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— Research —

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## Americans' reactions to Mid-Term Election Ads - November 1, 2010

According to a special Morgan Poll conducted over the last 48 hours using *The Reactor* – Roy Morgan's online real time *reaction* device based on a sample of over 500 people across the United States of America, three fairly traditional ads gained the most positive *reaction* from the American people this week:

- Meg Whitman's call to restore the American dream,
- Jerry Brown's call to remember 30 years ago when anything was possible in California, and
- Chris Coons' ad that started in the O'Donnell Zone (demonising Christine O'Donnell) and presented the alternative Chris Coons history of achievement,

The 'Rebel Headquarters' ad with its back-to-the-future style of advertising, warning of the future if people don't vote and urging people to take five minutes to vote, gained a warm *reaction* from younger people, probably the primary target. However the *reaction* of the US electorate was overall poor and divided strongly along party lines, with Republicans *reacting* very negatively and Democrats just above the neutral line.

Arnold Schwarzenegger and Meg Whitman saying exactly the same lines received a strange neutral response. The ad did not divide along party lines as would have been expected, instead the *Reactor* flat-lined.

The *reaction* to Sharron Angle's two negative ads was predictably negative. As has been noted in previous political ad research, electors typically *react* negatively to negative or critical communication. Joe Miller's negative ad was not saved by the spooky, Halloween influenced delivery. The electorate *reacted* negatively.

Roy Morgan Research has monitored Americans' *reactions* to a range of political ads during the run-up to the Mid-Term Elections. Two themes emerge consistently:

1. Americans do not *react* well to criticism and negativity in advertising. They *react* well to positive messages, either of proof of success or a promise of good things to come.
2. The ads that persuade most reliably are those that identify a problem and then provide a solution.

In the last six ads tested this is best exemplified in the Chris Coons ad – Christine O'Donnell is portrayed as the problem and Chris Coons the solution. It is a simple formula but the *Reactor* response is clear.

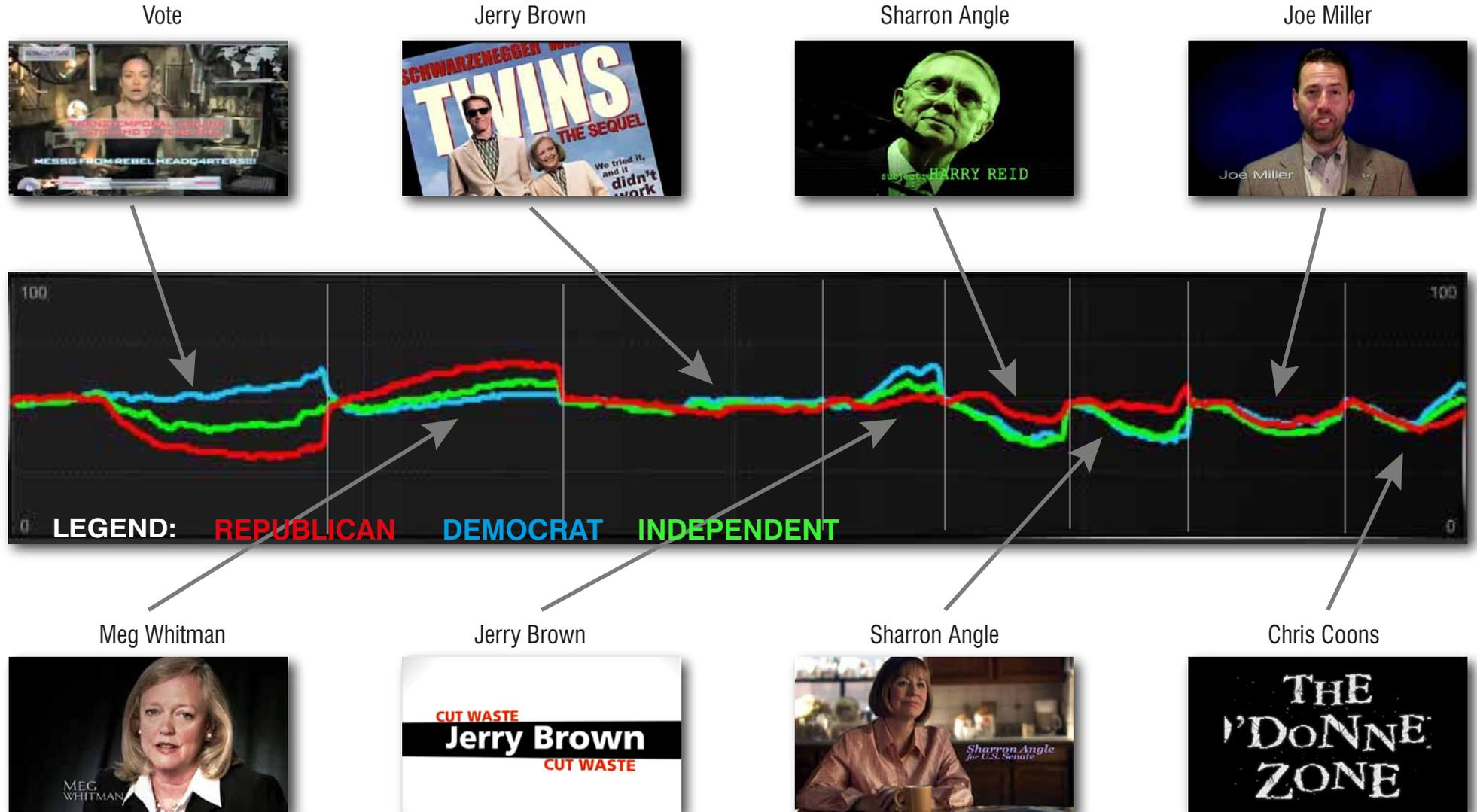
[View a graphic overview of the results here.](#)

[View a 5 minute video of the \*Reactor\* results here.](#)

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## How positively or negatively do Americans feel about these mid-term election ads?



Over the last few days, Roy Morgan Research tested a selection of ads with *The Reactor* - an online device that continuously measures respondents' reactions.



The *reactions* of over 500 respondents confirm that, typically, Americans tend to *react* negatively to messages that are entirely negative.