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NEW YORKERS LEAD NEW JERSEY PRIMARIES

Iraq tops list of voter concerns in the presidential race

In the *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll's* first reading of New Jersey's February 5, 2008 presidential primary, the candidates from neighboring New York hold commanding leads in both party's primaries. In the contest for Garden State delegates, Senator Hillary Clinton leads her nearest Democratic competitor by a nearly 2-to-1 margin, while former New York City mayor Rudy Giuliani has an even larger lead in the Republican primary.

Among likely Democratic primary voters in New Jersey, Clinton currently claims support from 41% of voters, compared to 22% for Barack Obama and 13% for John Edwards. On the Republican side, Giuliani claims support from nearly half (49%) of likely GOP primary voters, compared to 19% for John McCain and 6% for Mitt Romney. Other candidates poll in the single digits.

The poll also found a notable gender gap in the Democratic primary. Half (50%) of Democratic women give their support to Clinton, compared to only 16% for Obama.

Among Democratic men, the race is a virtual tie between Clinton (30%) and Obama (28%).

Historically, turnout in New Jersey presidential primaries has been very low unless a contested U.S. Senate seat is also on the ballot. Comparing the poll results for all likely voters to those who have actually voted in past primaries shows little difference in the standings. While the front-runners' support levels dip slightly among known past primary voters, Clinton and Giuliani still enjoy large leads.

One wild card with the new primary schedule is whether unaffiliated voters will be motivated to vote. If so, this may benefit John Edwards and John McCain, both of whom tend to do better among independent voters who “lean” toward either party.

“Turnout will be an interesting, and unpredictable, issue in next year’s primary, with a number of large states holding their contests on the same day” remarked Patrick Murray, director of the Monmouth University Polling Institute. “Moving up the primary date was supposed to make New Jersey more relevant to the process, but the dominance of the two New York candidates may deter other candidates from spending precious campaign resources here.”

Only 37% of registered voters feel that the state’s earlier primary date will make the presidential candidates pay more attention to issues that concern New Jersey. This compares to just over half (51%) who believe that moving up the primary date will have no impact on bringing New Jersey issues to the forefront.

Like most voters across the country, the situation in Iraq is clearly the issue weighing on Garden State voters’ minds. More than half (52%) of New Jersey voters want to hear the presidential candidates address what they would do about the war in Iraq. The “Number 2” issue for the state’s electorate is health care (23%), followed by jobs and the cost of living (19%) and federal taxes (13%). Other important issues include homeland security (9%), immigration (8%) and education (8%).

Democratic voters are more likely to want to hear the presidential candidates talk about health care and schools, while Republican voters are more likely to mention terrorism and immigration as key issues for '08. There is no difference in issue importance among supporters of the different Democratic candidates. Among the Republicans, Giuliani voters are more likely to emphasize terrorism and immigration while McCain voters are more likely to focus on Iraq and the economy.

The poll was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute in partnership with the Hall Institute of Public Policy-New Jersey (www.hallnj.org) as part of its *Igniting the Engine of Democracy* effort.

The *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll* was conducted by telephone with 1,069 New Jersey registered voters from April 11 to 16, 2007. The total sample has a margin of error of ± 3.0 percent. The margins of error for the two voting intention questions are $\pm 4.6\%$ for the 451 likely Democratic primary voters and $\pm 4.9\%$ for the 402 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, Home News Tribune, and Ocean County Observer).

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 10% of all voters or about 22% of registered Democrats and Republicans. Turnout in 2000 was slightly higher at 17% overall, or 39% of registered Democrats and 35% of registered Republicans. However, the 2000 primary also included contested U.S. Senate races in both parties. Moreover, unaffiliated voters are able to vote in either party's nomination contest 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 sample of 668 registered voters plus an additional sample of 401 known past primary voters drawn from voter records. Subsets of likely voters in 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	GENDER	
			Male	Female
Hillary Clinton	41%	38%	30%	50%
Barack Obama	22%	21%	28%	16%
John Edwards	13%	13%	15%	11%
Bill Richardson	2%	4%	3%	2%
Joe Biden	3%	1%	5%	2%
Chris Dodd	--%	1%	1%	--%
Dennis Kucinich	--%	1%	--%	--%
(VOL) Al Gore	1%	1%	1%	1%
Don't Know	18%	21%	17%	18%
Unwtd N	451	198	194	257

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	GENDER	
			Male	Female
Rudy Giuliani	49%	45%	52%	45%
John McCain	19%	19%	20%	18%
Mitt Romney	6%	5%	6%	7%
Sam Brownback	1%	2%	1%	1%
Jim Gilmore	--%	--%	--%	--%
Mike Huckabee	1%	1%	--%	1%
Tommy Thompson	2%	3%	3%	2%
(VOL) Fred Thompson	1%	1%	1%	--%
Don't Know	21%	24%	16%	27%
Unwtd N	402	199	205	197

3. [ASKED OF ALL REGISTERED VOTERS:] In your opinion, what are the most important one or two issues that the candidates for president should talk about? [Results do not add to 100% because multiple responses were accepted]

	All Registered Voters	Likely Primary Voters	Known Past Primary Voters Only	PARTY ID		
				Dem	Ind	Rep
War in Iraq	52%	55%	55%	55%	53%	49%
Terrorism/ Homeland security	9%	12%	15%	5%	6%	20%
Foreign policy/ foreign relations	5%	6%	7%	4%	5%	9%
Federal/Income Taxes	13%	13%	13%	11%	13%	15%
State (Property) Taxes	5%	5%	4%	5%	4%	9%
Economy/ Jobs/ Cost of living	19%	18%	17%	17%	23%	17%
Gas prices	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%
Health care and prescription drug costs	23%	25%	24%	33%	20%	18%
Social security	5%	5%	6%	7%	5%	4%
Education/ schools	8%	9%	8%	15%	5%	4%
Environment/ global warming	5%	5%	4%	5%	7%	3%
Abortion/ gay marriage/ morality/ stem cells/ social issues	3%	2%	2%	2%	3%	4%
Immigration	8%	11%	9%	6%	6%	14%
Budget deficit	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%
Ethics/ corruption/ cleaning up government	3%	2%	3%	2%	5%	3%
Other	4%	4%	3%	3%	5%	5%
Nothing/ Don't know	7%	5%	3%	6%	9%	3%
Unwtd N	1069	853	401	411	257	371

4. [ASKED OF ALL REGISTERED VOTERS:] As you may know, New Jersey has moved its presidential primary up from June to February. Do you think having an earlier primary will make the presidential candidates pay more attention to issues that concern New Jersey, less attention, or will it have no impact?

	All Registered Voters	Likely Primary Voters	Known Past Primary Voters Only	PARTY ID		
				Dem	Ind	Rep
More attention	37%	42%	43%	45%	28%	37%
Less attention	4%	3%	3%	3%	5%	2%
No impact	51%	47%	46%	44%	57%	54%
Don't know	8%	8%	8%	8%	9%	7%
Unwtd N	1069	853	401	411	257	371

Results for this *Monmouth University/Gannett NJ Poll* are based on telephone interviews conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute on April 11-16, 2007 with a statewide random sample of 1,069 registered 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 3.0 percentage points. The sample used for this survey involved a random digit dial sample of 668 registered voters plus an additional sample of 401 known past 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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