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IOWA: CRUZ TAKES CAUCUS LEAD

Former Carson supporters swing to Texas senator

West Long Branch, NJ – Ted Cruz commands the top spot in the latest ***Monmouth University Poll*** of likely Iowa Republican caucusgoers – his first lead in any early state poll of the 2016 cycle. Donald Trump and Marco Rubio are within a few percentage points of one another for second place. The poll also found that an influential House member’s recent endorsement is only one factor behind Cruz’s rise, which has come primarily at Ben Carson’s expense.

Ted Cruz earns 24% support when likely caucusgoers are asked who they will support in the Republican contest. This marks a clear lead over Donald Trump (19%), Marco Rubio (17%), and Ben Carson (13%). Jeb Bush stands at 6% and Rand Paul is at 4%, while Carly Fiorina and John Kasich earn 3% each. None of the other six candidates tested in the poll draws more than 2% support.

Monmouth showed Carson on top two months ago, but his support has plummeted by 19 points since then. Cruz’s support, on the other hand, has jumped by 14 points. Rubio has seen his vote share increase by 7 points since October. Support levels for both Trump and Bush are nearly identical to two months ago.

Evangelical voters, who make up about half of the Iowa GOP caucus electorate, back Cruz (30%) over Trump (18%), Rubio (16%), and Carson (15%). In October, Carson held the advantage with this group – garnering 36% support to 18% for Trump, 12% for Cruz, and 9% for Rubio.

Cruz also has an edge among voters who call themselves tea party supporters. He commands 36% support among this group, compared to 20% for Trump, 17% for Carson, and 11% for Rubio. In October, this group gave their vote to Carson (30%) over Trump (22%), Cruz (17%), and Rubio (8%).

There is a notable gender difference among caucusgoers’ preferences. Men prefer Cruz (29%) and Trump (24%) over Rubio (12%) and Carson (12%). Women support Rubio (23%) and Cruz (19%) over Carson (15%) and Trump (14%).

“This marks the first time Ted Cruz has held a lead in any of the crucial early states. As Ben Carson’s stock has fallen, Cruz has been able to corral most of those voters,” said Patrick Murray, director of the independent Monmouth University Polling Institute in West Long Branch, NJ. “Congressman King’s endorsement may not be the primary reason for this swing, but it certainly put a stamp on the Cruz surge in Iowa.”

Nearly 1-in-5 likely caucusgoers say that Rep. Steve King’s recent endorsement of Cruz makes them more likely to support the Texas senator – including 7% who say it makes them a lot more likely and 12% a little more likely. This compares to 7% who say the endorsement makes them less likely to caucus for Cruz. The vast majority (73%) say King’s endorsement will not be a factor in who they decide to support at the caucuses. Among Cruz’s current supporters, 35% say King’s endorsement makes them more likely to caucus for Cruz.

Turnout will be a major factor in the final standings in Iowa. GOP caucus turnout over the past 35 years has ranged from about 87,000 to 122,000. Trump does better with more independent-minded voters, while Rubio’s support increases among those who regularly take part in the state’s Republican primary elections.

About 1-in-7 voters in the poll sample are non-GOP voters who say they are likely to caucus as Republicans in February. Trump holds 30% of this group’s support, compared to 21% for Cruz, 15% for Carson, and 10% for Rubio. About 7-in-10 voters in the sample, though, regularly cast GOP primary ballots. Among this more probable group of voters, Cruz (25%) and Rubio (21%) garner greater support than Trump (16%) and Carson (13%).

“Trump will need a huge organizational effort to get independent voters to show up in a contest where they have historically participated in small numbers. Without this dynamic, the underlying fundamentals appear to favor Cruz and Rubio,” said Murray.

One thing Trump still has going for him is that 6-in-10 GOP voters in Iowa would be content to see him as their party’s nominee – including 17% who would be enthusiastic about this outcome and 44% who would be satisfied. Another 20% of caucusgoers would be dissatisfied and just 17% say they would be upset. It’s worth noting that two-thirds (67%) of Cruz voters would be okay with Trump as the Republican nominee, but fewer Rubio (55%) and Carson (48%) supporters feel the same.

It is also important to note that few voters are locked into a candidate with less than two months to go before the caucuses are held. Just 1-in-5 (20%) Iowa GOP caucusgoers say they are completely set on their choice, which is basically unchanged from two months ago (19%). Another 49% say they have a strong preference right now, 18% have a slight preference, and 13% are really undecided.

Cruz, Rubio, and Carson currently hold similarly high positive ratings from likely caucusgoers. This represents a slight bump for Cruz and Rubio since the October *Monmouth University Poll*, but a

large drop for Carson. Rubio holds a favorable rating of 70% – up 5 points since October – and an unfavorable rating of just 16%. Cruz holds a favorable rating of 67% – up 8 points since October – and a 19% unfavorable rating. Carson also has a 67% favorable rating, but this is down significantly from his 84% positive rating in October. His unfavorable rating now stands at 19%.

Trump’s rating of 54% favorable and 36% unfavorable is essentially unchanged from two months ago. Jeb Bush earns a net negative rating of 38% favorable and 45% unfavorable, which is similar to his October rating.

The *Monmouth University Poll* was conducted by telephone from December 3 to 6, 2015 with 425 Iowa voters likely to attend the Republican presidential caucuses in February 2016. This sample has a margin of error of ± 4.8 percent. The poll was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute in West Long Branch, NJ.

Methodological note: This poll marks a slight modification in Monmouth’s sampling methodology for the Iowa Republican caucuses. Prior sample frames included past state primary voters only. The current poll includes a small proportion (30%) of regular general election voters. The addition of these voters did not have a significant impact on the overall findings. For example, under the previous tighter sampling frame, Cruz’s support would be 25% compared to 24% in the full sample, Trump’s support would be 16% rather than 19%, and Carson’s 13% support would be unchanged. Rubio’s support using the prior frame would be slightly higher (21%) than in the current frame (17%). The current sample frame suggests a high-end turnout level of approximately 140,000 caucusgoers.

DATA TABLES

The questions referred to in this release are as follows:

(* Some columns may not add to 100% due to rounding.)

1. Who would you support if the presidential caucus was being held today and the candidates for the Republican nomination were – [NAMES WERE ROTATED]

	December 2015	October 2015	August 2015	July 2015
Ted Cruz	24%	10%	9%	7%
Donald Trump	19%	18%	23%	13%
Marco Rubio	17%	10%	4%	5%
Ben Carson	13%	32%	23%	8%
Jeb Bush	6%	8%	5%	7%
Rand Paul	4%	3%	3%	5%
Carly Fiorina	3%	5%	10%	3%
John Kasich	3%	2%	4%	2%
Chris Christie	2%	1%	1%	1%
Mike Huckabee	2%	2%	2%	6%
Rick Santorum	1%	1%	2%	3%
Lindsey Graham	<1%	0%	0%	0%
Jim Gilmore	0%	0%	0%	0%
George Pataki	0%	0%	<1%	<1%
(VOL) Other	0%	0%	0%	0%
Bobby Jindal	n/a	2%	1%	4%
Rick Perry	n/a	n/a	1%	3%
Scott Walker	n/a	n/a	7%	22%
(VOL) "Uncommitted"	1%	1%	n/a	n/a
(VOL) Undecided	4%	5%	5%	11%
(n)	425	400	405	452

2. And who would be your second choice?

	December 2015	October 2015	August 2015	July 2015
Ted Cruz	18%	14%	13%	7%
Marco Rubio	17%	14%	8%	9%
Donald Trump	14%	12%	10%	9%
Ben Carson	10%	19%	12%	6%
Jeb Bush	6%	5%	5%	6%
Carly Fiorina	6%	8%	8%	3%
Chris Christie	5%	1%	3%	2%
Mike Huckabee	4%	2%	5%	5%
John Kasich	2%	1%	2%	1%
Rand Paul	2%	<1%	3%	4%
Rick Santorum	1%	1%	1%	3%
Jim Gilmore	0%	0%	0%	<1%
Lindsey Graham	0%	<1%	<1%	<1%
George Pataki	0%	0%	0%	<1%
(VOL) Other	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Bobby Jindal</i>	n/a	6%	6%	8%
<i>Rick Perry</i>	n/a	n/a	2%	5%
<i>Scott Walker</i>	n/a	n/a	9%	13%
(VOL) No one	7%	6%	6%	4%
(VOL) Undecided	8%	9%	7%	15%
(n)	425	400	405	452

3. Which of the following best describes where your decision stands at this moment: I am completely decided on which candidate I will support, I have a strong preference right now but I am willing to consider other candidates, I have a slight preference among a group of candidates I like, or I am really undecided among a number of candidates?

	December 2015	October 2015	August 2015
Completely decided	20%	19%	12%
Strong preference	49%	43%	42%
Slight preference	18%	19%	27%
Undecided	13%	18%	20%

4. I'm going to read you a few names of people who are running for president in 2016. Please tell me if your general impression of each is favorable or unfavorable, or if you don't really have an opinion. [NAMES WERE ROTATED]

	Favorable	Unfavorable	No opinion
Former Florida Governor Jeb Bush	38%	45%	16%
--October 2015	42	46	12
--August 2015	32	51	17
--July 2015	40	42	18
Commentator and Doctor Ben Carson	67%	19%	13%
--October 2015	84	7	9
--August 2015	81	6	14
--July 2015	63	11	26
Texas Senator Ted Cruz	67%	19%	13%
--October 2015	59	24	18
--August 2015	58	21	21
--July 2015	53	17	29
Florida Senator Marco Rubio	70%	16%	15%
--October 2015	65	16	19
--August 2015	64	13	23
--July 2015	64	14	22
Businessman Donald Trump	54%	36%	9%
--October 2015	53	38	9
--August 2015	52	33	14
--July 2015	47	35	18

5. How would you feel if Donald Trump became the Republican nominee – enthusiastic, satisfied, dissatisfied, or upset?

	December 2015
Enthusiastic	17%
Satisfied	44%
Dissatisfied	20%
Upset	17%
(VOL) Don't know	2%

6. Which of the following issues is the most important to you in deciding who to support for the Republican nomination? [*ITEMS WERE ROTATED*]

	December 2015	July 2015
Immigration	7%	12%
The economy & jobs	15%	16%
National security	29%	28%
Social issues like abortion and same-sex marriage	6%	11%
Taxes and government spending	19%	18%
Education	1%	4%
Terrorism	11%	n/a
(VOL) All equally important	9%	10%
(VOL) Other	3%	2%
(VOL) Don't know	0%	1%

7. Congressman Steve King endorsed Ted Cruz for President. Does his endorsement make you more likely or less likely to support Cruz, or does it have no impact on who you will caucus for? [*If "MORE LIKELY": Is that a lot or a little more likely?*]

	December 2015
Lot more likely	7%
Little more likely	12%
Less likely	7%
No impact	73%
(VOL) Don't know	1%

The *Monmouth University Poll* was sponsored and conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute from December 3 to 6, 2015 with a statewide random sample of 425 Iowa voters drawn from a list of registered voters who voted in at least one of the last two state primary elections, voted in both the 2012 and 2014 general elections, or have registered to vote in the past year. Results in this report are based on voters who say they are likely to attend the Republican presidential caucuses in February 2016 (including voters already registered as Republicans and voters who say they will declare themselves as Republicans for the caucuses). This includes 301 contacted by a live interviewer on a landline telephone and 124 contacted by a live interviewer on a cell phone, in English. Monmouth is responsible for all aspects of the survey design, data weighting and analysis. Final sample is weighted for age and gender based on state registration list information on the pool of voters who participate in primary elections. Data collection support provided by Braun Research (field) and Aristotle (voter list). For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling has a maximum margin of plus or minus 4.8 percentage points (unadjusted for sample design). Sampling error can be larger for sub-groups (see table below). In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

POLL DEMOGRAPHICS (weighted)		
53% Male	9% 18-34	50% Evangelical Christian
47% Female	22% 35-49	50% Not evangelical
	39% 50-64	
	30% 65+	

	MARGIN OF ERROR									
	LIKELY CAUCUS-GOER	GENDER		TEA PARTY SUPPORTER		POLITICAL IDEOLOGY			EVANGELICAL	
		Male	Female	Yes	No	Very cons.	Somewhat cons.	Mod/Lib	Yes	No
Unweighted N	425	262	163	173	240	191	121	111	207	210
moe	4.8%	6.1%	7.7%	7.5%	6.3%	7.1%	8.9%	9.3%	6.8%	6.8%

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