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EMBARGOED to:

Sunday, February 3, 2008, 5:00 am

*This poll was conducted by the
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McCain Pulls Away; Clinton Maintains Lead in New Jersey Primary Races

GOP race solidifies; but still some volatility among Democrats

With just days to go before Super Tuesday, it looks like the race for New Jersey's presidential delegates is solidifying. According to the latest *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll*, Hillary Clinton continues to lead Barack Obama – now by 14 points – among likely Democratic voters in New Jersey. On the Republican side, it appears that nearly all of former Rudy Giuliani's supporters have transferred their affections to John McCain, who now holds a commanding 32 point lead over his nearest rival Mitt Romney.

The Democratic race is now down to a two-person contest, 50% of likely Democratic primary voters in New Jersey indicate they will vote for New York senator Hillary Clinton to 36% for Illinois senator Barack Obama. Another 14% remain undecided. Former North Carolina senator John Edward's departure from the race does not seem to have benefited one candidate over the other.

On the other hand, former New York mayor Rudy Giuliani's withdrawal from the GOP race after his third-place finish in Florida has been a boon for Arizona senator John McCain. McCain now leads the four-man field in New Jersey with 55% of likely primary voters, to 23% for former Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney, 7% for former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee, and 3% for Texas congressman Ron Paul. Another 11% are undecided.

"As expected, Giuliani supporters in New Jersey flocked to McCain, reflecting similar moderate views which are in line with most Republican voters here," remarked Patrick Murray,

director of the Monmouth University Polling Institute. “In the other race, it is appearing difficult for Obama to break Clinton’s hold on the traditional Democratic electorate in the state, despite an active television campaign and an appearance in the state.”

The Democratic Electorate in New Jersey

An analysis of key voter groups in the Democratic race shows some variation in the strength of Hillary Clinton’s support. For example, she holds a larger lead over Barack Obama among women (18 points) than among men (11 points).

Clinton has a 19 percentage point lead among voters age 55 and older and a 15 point lead among those age 35 to 54. However, her lead shrinks to only 5 points among voters under the age of 35.

Clinton also holds a 22 point lead among Democratic voters without a four-year college degree, but runs dead even with Obama among college graduates.

As may be expected, race plays a major role in candidate preference in this primary election. While Clinton holds a 33 point lead among white Democrats in the current poll, Obama claims an identical 33 point lead among black voters. Hispanic voters in this primary appear to be up for grabs, as Obama holds a slim 5 point advantage among this voting group. [Note: The poll estimates that approximately 60% of New Jersey’s Democratic turnout on February 5th will be white, 19% will be black, 14% Hispanic, and 7% percent Asian or other.]

NEW JERSEY DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY PREFERENCE AMONG KEY GROUPS			
	<u>Clinton</u>	<u>Obama</u>	<u>Clinton advantage</u>
Likely Voters	50%	36%	+14
Men	49%	38%	+11
Women	52%	34%	+18
White	60%	27%	+33
Black	24%	57%	-33
Hispanic	45%	50%	-5
Age 18-34	49%	44%	+5
Age 35-54	52%	37%	+15
Age 55+	50%	31%	+19
High school	53%	31%	+22
Some college	55%	33%	+22
College grad	43%	43%	--
Democrat	51%	35%	+16
Independent	49%	38%	+11

DEMOCRATS – MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE			
Democratic Primary Voters	<u>Clinton</u>	<u>Obama</u>	<u>Undecided</u>
- <i>Economy (42%)</i>	49%	39%	12%
- <i>War in Iraq (24%)</i>	53%	31%	16%
- <i>Health Care (20%)</i>	48%	42%	10%
- <i>Terrorism (6%)</i>	--	--	--
- <i>Illegal immigration (2%)</i>	--	--	--

The economy is the top concern of Democratic voters in New Jersey – 42% choose this issue from among five mentioned in the poll. This is followed by Iraq (24%) and health care

(20%) as the top concerns for Democrats. Terrorism (6%) and illegal immigration (2%) are chosen by very few Democratic voters as the top issue facing the country.

Clinton holds a ten point lead over Obama – 49% to 39% – among voters most concerned about the economy and a slimmer six point lead – 48% to 42% – among those most concerned with health care issues. She has a more substantial lead of 53% to 31% among the state’s Democratic voters who choose the war in Iraq as their top concern.

DEMOCRATS – IMPORTANT PERSONAL QUALITY			
Democratic Primary Voters	<u>Clinton</u>	<u>Obama</u>	<u>Undecided</u>
- Bring about change (44%)	28%	60%	11%
- Right experience (31%)	82%	6%	12%
- Both equally (22%)	54%	29%	16%

Turning to preferred personal qualities, 44% of likely Democratic primary voters say they want a candidate who can bring about needed change, 31% want someone with the right experience, and 22% want both qualities. Democratic voters who want change go for Obama over Clinton by 60% to 28%. Those who want experience choose Clinton over Obama by 82% to 6%. Those who want both qualities go for Clinton by 54% to 29%.

Murray said, “The Democratic electorate is volatile, with 1-in-7 voters still undecided. Analysis of our internal poll numbers indicates that Obama may be able close the gap by turning out large numbers of new voters. It does not appear that he will win the state outright, but he can rack up a good share of the delegates.”

The Republican Electorate in New Jersey

The poll finds that John McCain holds substantial leads among every demographic group in the Republican electorate (i.e. gender, age, education).

REPUBLICANS – MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE					
Republican Primary Voters	<u>McCain</u>	<u>Romney</u>	<u>Huckabee</u>	<u>Paul</u>	<u>Undecided</u>
- Economy (38%)	64%	18%	5%	3%	9%
- Terrorism (20%)	56%	26%	8%	1%	8%
- War in Iraq (14%)	59%	24%	6%	3%	9%
- Illegal immigration (12%)	33%	40%	13%	4%	9%
- Health Care (8%)	--	--	--	--	--

The economy is the top concern of Republican voters in New Jersey – 38% choose this issue from among five mentioned in the poll. Among this group of voters, McCain holds a substantial 64% to 18% lead over Romney.

Concerns about the economy outpace terrorism (20%), Iraq (14%), illegal immigration (12%), and health care (8%) as the number one issue among the state’s GOP electorate. McCain holds substantial leads on all these issues except illegal immigration. Voters who name immigration as their top concern prefer Romney (40%) to McCain (33%) by a small margin.

REPUBLICANS – IMPORTANT PERSONAL QUALITY					
Republican Primary Voters	<u>McCain</u>	<u>Romney</u>	<u>Huckabee</u>	<u>Paul</u>	<u>Undecided</u>
- Right experience (51%)	60%	22%	6%	2%	9%
- Bring about change (24%)	47%	25%	12%	9%	6%
- Both equally (21%)	55%	22%	5%	0%	16%

Turning to preferred personal qualities, 51% of likely Republican primary voters say they want a candidate with experience, 24% want someone who can bring about change, and 21% want both qualities. McCain has sizable leads among all these preferences, besting Romney by 60% to 22% among experience voters, by 47% to 25% among change voters, and by 55% to 22% among Republican voters who want both qualities.

The *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll* was conducted by telephone with 1,273 New Jersey likely primary voters from January 30 to February 1, 2008. The total sample has a margin of error of ± 2.8 percent. The margins of error for the party primary questions are $\pm 3.7\%$ for the 718 likely Democratic primary voters and $\pm 4.2\%$ for the 555 likely Republican primary voters. The poll was originally published by the Gannett New Jersey newspaper group (Asbury Park Press, Courier-Post, Courier News, Daily Journal, Daily Record, and Home News Tribune).

A note on the primary sample methodology:
 Most New Jersey voters have not had the opportunity to vote in a competitive presidential primary due to the fact that the state’s contests have been held in June, after the eventual nominees had been all but determined. Turnout in the 2004 primary was 9% of all voters or about 22% of registered Democrats and Republicans. Turnout in 2000 was slightly higher at 17% overall, or 42% of registered Democrats and 37% of registered Republicans. However, the 2000 primary also included contested U.S. Senate races in both parties. Moreover, unaffiliated voters are able to declare with a party on primary day. As such, it is difficult to predict potential turnout for the February 2008 presidential primary. The sample used for this survey involved a random digit dial (RDD) sample of 701 screened likely voters plus an additional sample drawn from voter record lists, including 381 known past primary voters and 191 voters who have not voted in a primary in the past four years but indicate they are likely to vote on February 5. Subsets of likely voters for each party’s primary were asked the voting intention questions. Responses from the RDD and list-based samples were given equal weight for those questions.

DATA TABLES

The questions referred to in this release are as follows: (* Some columns may not add to 100% due to rounding.)

1. [ASKED OF LIKELY DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY VOTERS:] I'm going to read a list of people running for the Democratic nomination. After I read it, please tell me who you would vote for if the primary were held today. [Names were rotated]

Democrats	Likely Primary Voters	Known Past Primary Voters Only	PARTY ID		GENDER	
			Democrat	Independent	Male	Female
Hillary Clinton	50%	52%	51%	49%	49%	52%
Barack Obama	36%	27%	35%	38%	38%	34%
(VOL) Other	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Don't know	14%	21%	14%	13%	13%	14%
Unwtd N	718	190	572	136	300	418

TREND:	Feb' 08	Jan' 08	Oct '07	April '07
Hillary Clinton	50%	42%	42%	41%
Barack Obama	36%	30%	23%	22%
John Edwards	n/a	9%	7%	13%
Dennis Kucinich	n/a	2%	2%	0%
Bill Richardson	n/a	n/a	1%	2%
Joe Biden	n/a	n/a	2%	3%
Chris Dodd	n/a	n/a	0%	0%
Mike Gravel	n/a	n/a	0%	n/a
(VOL) Other	0%	1%	1%	1%
Don't know	14%	17%	21%	18%
Unwtd N	718	475	478	451

2. [ASKED OF LIKELY REPUBLICAN PRIMARY VOTERS:] I'm going to read a list of people running for the Republican nomination. After I read it, please tell me who you would vote for if the primary were held today. [Names were rotated]

Republicans	Likely Primary Voters	Known Past Primary Voters Only	PARTY ID		GENDER	
			Republican	Independent	Male	Female
John McCain	55%	48%	55%	57%	57%	53%
Mitt Romney	23%	29%	25%	16%	21%	25%
Mike Huckabee	7%	8%	7%	5%	7%	6%
Ron Paul	3%	3%	2%	9%	3%	4%
(VOL) Other	1%	0%	1%	2%	2%	1%
Don't know	11%	12%	10%	11%	9%	12%
Unwtd N	555	191	437	113	277	278

TREND:	Feb' 08	Jan' 08	Oct '07	April '07
John McCain	55%	29%	12%	19%
Mitt Romney	23%	9%	8%	6%
Mike Huckabee	7%	11%	2%	1%
Ron Paul	3%	5%	1%	n/a
Rudy Giuliani	n/a	25%	44%	49%
Fred Thompson	n/a	5%	10%	n/a
Duncan Hunter	n/a	n/a	0%	n/a
Tom Tancredo	n/a	n/a	1%	n/a
(VOL) Other	1%	0%	1%	1%
Don't know	11%	16%	20%	21%
Unwtd N	555	400	411	402

3. [ASKED OF ALL REGISTERED VOTERS:] Which personal quality matters more to you in deciding who to support for president: someone who can bring about needed change or someone who has the right experience?

	All Likely Primary Voters	Democratic Primary Voters	Republican Primary Voters
Bring change	35%	44%	24%
Right experience	40%	31%	51%
(VOL) Both equally	21%	22%	21%
(VOL) Don't know	4%	4%	4%
Unwtd N	1273	718	555

TREND: Jan '08	All Likely	Democratic	Republican
Bring change	38%	45%	27%
Right experience	38%	31%	51%
(VOL) Both equally	19%	20%	18%
(VOL) Don't know	5%	5%	4%
Unwtd N	875	475	400

4. Which one of the following five issues is the most important facing the country?

	All Likely Primary Voters	Democratic Primary Voters	Republican Primary Voters
The economy	41%	42%	38%
The war in Iraq	19%	24%	14%
Health care	15%	20%	8%
Illegal immigration	6%	2%	12%
Terrorism	12%	6%	20%
(VOL) Don't know	7%	6%	8%
Unwtd N	1273	718	555

The *Monmouth University/Gannett NJ Poll* was conducted and analyzed by the Monmouth University Polling Institute research staff. The telephone interviews were collected by Braun Research from January 30 to February 1, 2008 with a statewide random sample of 1,273 likely primary voters. 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 2.8 percentage points. The sample used for this survey involved a random digit dial sample of 701 likely primary voters plus an additional list-based sample of 572 likely primary voters who were drawn from voter records. Sampling error increases as the sample size decreases, so statements based on various population subgroups, such as separate figures reported by gender or party identification, are subject to more error than are statements based on the total sample. 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.

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