

What's on the Minds of Unmarried Voters

Annotated campaign flyer submitted by an AtMP member, C. K. of Camp Hill, PA

"What should candidates be saying to recognize or attract unmarried voters?"

From September 30 – October 3 and November 3 - 4, 2008, AtMP conducted an informal survey of members who had pledged to vote. The questionnaire elicited detailed comments from over 50 people in at least 23 states. Only 17% said they believe that the presidential candidates recognized the importance unmarried voters.

The economy is the most important issue in the presidential election for AtMP members, raised by 50% of respondents. One-third cite war / peace / foreign affairs. Health care concerns follow closely, cited by 28% of respondents. These members want to hear more about "health care for everyone." They are looking for a candidate who will "increase support for single parents [and] include unmarried partners in health care." Notably, "health care for the uninsured" is also the top priority among people who registered to vote through AtMP's online partnership with Rock the Vote (14 new voters in 10 states).

Another important issue raised in AtMP's voter survey was taxes. Specifically, unmarried voters want to hear candidates "acknowledge that we exist and stop making tax policy that hurts us," because "income taxes should be the same whether single or married."

Other issues of concern include: reproductive rights, housing, education, environment / energy, and greater equality for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered population.

Overwhelmingly (63%) respondents want to hear direct references to the way marital status affects people's lives and public policies. In

addition, 24% want to hear more specifics about health care reform. Detailed recommendations included:

- I'm not sure, but they're not saying it.

- Acknowledge that we are not all part of married-with-kids families.

- They should mention unmarried voters explicitly, address the issues facing unmarried voters, and directly address their campaigns (TV ads, etc.) to unmarried voters in order to get them to go out and vote for them.

- How unmarried people will benefit from their healthcare and economic policies.

- I want my candidate to say "no, you do not have to marry someone for the rights of your child to be recognized by law. No, you don't have to have requested permission from the government to bind your lives together, and if something ever happens to one of us, the other will not have to go through a terrible battle for their basic right."

- Our vote counts too!

Many AtMP members are available to speak on record about their concerns, including Ms. C.T. of Ohio, who wrote: "Candidates don't seem to be aware that not every American is either married, wants to be married, or is LGBT and wants to be married. I'm an educated woman (PhD), who's chosen to have no children, and remains unmarried by choice. I'm also a homeowner. I care for an elderly grandparent. I have my own health concerns, and I need to plan for my own retirement since I will not have a spouse or children to support me. I want to see tax relief and incentives that aren't based on having a partner or on having children. I want health care options that separate coverage from my employment status. I want health care that allows me to define my family as I see fit -- in my current situation, to cover an elderly grandmother who raised me."