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Taubman Center for Public Policy

Obama's Lead Slips Among R.I. Voters

A new Brown University survey of registered Rhode Island voters shows Sen. Barack Obama leading Sen. John McCain by 13 percentage points in the U.S. presidential race — down 7 points from last month. The poll was conducted Sept. 15-16, 2008.

PROVIDENCE, R.I. [Brown University] — Sen. Barack Obama is maintaining his lead against Sen. John McCain in the race for the U.S. presidency, but his numbers appear to be slipping, according to a new statewide survey conducted by researchers at Brown University.

The survey was conducted Sept. 15-16, 2008, at Brown University by Marion Orr, the Frederick Lippitt Professor of Public Policy and Political Science and director of the Taubman Center for Public Policy and the John Hazen White Public Opinion Laboratory. It is based on a statewide random sample of 652 registered voters in Rhode Island. Overall, the poll has a margin of error of about plus or minus 3.8 percentage points.

If the election were held today, 47 percent of the registered voters in Rhode Island say they will vote for Obama, 34 percent for McCain, and approximately 19 percent are undecided. In a **Taubman Center poll** conducted in August, prior to the Republican National Convention, Obama was leading McCain by 20 percent. When asked to choose between a candidate who is more experienced and a candidate who will bring greater change to national politics, 55 percent of Rhode Island voters said they want someone who will bring greater change. Thirty-five percent said a more experienced and tested person was preferable.

Nearly 50 percent of women respondents said they plan to vote for Obama. McCain was supported by 37 percent of female respondents. Ninety-four percent of respondents said they were likely to vote in November.

Participants were also asked about the Democratic and Republican vice presidential candidates. When asked if Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin, the Republican nominee for vice president, has the kind of experience it takes to serve effectively as president if necessary, 53 percent of respondents said she does not. Thirty-three percent believe that Palin does have the experience necessary to become president. Seventy-four percent of the Rhode Island voters believe Delaware Sen. Joe Biden, the Democratic nominee for vice president, has the experience necessary to become president if necessary, while nearly 14 percent believe he does not. Fifty-six percent of women and 50 percent of men believe Palin does not have the experience necessary to become president. Seventy-three percent of women and nearly 76 percent of men believe Biden has the experience to become president.

The survey found that 60.5 percent of respondents who voted for Sen. Hillary Clinton in the 2008 Democratic primary said they plan to vote for Obama in the general election. McCain was favored by nearly 22 percent of those who supported Clinton. The survey found that 37.6 percent of the respondents believe Bill and Hillary Clinton are spending enough time and effort to help Obama win the election. Nearly 30 percent believe the Clintons are not doing enough. Of those respondents who said they voted for Obama in the primary, nearly 42 percent believe the Clintons are not doing enough. Forty-six percent of the respondents who voted for Sen. Clinton believe the Clintons are doing enough to help Obama.

Approval Ratings

Only 12 percent of state voters believe President George W. Bush is doing an excellent or good job. Sixty-eight percent of Rhode Island voters rate the performance of Sen. Jack Reed as good or excellent. Forty-six percent believe Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse is doing a good or excellent job. Forty-six percent feel Rep. Patrick Kennedy is doing an excellent or good job and 51 percent believe Rep. Jim Langevin is doing an excellent or good job.

When asked about the job performance of state officials, 39 percent feel Gov. Donald Carcieri is doing a good or excellent job. Twenty-four percent believe Lt. Gov. Elizabeth Roberts is doing a good or excellent job. Fifty-two percent think Attorney General Patrick Lynch is doing an excellent or good job. Twenty-four percent feel Secretary of State Ralph Mollis is doing an excellent or good job. Forty percent believe Treasurer Frank Caprio Jr. is doing an excellent or good job.

Forty-six percent rate the job of Providence Mayor David Cicilline as excellent or good. Sixteen percent believe House Speaker William Murphy is doing an excellent or good job and 13 percent of respondents feel Senate President Joseph Montalbano is doing an excellent or good job.

Findings also show that a large majority (70 percent) of Rhode Island voters believe the state is on the wrong track. The survey also asked respondents their views on workplace raids carried out by the federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency to crack down on businesses that hire undocumented immigrants. Fifty-six percent of Rhode Island voters believe that ICE should continue the practice of workplace raids, while nearly 31 percent of respondents believe ICE should stop the raids.

For more information, contact Marion Orr at (401) 863-9436.

Survey Questions and Responses

1. How likely are you to vote in this year's presidential election? *Very likely 91.5%; Somewhat likely 3.4%; Not very likely 2.5%; Not at all likely 1.9%; No answer .9%*

2. Thinking about this year's presidential election, which of the following statements comes closer to your point of view? Statement A: This is a time when it is important to look for a more experienced and tested person even if he brings fewer changes to the current policies. Statement B: This is a time when it is important to look for a person who will bring greater changes to the current policies even if he is less experienced and

tested. *Statement A 35.2%; Statement B 55.0%; Depends (voluntary) 2.8%; Not sure 5.3%; Don't know/No answer 1.7%*

3. If the next election for president were held today, would you vote for 1) Republican John McCain or 2) Democrat Barack Obama? *John McCain 34.0%; Barack Obama 47.4%; Depends (voluntary) 4.6%; Neither/other (voluntary) 7.1%; Don't know/No answer 6.9%*

4. When it comes to your vote for [Question 3 choice] would you say that you are excited to be voting for him, you are satisfied to be voting for him, or you are voting for him as the lesser of two evils? *Excited 37.3%; Satisfied 31.5%; Lesser of two evils 18.4%; Not sure 4.8%; Don't know/No answer 8.0%*

5. Did you vote in the Democratic primary for president? *Yes 47.0%; No 51.2%; Don't know/No answer 1.8%*

6. For whom did you vote in the primary — Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, or someone else? *Barack Obama 41.1%; Hillary Clinton 46.1%; Someone else 4.7%; Not sure 2.1%*

7. Do you think Bill and Hillary Clinton are spending enough time and effort to help Barack Obama win the election? *Yes 37.6%; No 29.2%; Not sure 20.5%; Don't know/No answer 12.7%*

8. Regardless of your vote preference, does Barak Obama's choice of Senator Joe Biden as his running mate make you more confident or less confident in the kinds of decisions he would make as president? *More confident 54.0%; No affect 15.2%; Less confident 22.8%; Don't know/No answer 8.0%*

9. Regardless of your vote preference, does John McCain's choice of Alaska Governor Sarah Palin as his running mate make you more confident or less confident in the kinds of decisions he would make as president? *More confident 34.8%; No affect 11.7%; Less confident 45.8%; Don't know/No answer 7.7%*

10. Do you think Alaska Governor Sarah Palin does or does not have the kind of experience it takes to serve effectively as president, if that become necessary? *Yes 33.8%; No 53.4%; Not sure 9.0%; Don't know/No answer 3.8%*

11. Do you think Senator Joe Biden does or does not have the kind of experience it takes to serve effectively as president, if that become necessary? *Yes 74.3%; No 13.7%; Not sure 8.1%; Don't know/No answer 3.9%*

12. How would you rate the job George W. Bush is doing as president? *Excellent 1.4%; Good 10.9%; Only fair 23.6%; Poor 62.2%; Don't know/No answer 1.9%*

13. How would you rate the job Jack Reed is doing as U.S. senator? *Excellent 31.2%; Good 36.8%; Only fair 20.9%; Poor 6.7%; Don't know/No answer 4.4%*

14. How would you rate the job Sheldon Whitehouse is doing as U.S. senator? *Excellent 10.0%; Good 36.2%; Only fair 28.1%; Poor 14.0%; Don't know/No answer 11.7%*

15. How would you rate the job Patrick Kennedy is doing as U.S. representative? *Excellent 11.1%; Good 35.6%; Only fair 26.6%; Poor 20.2%; Don't know/No answer 6.5%*
16. How would you rate the job Jim Langevin is doing as U.S. representative? *Excellent 12.7%; Good 38.5%; Only fair 23.3%; Poor 8.2%; Don't know/No answer 17.3%*
17. How would you rate the job Don Carcieri is doing as governor? *Excellent 13.0%; Good 26.3%; Only fair 24.9%; Poor 32.8%; Don't know/No answer 3.0%*
18. How would you rate the job Elizabeth Roberts is doing as lieutenant governor? *Excellent 2.5%; Good 21.5%; Only fair 29.4%; Poor 14.5%; Don't know/No answer 32.1%*
19. How would you rate the job Patrick Lynch is doing as attorney general? *Excellent 9.9%; Good 42.2%; Only fair 27.5%; Poor 12.1%; Don't know/No answer 8.3%*
20. How would you rate the job Ralph Mollis is doing as secretary of state? *Excellent 3.8%; Good 20.3%; Only fair 26.5%; Poor 10.2%; Don't know/No answer 39.2%*
21. How would you rate the job Frank Caprio, Jr. is doing as general treasurer? *Excellent 9.9%; Good 30.4%; Only fair 21.4%; Poor 4.5%; Don't know/No answer 34.8%*
22. How would you rate the job William Murphy is doing as House speaker? *Excellent 2.0%; Good 14.9%; Only fair 23.6%; Poor 18.4%; Don't know/No answer 41.1%*
23. How would you rate the job Joseph Montalbano is doing as Senate president? *Excellent 1.6%; Good 11.6%; Only fair 22.2%; Poor 22.1%; Don't know/No answer 42.5%*
24. How would you rate the job David Cicilline is doing as mayor of Providence? *Excellent 9.1%; Good 36.9%; Only fair 24.9%; Poor 18.2%; Don't know/No answer 10.9%*
25. Generally speaking, would you say things in Rhode Island are going in the right direction, or have they gotten off on the wrong track? *Right direction 16.4%; Off on wrong track 69.9%; Mixed 11.1%; Don't know/No answer 2.6%*
26. Immigration and Customs Enforcement has recently started workplace raids in an effort to cracked down on businesses that hire undocumented immigrant, arresting scores of workers and their employers. Bishop Tobin and many other clergy nationwide have asked the ICE to stop workplace raids. Do you think that ICE should continue their practice of workplace raids or should they stop these raids? *Continue raids 56.3%; Stop raids 30.7%; Depends 8.7%; Don't know/No answer 4.3%*