

Taubman Center for Public Policy Survey

Hillary Clinton Holds Slim Lead Over Barack Obama in Democratic Presidential Primary

A statewide survey of 739 registered Rhode Island voters conducted February 9-10, 2008 also finds opposition to raising the state's general income or sales taxes and support for two-year time limits on welfare.

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — U.S. Senator Hillary Clinton holds a slim lead over Senator Barack Obama in their race for the Democratic presidential nomination, according to a new statewide survey conducted by researchers at Brown University.

The survey was conducted February 9-10, 2008, at Brown University by Darrell M. West, director of the Taubman Center for Public Policy and the John Hazen White Sr. Public Opinion Laboratory. It is based on a statewide random sample of 739 registered voters in Rhode Island. Overall, the poll had a margin of error of about plus or minus 4 percentage points. The Democratic primary sample was based on the 474 voters who indicated they were very likely to participate in the state's upcoming Democratic primary. It has a margin of error of about plus or minus five percentage points.

If the primary was held today, 36 percent of the 474 voters who indicated they were likely to vote in the 2008 Democratic primary say they will vote for Hillary Clinton, 28 percent support Barack Obama, 27 percent say they will vote for the "Uncommitted" ballot line, and 9 percent are undecided.

In September, 2007, 35 percent of the 380 likely voters said they would vote for Hillary Clinton, 16 percent supported Barack Obama, 7 percent favored John Edwards, 3 percent wanted Joe Biden, 2 percent supported Bill Richardson, 1 percent favored Chris Dodd, 1 percent wanted Dennis Kucinich, 0 percent favored Mike Gravel, and 35 percent were undecided.

If the presidential general election was held today and the nominees were Democrat Hillary Clinton and Republican John McCain, 43 percent they would support Clinton, 32 percent favor McCain, and 25 percent are undecided (down from 55 to 26 percent in September). If the Democratic nominee is Barack Obama and the Republican nominee is John McCain, 42 percent say they support Obama, 30 percent favor McCain, and 28 percent are undecided (down from 46 to 27 percent in September).

Only 14 percent of state voters believe President George Bush is doing an excellent or good job (down from 16 percent last September). Sixty-two percent of Rhode Island voters rate the performance of Sen. Jack Reed good or excellent, up from 61 percent in the previous survey. Forty-four percent believe Senator Sheldon Whitehouse is doing a good or excellent job (up from 41 percent last time). Fifty-five percent feel Rep. Jim Langevin is doing a good job in Congress (the same as last time) and 45 percent believe Rep. Patrick Kennedy is doing a good job (down from 51 percent in September).

When asked about the job performance of state officials, 40 percent feel Carcieri is doing a good job as governor (down from 44 percent in September). Thirty percent believe Lt. Governor Elizabeth Roberts is doing a good job (down from 37 percent). Fifty percent think Attorney General Patrick Lynch is doing a good job, up from 48 percent in September. Twenty-five percent feel Secretary of State Ralph Mollis is doing a good job as secretary of state (up from 23 percent). Forty percent believe Treasurer Frank Caprio, Jr. is doing a good job (up from 37 percent).

Fifty-one percent say Providence Mayor David Cicilline is doing a good job, down from 64 percent in the last survey. Nineteen percent believe House Speaker William Murphy is doing a good job (down from 21 percent) and 15 percent feel Senate President Joseph Montalbano is doing a good job, down from 16 percent.

Only 16 percent believe the state is headed in the right direction, while 74 percent feel it is headed on the wrong track. In September, 31 percent thought Rhode Island was headed in the right direction and 57 percent believed it was off on the wrong track.

The state faces a substantial deficit in its fiscal budget. By law, it is required to eliminate this deficit. When we asked which items they would support or oppose to close this deficit, voters preferred the following proposals: imposing a two-year time limit on welfare benefits (71%), changing the public employee work week from 35 to 40 hours (71%), raising public employee contributions to their health care plans (68%), making changes in Medicaid that would encourage senior citizens to use visiting nurses instead of nursing homes (63%), raising income taxes on high-wage earners (61%), privatizing housekeeping, janitorial, and dietary services at some state institutions (55%), layoffs of state employees (52%), adding furlough days without pay for public employees (43%), raising the capital gains tax (42%), reduction of state aid to local communities 28%, reducing subsidized health care for low-income families (24%), raising the state sales tax (23%), an increase in the state income tax (22%), and reducing state aid for local education (18%).

The survey press release can be found online at www.InsidePolitics.org. For more information, contact Darrell M. West at (401) 863-1163.

Survey Questions and Responses

If the Democratic presidential primary were held today, would you vote for: 36% Hillary Clinton, 28% Barack Obama, 27% Uncommitted, 9% don't know or no answer (based on 474 voters who indicated they were likely to vote in the 2008 Democratic presidential primary)

If the presidential general election were held today, would you vote for: 32% Republican John McCain or 43% Democrat Hillary Clinton? 25% don't know or no answer

If the presidential general election were held today, would you vote for: 30% Republican John McCain or 42% Democrat Barack Obama? 28% don't know or no answer

How would you rate the job George W. Bush is doing as president? 2% Excellent, 12% good, 26% only fair, 58% poor, 2% don't know or no answer

How would you rate the job Jack Reed is doing as US Senator? 22% Excellent, 40% good, 20% only fair, 6% poor, 12% don't know or no answer

How would you rate the job Sheldon Whitehouse is doing as U.S. Senator? 10% Excellent, 34% good, 25% only fair, 10% poor, 21% don't know or no answer

How would you rate the job Patrick Kennedy is doing as U.S. Representative? 8% Excellent, 37% good, 28% only fair, 19% poor, 8% don't know or no answer

How would you rate the job Jim Langevin is doing as U.S. Representative? 13% Excellent, 42% good, 21% only fair, 4% poor, 20% don't know or no answer

How would you rate the job Don Carcieri is doing as governor? 10% Excellent, 30% good, 24% only fair, 33% poor, 3% don't know or no answer

How would you rate the job Elizabeth Roberts is doing as lieutenant governor? 4% Excellent, 26% good, 24% only fair, 9% poor, 37% don't know or no answer

How would you rate the job Patrick Lynch is doing as attorney general? 7% Excellent, 43% good, 25% only fair, 11% poor, 14% don't know or no answer

How would you rate the job Ralph Mollis is doing as secretary of state? 3% Excellent, 22% good, 24% only fair, 7% poor, 44% don't know or no answer

How would you rate the job Frank Caprio, Jr. is doing as general treasurer? 9% Excellent, 31% good, 16% only fair, 4% poor, 40% don't know or no answer

How would you rate the job William Murphy is doing as House Speaker? 2% Excellent, 17% good, 22% only fair, 14% poor, 45% don't know or no answer

How would you rate the job Joseph Montalbano is doing as Senate President? 1% Excellent, 14% good, 20% only fair, 16% poor, 49% don't know or no answer

How would you rate the job David Cicilline is doing as mayor of Providence? 13% Excellent, 38% good, 18% only fair, 14% poor, 17% don't know or no answer

Generally speaking, would you say things in Rhode Island are going in the right direction, or have they gotten off on the wrong track? 16% right direction, or 74% wrong track, 10% don't know or no answer

The state faces a substantial deficit in its fiscal budget. By law, it is required to eliminate this deficit.

Which of the following items would you support or oppose to close this deficit:

- a) layoffs of state employees: 52% support, 36% oppose, 12% don't know or no answer
- b) an increase in the state income tax: 22% support, 71% oppose, 7% don't know or no answer
- c) reduction of state aid to local communities: 28% support, 60% oppose, 12% don't know or no answer
- d) raising the state sales tax: 23% support, 70% oppose, 7% don't know or no answer
- e) reducing state aid for local education: 18% support, 75% oppose, 7% don't know or no answer
- f) imposing a two-year time limit on welfare benefits: 71% support, 19% oppose, 10% don't know or no answer
- g) raising the capital gains tax: 42% support, 43% oppose, 15% don't know or no answer
- h) changing the public employee work week from 35 to 40 hours: 71% support, 19% oppose, 10% don't know or no answer
- i) reducing subsidized health care for low-income families: 24% support, 65% oppose, 11% don't know or no answer
- j) raising public employee contributions to their health care plans: 68% support, 23% oppose, 9% don't know or no answer
- k) adding furlough days without pay for public employees: 43% support, 43% oppose, 14% don't know or no answer
- l) raising income taxes on high-wage earners: 61% support, 31% oppose, 8% don't know or no answer
- m) making changes in Medicaid that would encourage senior citizens to use visiting nurses instead of nursing homes: 63% support, 24% oppose, 13% don't know or no answer
- n) privatizing housekeeping, janitorial, and dietary services at some state institutions: 55% support, 26% oppose, 19% don't know or no answer