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NATIONAL: 2016 GOP REMAINS WIDE OPEN
Walker surges; Christie drops

West Long Branch, NJ – The 2016 Republican field continues to be crowded, with no single contender breaking from the pack according to the latest *Monmouth University Poll* of Republican voters nationwide. In hypothetical head-to-head contests for the GOP presidential nomination, the surging Scott Walker draws about even with both Jeb Bush to his left and Ted Cruz to his right, while Bush bests Cruz in a two-man match-up. Chris Christie, on the other hand, would end up on the losing end of a one-on-one with Walker, Bush, or Cruz.

When asked to name who they would like to see as the party's nominee for president from a field of 17 potential candidates, Republican and Republican-leaning voters spread the wealth. The nominal leader is former Florida Governor Jeb Bush at 13%, but he is closely followed by Texas Senator Ted Cruz (11%), Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker (11%), and former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee (9%). The next tier of candidate preferences includes commentator Dr. Ben Carson (7%), businessman Donald Trump (7%), Kentucky Senator Rand Paul (6%), New Jersey Governor Chris Christie (5%), Florida Senator Marco Rubio (5%), and former Texas Governor Rick Perry (5%). None of the remaining potential candidates – businesswoman Carly Fiorina, South Carolina Senator Lindsey Graham, Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal, Ohio Governor John Kasich, former Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum, former New York Governor George Pataki, or former UN Ambassador John Bolton – register higher than 1% support from GOP voters. Among voters who consider themselves to be "very conservative," Cruz leads with 20%, followed by Walker (16%), Bush (11%), Carson (11%), and Huckabee (10%).

At some point the GOP field will get winnowed down and Monmouth pollsters tested some hypothetical two-candidate matchups. The first set of contests pitted contenders who are seen as more establishment figures – Jeb Bush, Scott Walker, and Chris Christie. Walker (46%) and Bush (42%) run nearly neck-and-neck in that contest. However, both would easily best Christie – Walker by a 58% to 26% margin and Bush by a 54% to 28% margin.

The poll also pitted all three establishment contenders against the only (as yet) declared candidate in the race – conservative Ted Cruz. Bush would edge Cruz in this match-up by 49% to 40%. Cruz would have a negligible 41% to 36% advantage over Walker. However, Cruz would easily best Christie by a 55% to 30% margin.

"The Republican field for 2016 remains more open than it has been in past contests. Some candidates, such as Walker, seem to be better placed to form a winning coalition, while others, such as Christie, find their path to victory getting more narrow every day," said Patrick Murray, director of the Monmouth University Polling Institute in West Long Branch, NJ.

A key indicator of the possible fortunes of these putative candidates is their overall favorability rating with the Republican base. Since Monmouth's last national poll of GOP voters in December, Walker's ratings have surged, while Christie's have fallen. Bush, Cruz, Huckabee, and Santorum have also seen their standing improve among Republicans in the past few months.

Potential 2016 Republican Candidate Favorability Ratings				TEA PARTY SUPPORTERS	STRONG CONSERVATIVES
GOP VOTER RATING					
Net rating	Favorable	Unfavorable		*Fav - Unfav*	*Fav - Unfav*
+35	44%	9%	Scott Walker	*61 - 7*	*63 - 4*
+32	53%	21%	Mike Huckabee	*70 - 19*	*64 - 19*
+30	49%	19%	Ted Cruz	*68 - 16*	*68 - 10*
+25	47%	22%	Rand Paul	*62 - 23*	*63 - 20*
+23	41%	18%	Marco Rubio	*59 - 21*	*53 - 17*
+23	39%	16%	Ben Carson	*56 - 15*	*54 - 15*
+22	42%	20%	Rick Perry	*60 - 16*	*58 - 15*
+18	49%	31%	Jeb Bush	*48 - 43*	*40 - 46*
+14	36%	22%	Rick Santorum	*49 - 22*	*44 - 22*
+10	24%	14%	John Kasich	*29 - 19*	*25 - 17*
+9	30%	21%	Bobby Jindal	*45 - 23*	*45 - 15*
+2	21%	19%	John Bolton	*29 - 24*	*29 - 19*
-2	18%	20%	Carly Fiorina	*28 - 18*	*23 - 18*
-9	33%	42%	Chris Christie	*31 - 57*	*24 - 54*
-14	18%	32%	Lindsey Graham	*21 - 45*	*14 - 40*
-18	15%	33%	George Pataki	*16 - 39*	*14 - 41*
-28	28%	56%	Donald Trump	*35 - 52*	*35 - 47*

Currently, Scott Walker has a net +35 positive rating – 44% favorable to just 9% unfavorable – although it's worth noting that nearly half of Republican voters in the country don't know enough about him yet to form an opinion. Four months ago, Walker had a net +20 rating (30% favorable to 10% unfavorable).

"Scott Walker may be that rare candidate who has true cross-over appeal in all wings of the GOP. The more Republican voters get to know him, the more they like him; and that goes for conservatives, moderates, and Tea Party supporters alike," said Murray.

Mike Huckabee's net positive rating stands at +32 points (53% favorable to 21% unfavorable) which is up from +23 points (45% to 22%) in December. Ted Cruz, who officially declared his

candidacy last month, enjoys a +30 net rating – 49% favorable to 19% unfavorable. This is up from +24 points (39% to 15%).

Other potential candidates with high net positive ratings include Rand Paul at +25 (47% favorable to 22% unfavorable), Marco Rubio at +23 (41% to 18%), Ben Carson at +23 (39% to 16%) and Rick Perry at +22 (42% to 20%). These results are similar to their voter standings in December. Paul and Rubio are expected to announce their candidacies in the coming days.

Jeb Bush enjoys positive ratings from nearly half of GOP voters. His net rating now stands at +18 points (49% favorable to 31% unfavorable), up from +9 points (39% to 30%) four months ago.

Rick Santorum has also seen his prospects rise, earning a +14 rating among Republicans (36% favorable to 22% unfavorable), up from +6 points four months ago. John Kasich's ratings have remained stable at +10 (24% to 14%), while Bobby Jindal's have dropped from +14 to +9 in the current poll (30% to 21%). John Bolton, who makes his initial appearance on the poll, has a +2 rating, but low name recognition (21% favorable to 19% unfavorable). Another newcomer to the poll, Carly Fiorina earns a slightly negative -2 point split of 18% favorable to 20% unfavorable.

A handful of possible candidates earn decidedly negative ratings from GOP voters nationwide. This includes Chris Christie at -9 points (33% favorable to 42% unfavorable), which is down from +2 in December (36% to 34%). Others with even worse net negative ratings from their fellow Republicans include Lindsey Graham at -14 (18% to 32%), George Pataki at -18 (15% to 33%), and Donald Trump at -28 (28% to 56%). This is the first *Monmouth University Poll* reading on these latter three names.

Base support is a key factor to viability in the early nominating contests. Cruz, Huckabee, Paul and Walker all earn positive ratings from more than 6-in-10 GOP voters who identify themselves as "very conservative" or say they are supporters of the Tea Party movement. Jeb Bush earns a narrow net negative rating of 40% favorable to 46% unfavorable among strong conservatives and a narrow net positive rating of 48% favorable to 43% unfavorable rating among Tea Party supporters.
The GOP base is decidedly negative, though, about two possible candidates. A majority of Tea Party supporters give both Chris Christie (57%) and Donald Trump (52%) unfavorable ratings. A similar number of strong conservatives feel the same – 54% hold negative views of Christie and 47% say the same of Trump. Lindsey Graham and George Pataki also earn sizable net negative ratings from voters in these base groups.

The *Monmouth University Poll* was conducted by telephone from March 30 to April 2, 2015 with 1,005 adults in the United States.   This release is based on a sample of 355 registered voters who identify themselves as Republicans or lean toward the Republican Party. This voter sample has a margin of error of +5.2 percent. The poll was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute in West Long Branch, NJ.

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

1. I know the 2016 election is far away, but who would you support for the Republican nomination for president if the candidates were – [*NAMES WERE ROTATED*]

	TOTAL		TOTAL
John Bolton	0%	George Pataki	0%
Jeb Bush	13%	Rand Paul	6%
Ben Carson	7%	Rick Perry	5%
Chris Christie	5%	Marco Rubio	5%
Ted Cruz	11%	Rick Santorum	1%
Carly Fiorina	1%	Donald Trump	7%
Lindsey Graham	1%	Scott Walker	11%
Mike Huckabee	9%	(VOL) Other	1%
Bobby Jindal	1%	(VOL) No one	2%
John Kasich	1%	(VOL) Undecided	14%

2. I'm going to read you a few names of people who might run 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 Ambassador John Bolton	21%	19%	61%
Former Florida Governor Jeb Bush	49%	31%	21%
--December 2014	*39*	*30*	*31*
Commentator and Doctor Ben Carson	39%	16%	45%
--December 2014	*32*	*12*	*57*
New Jersey Governor Chris Christie	33%	42%	25%
--December 2014	*36*	*34*	*31*
Texas Senator Ted Cruz	49%	19%	32%
--December 2014	*39*	*15*	*46*
Businesswoman Carly Fiorina	18%	20%	62%
South Carolina Senator Lindsey Graham	18%	32%	50%
Former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee	53%	21%	26%
--December 2014	*45*	*22*	*33*
Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal	30%	21%	48%
--December 2014	*28*	*14*	*58*
Ohio Governor John Kasich	24%	14%	61%
--December 2014	*21*	*11*	*69*
Former New York Governor George Pataki	15%	33%	52%
Kentucky Senator Rand Paul	47%	22%	31%
--December 2014	*42*	*18*	*39*
Former Texas Governor Rick Perry	42%	20%	39%
--December 2014	*43*	*20*	*37*
Florida Senator Marco Rubio	41%	18%	40%
--December 2014	*38*	*16*	*46*
Former Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum	36%	22%	42%
--December 2014	*28*	*22*	*51*
Businessman Donald Trump	28%	56%	15%
Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker	44%	9%	46%
--December 2014	*30*	*10*	*61*

3. If the only two candidates for the Republican nomination were [*NAME and NAME*], who would you choose? [*NOTE: The following choices were asked of a random half-sample, n=175, moe = +/-7.4%*]

Jeb Bush	Scott Walker	(VOL) Neither	(VOL) Don't know
42%	**46%**	**5%**	**7%**
Chris Christie	Scott Walker		
26%	**58%**	**6%**	**10%**
Jeb Bush	Chris Christie		
54%	**28%**	**12%**	**6%**

4. If the only two candidates for the Republican nomination were [*NAME and NAME*], who would you choose? [*NOTE: The following choices were asked of a random half-sample*, *n=180, moe = +/-7.3%*]

Ted Cruz	Scott Walker	(VOL) Neither	(VOL) Don't know
41%	**36%**	**11%**	**12%**
Ted Cruz	Jeb Bush		
40%	**49%**	**6%**	**5%**
Ted Cruz	Chris Christie		
55%	**30%**	**9%**	**6%**

POLL DEMOGRAPHICS (weighted)
FULL SAMPLE - ALL ADULTS

49% Male	32% 18-34	66% White
51% Female	36% 35-54	12% Black
	32% 55+	15% Hispanic
		7% Asian/Other

POLL DEMOGRAPHICS (weighted)
REPUBLICAN VOTERS ONLY

50% Male	24% 18-34	83% White
50% Female	34% 35-54	4% Black
	41% 55+	10% Hispanic
		3% Asian/Other

MARGIN OF ERROR

	REPUBLICAN VOTER	PARTY ID		GENDER		TEA PARTY SUPPORTER		POLITICAL IDEOLOGY		
		Rep	*Lean Rep*	*Male*	*Female*	*Yes*	*No*	*Very cons.*	*Somewhat cons.*	*Mod/ liberal*
Unweighted N	*355*	*209*	*146*	*193*	*162*	*142*	*196*	*119*	*119*	*112*
moe	*5.2%*	*6.8%*	*8.1%*	*7.1%*	*7.7%*	*8.2%*	*7.0%*	*9.0%*	*9.0%*	*9.3%*

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