

Could Pro-Lifers Hand Romney the Election?

Written off, derided, neglected—and now ruthlessly exploited by the Obama campaign with a tailwind of media bias—the **abortion** issue may yet be decisive in the 2012 election. Decisive for Gov. **Mitt Romney**, that is.

This might seem counterintuitive at first. After all, the Obama campaign is a nest of political pros who would not have chosen to hammer “reproductive choice” without solid polling that the issue cuts their way, right? Given that the media echo chamber can ferret out a GOP “war on women” in the debate over **Planned Parenthood** funding, but not on the question of sex selection abortions, the inference that “abortion helps Obama” is certainly reasonable.

Still, abortion as a voting matter has for decades conferred an increment in favor of pro-life candidates. That increment does not occur everywhere, but it shows up in national polls and is an even stronger factor in most of this year’s designated swing states. Consider the Gallup poll. From 1995 to the present, the percentage of U.S. adults who label themselves pro-life has risen from 33 to 50 percent, an increase of 17 percentage points. At the same time, the percentage of adults who label themselves pro-choice has dropped from 56 to 41 percent, an enormous swing.

Changing labels has not, however, coincided to date with radical increases in the number of single-issue voters. Even so, Gallup’s measure of voting sentiment from 1984 to the present has found that pro-life candidates (typically but not always Republicans) have a net gain of between 2.2 and 3.4 percentage points due to their stance on the right to life. The most recent Gallup poll on this subject, from September 24 to 27, found that 16 percent of voters are more or less single

issue on abortion, and 9 percent versus 7 percent are pro-life in their outlook and voting behavior.

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