

Survey: Young evangelicals at odds with their political parties

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WASHINGTON (RNS) A large majority of young evangelicals see a conflict between their faith and their political party — but Democrats grapple with this disconnect much more than Republicans.

So says a new survey from Sojourners, the progressive Christian group, which asked evangelicals under the age of 35 about their political views and civic engagement.

The survey — of mostly single, college-educated evangelicals — showed that 54 percent identified as Republicans, 26 percent as Democrats and 20 percent as Independents or something else.

Of the Republicans, 65 percent said their faith convictions frequently or sometimes conflict with the positions taken by the political party they usually support. That was true of 83 percent of Democrats.

"As a young Christian, I know no candidate or party ever lines up perfectly with my religious beliefs. But that doesn't stop me from voting or engaging the political system," said Tim King, a young evangelical who also works as a spokesman for Sojourners.

"Voting is always a choice between imperfect people. That's why engaging in advocacy is so important — when politicians are missing important issues, we have the ability as voters to try and put those issues on their agendas," King said.

Sojourners released "Young Evangelicals in the 2012 Elections" on Tuesday (Oct. 16) as a snapshot of the group as a political force.

Because the survey was based on only 161 respondents, Sojourners acknowledged that the survey gives more of an impression of the group than solid scientific data. The margin of error of the survey is a relatively high plus or minus 8 percentage points.

Among other questions, the survey also asked about the separation of church and state (47 percent agree or strongly agree that there must be strict separation) and the content of sermons they hear (55 percent had heard abortion addressed from the pulpit, and 73 percent had heard about poverty).