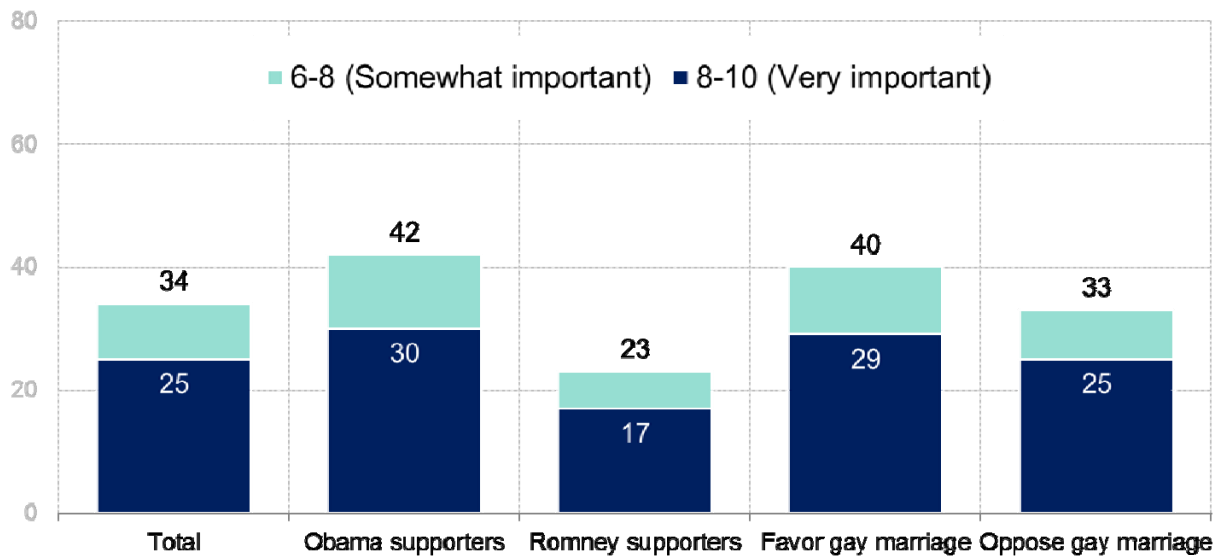
In 2012, President Obama ran with a strong record on protecting LGBT rights including repealing "Don't Ask Don't Tell," signing a hate crimes law, and making administrative policy changes that, among other things, ensure hospital visitation rights to gay couples. In the months leading up to the election, both President Obama and Vice President Biden expressed their support for marriage for gay and lesbian couples. Voters were well aware of these developments, with 63 percent correctly identifying his support for marriage equality. Some argued that this position could hurt the President's re-election chances, particularly in the context of a close election. But in an open ended question where voters were asked the most important reason to vote against re-election, only 2 percent cited "gay marriage." Moreover, only 15 percent said this issue was a very important issue to them in this election (15 percent 8-10 on a 0-10 scale).

Yet, there is evidence that among the voters who care about this issue, his position actually helped him; Obama voters were twice as likely to say that the gay marriage was important to

their vote (42 percent 6-10 on 0-10 scale) than Romney voters (23 percent 6-10 on a 0-10 scale). Among supporters of marriage equality, 40 percent said it was important to them compared to 33 percent among opponents of marriage equality. There is no evidence that this issue mobilized base Republican voters; in fact, there are more Romney voters that support marriage equality (27 percent) than Obama voters that oppose marriage equality (18 percent).

**Figure 1: Marriage Equality an Important Issue to Obama Supporters**

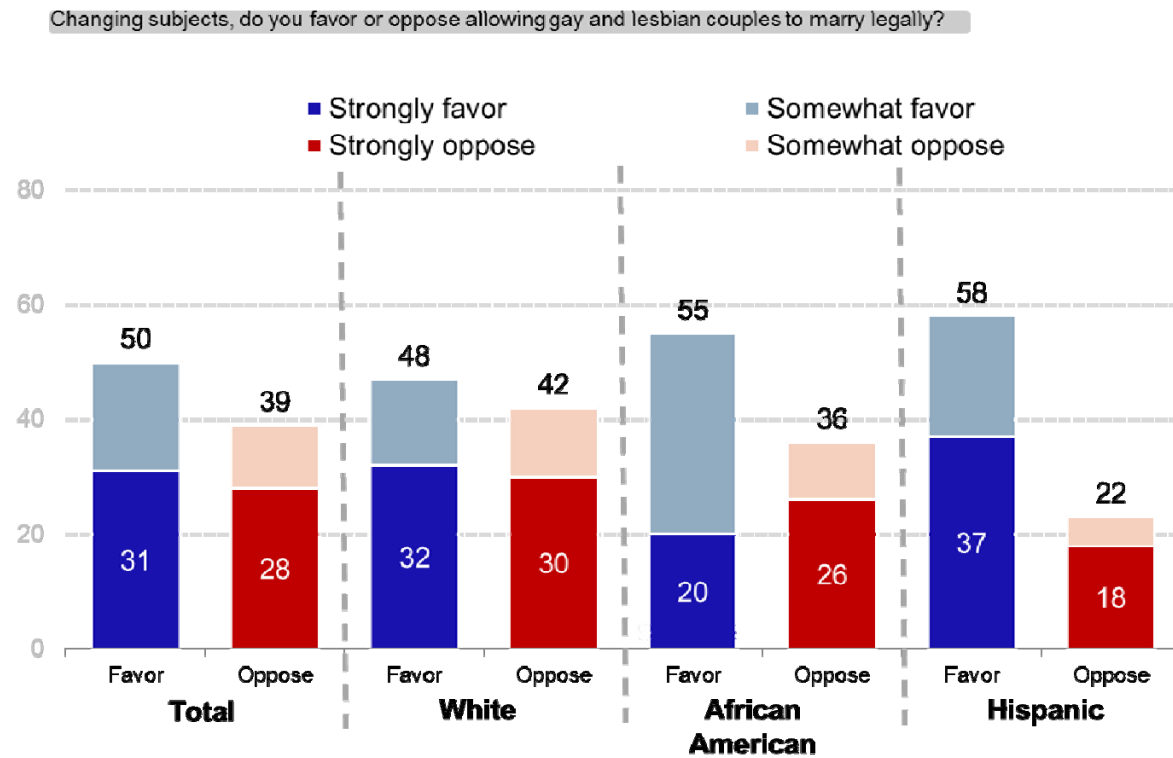
*How important was the issue of gay marriage to you personally in making up your mind about whom to support for President? On a scale of zero to ten, where zero would mean not at all important and ten would mean very important, how would you rate the importance of the issue of gay marriage to your decision about whom to support for President?*



Consistent with pre-election surveys, half of 2012 voters favor marriage equality. This position reflects strong support among Democrats (71 percent) and a solid majority among Independents (53 percent), as well as support among African Americans (55 percent) and Latinos (58 percent). Both our polling data and actual results run counter to the arguments that the African American community will not vote in favor of marriage equality. This is particularly evident in Maryland where a same-sex marriage referendum drew strong support in minority-heavy communities such as Baltimore city (57 percent of voters supported the referendum) and Prince George’s County (51 percent supported the referendum).

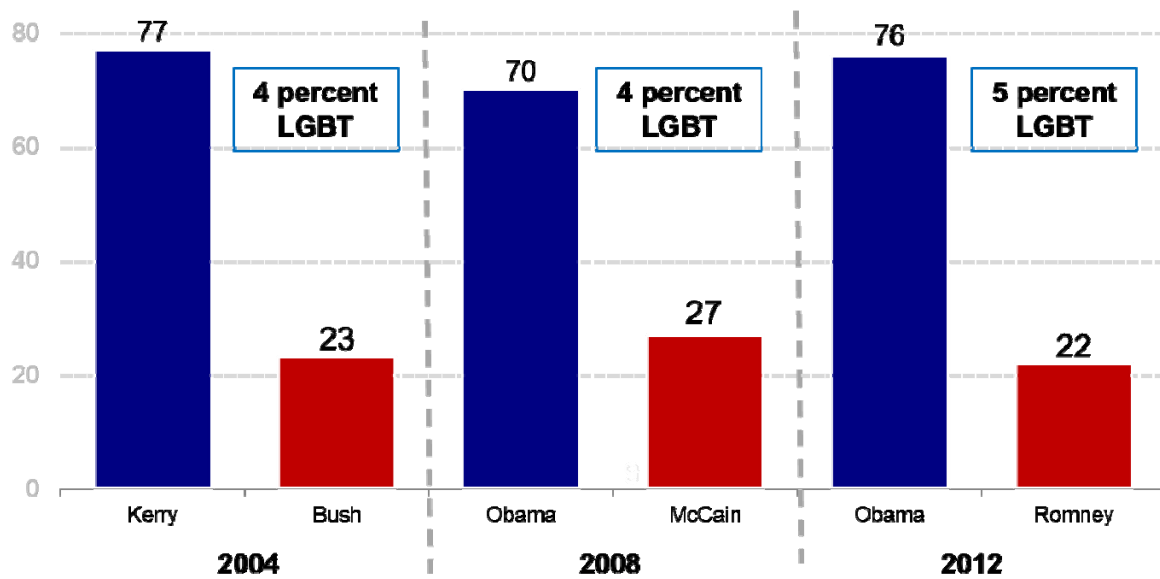
Support for combatting workplace discrimination is even stronger with three quarters favoring laws outlawing sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination in employment. A similar number (72 percent) support a federal policy that government contractors cannot discriminate against LGBT people in employment.

**Figure 2:** Support for Marriage Equality High Among African Americans, Latinos



Finally, LGBT voters offered increased support for President Obama compared to 2008. In 2008, 70 percent of LGBT voters supported President Obama compared to 76 percent in 2012.

**Figure 3:** Exit Polling Show Support for President Up Among LGBT Voters



*Data from CNN.com exit polling for 2004, 2008 And NYTimes.com exit polling for 2012*

In sum, while pundits focus on the way demographic shifts supported the President's re-election, there was also a cultural shift that clearly ushers in a new era in the politics of LGBT issues. Marriage equality is no longer a wedge issue, but a principled position that supporters of equality can feel confident bolsters them in electoral politics.