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BY: **Aaron Smith, Research Specialist**
RE: **POST-ELECTION VOTER ENGAGEMENT**
DATE: December 30, 2008

Many who were active online during the campaign expect to remain involved with the Obama Administration and promote his policies to others

Voters expect that the level of public engagement they experienced with Barack Obama during the campaign, much of it occurring online, will continue into the early period of his new administration. A majority of Obama voters expect to carry on efforts to support his policies and try to persuade others to back his initiatives in the coming year; a substantial number expect to hear directly from Obama and his team; and a notable cohort say they have followed the transition online.

These are the key findings of a new survey about public interest in the presidential transition process and voters' intentions to carry on the national conversation about the incoming administration:

- 62% of Obama voters expect that they will ask others to support the policies of the new administration over the next year. Among Obama voters who were engaged online during the campaign, 25% expect to support the administration's agenda by reaching out to others online.

- 46% of Obama voters and 33% of McCain voters expect to hear directly from their candidate or party leaders over the next year. Fully 51% of online Obama supporters expect some kind of ongoing communication from the new administration—34% of Obama-supporting email users expect email communication, 37% of social network site users expect SNS updates, and 11% of phone texters expect to receive text messages from the new administration.

- 27% of wired Obama voters have gone online to learn about or get involved with the presidential transition process.[1] Nine percent of online McCain voters have visited websites hoping to rebuild the GOP or elect conservative candidates in the future.

Background on the survey

This year's presidential campaign witnessed unprecedented levels of online engagement in the political process as millions of ordinary citizens used the internet to keep informed about politics, donate money, share their views, join communities built around shared interests or objectives and

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[1] Throughout this report, "wired" voters refer to those who go online.

mobilize others in support of their candidate. In the final days of the campaign, our colleagues at the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press found that 59% of voters had taken part in some sort of campaign activity online: 44% had sent or received campaign-related emails, 39% had watched online political videos and 37% had visited politically-oriented websites or blogs.

In light of this level of online involvement during the election itself, more questions arise about the ability of the Obama team to translate its successful internet political operations into new levels of engagement and activism when Obama assumes the presidency: Will voters who were mobilized during the campaign through email, text messaging and social media such as Facebook remain politically engaged as the immediacy of the campaign turns to more mundane matters of governance? Do those who went online to support the Obama/Biden ticket and mobilize their friends during the election itself expect to remain engaged with the new administration during the transition process and beyond? Similarly, will Republican voters look to the internet as a key component of mobilizing conservative voters and electing GOP candidates in the future?

The Pew Internet Project examined those questions in a survey fielded from November 20 to December 4. Some 2,254 adults were surveyed and the margin of error in the overall sample is plus or minus two percentage points. There were 1,591 internet users in the sample and the margin of error for analysis relating to them is 3 percentage points.

From BarackObama.com to Change.gov -- the current state of the online transition

Since Election Day, 15% of all online Americans have visited a website affiliated with the Obama transition effort. In partisan terms, 24% of online Obama voters have visited transition-related websites.[2] Moreover, even fans of his opponents are going online to see what all the fuss is about—among McCain/Palin voters who go online, 10% have visited a transition website.

In addition to visiting transition websites such as change.gov, 6% of online Obama voters have signed up to receive email updates about the transition or the new administration, and an additional 5% have joined or participated in email lists or online groups discussing the new administration.

Taken together, this means that 27% of wired Obama voters have gone online to get information or participate in discussions about the presidential transition process.

Prior online involvement during the presidential race is strongly predictive of online voter engagement during the transition process. Among those Obama voters who got online news about the election or were politically active online during the campaign (we refer to these individuals as online political users), 33% have gone online to track or discuss the transition process during the post-election period. By contrast, among Obama voters who use the internet but were not politically engaged during election season, just 4% have gone online to learn about or share their thoughts on the new administration.

Otherwise, online Obama supporters with different demographic and socio-economic characteristics tend to use the internet to keep up with the transition at roughly similar rates. The primary exception is older voters, who have not kept up with the transition at the same rate as younger Obama supporters, even among the cohort of seniors who go online.

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[2] Of those in our survey who voted in the presidential race, 50% voted for the Obama/Biden ticket. Among these Obama voters, 76% are internet users. Therefore, online Obama voters represent 38% of voters in our survey (and 30% of the total sample).

Wired Obama Voters and the Online Transition	
Percentage of online Obama voters (i.e. those who use the internet and voted for Obama on election day) within each group who have visited a website affiliated with the presidential transition or gone online to discuss or get information about the transition process	
All online Obama voters	27%
Sex	
Men	28%
Women	25
Race/Ethnicity	
White (non-Hispanic)	25%
Black (non-Hispanic)	31
English-speaking Hispanics	**
Education	
High school grad	27%
Some college	28
College grad	27
Annual Household Income	
Less than $30,000	26%
$30,000-$49,999	21
$50,000-$74,999	32
$75,000 or more	33
Age	
18-29	33%*
30-49	31
50-64	19
65+	9*
Online Campaign Engagement	
Online political user	33%
Go online, not online political user	4

*Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project 2008 Post-Election Survey, November-December 2008. Margin of error is ±4% based on online Obama voters. *Note: Due to the relatively small base size of 18-29 year olds (n=92) and those age 65+ (n=96) please interpret these results with some caution. **sample size is too small to report*

Of course, the Obama administration is not the only political entity to go live since election day. On the other side of the partisan divide, the online Republican community has been debating how to mobilize conservative voters and elect GOP candidates in the future, both on existing sites like redstate.com and on new entities such as rebuildtheparty.com.

In all, 5% of online Americans (and 9% of Republicans who go online) have visited websites related to efforts to rebuild the GOP. As was seen with Obama voters, GOP voters with prior exposure to the online political debate during election season are much more heavily involved in online post-election efforts than GOP voters who use the internet but are not engaged in the

online political debate. Some 11% of politically-engaged internet users who supported McCain have visited such sites, compared with fewer than 1% of McCain voters who use the internet but are not politically engaged online.[3]

Wired McCain Voters and Online GOP Efforts	
Percentage of online McCain voters (i.e. those who use the internet and voted for McCain on election day) within each group who have visited websites related to efforts to rebuild the Republican Party and elect GOP candidates in the future.	
All online McCain voters	9%
Sex	
Male	12%
Female	6
Race/Ethnicity	
White (non-Hispanic)	9%
Black (non-Hispanic)	**
English-speaking Hispanics	**
Education	
High school grad	10%
Some college	10
College grad	10
Annual Household Income	
Less than $30,000	**
$30,000-$49,999	7
$50,000-$74,999	8
$75,000 or more	12
Age	
18-29	**
30-49	10
50-64	6
65+	5
Online Campaign Engagement	
Online political user	11%
Go online, not online political user	<1

*Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project 2008 Post-Election Survey, November-December 2008. Margin of error is ±4% based on online McCain voters. **sample size is too small to report*

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[3] Of those in our survey who voted in the presidential race, 36% voted for the McCain/Palin ticket. Among McCain voters, 83% are internet users. Therefore, online McCain voters represent 30% of voters in our survey (and 24% of the total sample).

As campaigning becomes governing, voters continue to expect direct communication with their preferred candidate or party leaders.

In the 2008 election campaign, candidates increasingly relied on tools such as email and text messaging to reach out directly to supporters outside of the media or traditional communications channels such as television or radio.

Obama supporters in particular have a strong expectation that these communications will continue as the new administration takes office. Fully 46% of all Obama voters (and 51% of those who go online) expect to hear directly from Barack Obama or other officials affiliated with the new administration at least occasionally over the next year, and 15% of Obama voters expect to hear from the new administration on at least a weekly basis.

Notably, Obama supporters who use email and social networking sites not only expect continued communication with the administration through these channels, they also expect these communications to occur with greater frequency than mail or telephone contacts.

- 37% of Obama voters who use social networking sites expect to receive updates from the administration on these sites. Most expect to receive these updates on either a weekly (12%) or monthly (11%) basis, while 14% expect them to occur less frequently.

- 34% of Obama voters who use email expect to hear from the new administration via email. One in ten (10%) expect to receive these email contacts on a weekly basis, and 9% expect to do so monthly.

- 38% of all Obama voters expect to hear from the administration via mail. Some 7% expect to receive mail from the new administration on a weekly basis and 12% expect to do so monthly, while 19% expect to be contacted by mail just a few times a year.

- 17% of all Obama voters expect to receive phone calls from the new administration at least occasionally. Just 2% expect to receive phone calls on a weekly basis, and most (10%) would prefer these communications to take place a few times a year.

- 11% of Obama voters who own cell phones and use text messaging expect to be contacted by text messaging, with most (6%) preferring that these text message contacts occur less than once a month.

At the moment, McCain supporters do not have the same expectations of regular direct contact with their party or its leaders as Obama supporters. One-third (33%) of McCain voters expect to have such contact at least occasionally over the next year in one form or another (vs. 46% of Obama voters), while just 4% expect to be contacted on a weekly basis (vs. 15% of Obama voters). The differences between Obama and McCain voters are particularly pronounced when it comes to online contact. Tech-using Obama supporters have a much greater expectation of direct future contact with their "team" than do tech-using McCain voters.

Obama Voters Have Greater Expectations for Future Engagement, Particularly Online Engagement			
% of Obama/McCain voters who expect to be contacted at least occasionally in the following 12 months using…			
	Obama Voters	*McCain Voters*	*Difference in percentage points*
Via mail	38%	29%	+9
Via phone calls	17	12	+5
Via email (based on email users)	34	20	+14
Via text messages (based on those who text message)	11	3	+8
Via updates on social networking sites (based on SNS users)	37	8	+29
Via any method	**46**	**33**	**+13**

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project 2008 Post-Election Survey, November-December 2008. Margin of error is ±4% based on all Obama voters and ±4% based on all McCain voters. Margin of error for email, social networking and text messaging users is larger.

The role of the internet in future voter engagement

A large number of Americans intend to carry on the campaign debate into the first year of the Obama Administration. Some 31% of Americans say they expect to ask other people to support some Obama policies in personal conversations; 16% say they expect to ask others to back President Obama in phone conversations; and 10% say they expect to ask others to support Obama using online methods.

A significant majority of voters who supported the Obama/Biden ticket are also prepared to encourage others to support the new administration's policy agenda. Among those who voted for the Democratic presidential ticket in the fall, 62% expect to ask others to support at least some of the new administration's policies. Roughly half (48%) expect to do so in person, one-quarter (25%) expect to do so on the phone, and 16% expect to do so online.[4]

Reflecting the campaign's focus on online mobilization and voter engagement, those Obama voters who were highly engaged in the online campaign expect to be particularly engaged in promoting the administration's agenda, especially online. Among online political users who voted for the Obama ticket, fully 68% say that they expect to press others to support the new administration's policies in the coming year. Fully 25% of these engaged online activists say that they will likely use the internet to encourage others to support president Obama's policy agenda in the year ahead.

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[4] Note: Totals may exceed 100% due to multiple responses.

Obama Voters Expect to Remain Mobilized				
% of Obama voters within each group who expect to ask others to support the policies and actions President Obama will pursue as president...				
	In person	*On the phone*	*Online*	*Total yes*
All Obama voters	**48%**	**25%**	**16%**	**62%**
Internet users	51	25	21	**64**
Online political users	56	25	25	**68**
All black (non-Hispanic)	50	35	10	**67**
All 18-29 year olds	55	21	23	**69**

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project 2008 Post-Election Survey, November-December 2008. Margin of error is ±4% based on all Obama voters. Margin of error for subgroups is larger.

About the Pew Internet Project

The Pew Internet Project is an initiative of the Pew Research Center, a nonprofit "fact tank" that provides information on the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world. The Pew Internet Project explores the impact of the internet on children, families, communities, the work place, schools, health care and civic/political life. The Project is nonpartisan and takes no position on policy issues. Support for the project is provided by The Pew Charitable Trusts.

November 2008 Post-Election Tracking Survey

Final Topline   12/9/08

Data for November 20 – December 4, 2008

Princeton Survey Research Associates International
for the Pew Internet & American Life Project

Sample: n = 2,254 adults, age 18 and older
Interviewing dates: 11.20.08 – 12.04.08
Margin of error is plus or minus 2 percentage points for results based on total sample [n=2,254]
Margin of error is plus or minus 3 percentage points for results based on internet users [n=1,591]
Margin of error is plus or minus 3 percentage points for results based on online political users [n=1,186]

Q28 Now that the 2008 presidential election is over, have you... [INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE]?
Based on internet users [N=1,591]

	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW	REFUSED
a. Visited websites that are part of the Obama transition effort as he prepares to take office as President in January	15	85	*	0
b. Visited websites related to efforts to rebuild the Republican Party and help elect GOP candidates in the future	5	95	0	*
c. Signed up for email updates about the transition or the new administration	3	97	*	0
d. Participated in or joined any email lists or groups that are discussing the new administration	3	96	*	0

Q29 In the coming 12 months, I would like to know how often, if ever, you expect to hear from Barack Obama or some other official who supports Obama. Over the next year or so, do you expect to [INSERT ITEMS IN ORDER] from Obama or some other Obama official once a week, once a month, several times a year or never?

Based on those who voted for Obama [N=879]

	ONCE A WEEK	ONCE A MONTH	SEVERAL TIMES A YEAR	NEVER	DON'T KNOW	REFUSED
a. Receive MAIL	7	12	19	55	7	*
b. Receive phone calls	2	4	10	77	6	1
Item C: Based on email users who voted for Obama [N=601]						
c. Receive EMAIL	10	9	15	63	3	1
Item D: Based on those who voted for Obama and use text messages [N=294]						
d. Receive TEXT MESSAGES	2	2	6	88	*	1
Item F: Based on SNS users who voted for Obama [N=214]						
e. Receive updates on Social Networking sites	12	11	14	62	1	0

Q30 In the coming 12 months, I would like to know how often, if ever, you expect to hear from John McCain, Sarah Palin or someone else who is involved in the Republican Party. Over the next year or so, do you expect to [INSERT ITEMS IN ORDER] from McCain, Palin or someone else who is involved in the Republican Party once a week, once a month, several times a year or never?

Based on those who voted for McCain [N=740]

	ONCE A WEEK	ONCE A MONTH	SEVERAL TIMES A YEAR	NEVER	DON'T KNOW	REFUSED
a. Receive MAIL	4	7	18	67	4	*
b. Receive phone calls	1	4	7	84	3	*
Item C: Based on email users who voted for McCain [N=551]						
c. Receive EMAIL	3	7	10	78	2	*
Item D: Based on those who voted for McCain and use text messages [N=245]						
d. Receive TEXT MESSAGES	1	1	1	97	*	0
Item F: Based on SNS users who voted for McCain [N=118]						
e. Receive updates on Social Networking sites	1	2	4	92	1	0

Q31 Thinking about the policies and actions that Barack Obama will support next year as President, do you expect that you will be asking other people to support some of those Obama policies, either by talking to them in person, on the telephone or online?

	CURRENT	
%	31	Yes/in person
	16	Yes/on the phone
	10	Yes/online
	49	No, don't expect to do this
	8	Don't know
	1	Refused

Note: Table total may exceed 100% due to multiple responses.

Methodology

This report is based on the findings of the Post-Election survey, a daily tracking survey on Americans' use of the Internet. The results in this report are based on data from telephone interviews conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International between November 20 to December 4, 2008, among a sample of 2,254 adults, 18 and older. For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects is plus or minus 2.4 percentage points. For results based Internet users (n=1,591), the margin of sampling error is plus or minus 2.9 percentage points. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting telephone surveys may introduce some error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

The sample for this survey is a random digit sample of telephone numbers selected from telephone exchanges in the continental United States. The random digit aspect of the sample is used to avoid "listing" bias and provides representation of both listed and unlisted numbers (including not-yet-listed numbers). The design of the sample achieves this representation by random generation of the last two digits of telephone numbers selected on the basis of their area code, telephone exchange, and bank number.

New sample was released daily and was kept in the field for at least five days. The sample was released in replicates, which are representative subsamples of the larger population. This ensures that complete call procedures were followed for the entire sample. At least 10 attempts were made to complete an interview at sampled households. The calls were staggered over times of day and days of the week to maximize the chances of making contact with a potential respondent. Each household received at least one daytime call in an attempt to find someone at home. In each contacted household, interviewers asked to speak with the youngest male currently at home. If no male was available, interviewers asked to speak with the youngest female at home. This systematic respondent selection technique has been shown to produce samples that closely mirror the population in terms of age and gender. All interviews completed on any given day were considered to be the final sample for that day.

Non-response in telephone interviews produces some known biases in survey-derived estimates because participation tends to vary for different subgroups of the population, and these subgroups are likely to vary also on questions of substantive interest. In order to compensate for these known biases, the sample data are weighted in analysis. The demographic weighting parameters are derived from a special analysis of the most recently available Census Bureau's March 2007 Annual Social and Economic Supplement. This analysis produces population parameters for the demographic characteristics of adults age 18 or older, living in households that contain a telephone. These parameters are then compared with the sample characteristics to construct sample weights. The weights are derived using an iterative technique that simultaneously balances the distribution of all weighting parameters.

Following is the full disposition of all sampled telephone numbers:

Table 2:Sample Disposition

26,690	Total Numbers Dialed
1,563	Non-residential
1,369	Computer/Fax
17	Cell phone
10,498	Other not working
1,842	Additional projected not working
11,401	Working numbers
42.7%	Working Rate
614	No Answer / Busy
961	Answering Machine / Voice Mail
122	Other Non-Contact
9,704	Contacted numbers
85.1%	Contact Rate
200	Callback
6,453	Refusal
3,051	Cooperating numbers
31.4%	Cooperation Rate
457	Language Barrier
2,594	Eligible numbers
85.0%	Eligibility Rate
340	Break-off
2,254	Completes
86.9%	Completion Rate
23.3%	Response Rate

PSRAI calculates a response rate as the product of three individual rates: the contact rate, the cooperation rate, and the completion rate. Of the residential numbers in the sample, 85 percent were contacted by an interviewer and 31 percent agreed to participate in the survey. Eighty-five percent were found eligible for the interview. Furthermore, 87 percent of eligible respondents completed the interview. Therefore, the final response rate is 23 percent.