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Winthrop-ETV Poll Results Released about President Obama's Performance

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Winthrop-ETV Poll Results Released about President Obama's Performance

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Quick Facts

- While a majority of respondents, 56.3 percent, are confident in President Obama's ability to handle threats to the U.S., barely half of those, 28.5 percent, feel "very confident."
- The Winthrop/ETV Poll was conducted among 955 registered voters from Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia.



Scott Huffmon

COLUMBIA, S.C. - The results of the latest [Winthrop/ETV Poll](#), conducted among registered voters in 11 southern states between May 1 and May 17, are in.

Taken just days after **President Barack Obama** had completed his first 100 days in office, the poll asked southerners about everything from their level of confidence in his ability to handle threats against the United States, to who the potential Republican presidential front-runners might be for 2012, to the willingness of African Americans to get ahead in today's society.



Adolphus Belk Jr.

The results will be released exclusively during the Thursday, May 21 edition of **South Carolina ETV's "The Big Picture"** program at 7:30 p.m. ET. ETV is the public television and radio network in South Carolina.

The **Winthrop/ETV Poll** was conducted among 955 registered voters from Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia. Data utilizing all respondents has a margin of error of plus/minus 3.17 percent. As is true with all survey data, any results that use a subset of the respondents will have a higher margin of error.

The survey was designed by **Dr. Scott Huffmon**, director of the Winthrop/ETV Poll initiative, and **Dr. Adolphus Belk, Jr.**, director of the African American Studies program at Winthrop University.

Commenting on the overall results, Huffmon said, "There was a lot of talk after the last election about the erosion of Republican dominance in the region and, indeed, there are fewer Republican identifiers among registered voters than we have seen in the past. But while this may make the region more fertile for Democratic presidential candidates, several aspects of our findings point to continued Republican strength in the region. First, although Republican and Democratic identifiers are in near parity, independents who lean toward one party favor the Republican Party.

"And second, since the **Republican Party** has taken up the banner of reducing government spending and regulation of business at the state level in many southern states, it will be primed to tap into the preferences of these Republican identifiers and Republican-leaning Independents who together make up a plurality of the electorate."

With regard to the issue of national security, Huffmon noted, "While a majority of respondents, 56.3 percent, are confident in President Obama's ability to handle threats to the US, barely half of those, 28.5 percent, feel 'very confident.'

"Incidents such as the handling of the Somali pirates, and the release of the CIA interrogation memos--which the majority of those polled disagreed with--has had a mixed impact on southern perceptions. Half of all respondents say they hold the same level of trust now as they did when

Obama took office. But among those whose attitudes have changed, over three times as many Republicans have become less confident, while nearly eight times as many Democrats have become more confident.

"Clearly, the Obama administration has yet to face a test where confidence in his ability to handle threats will transcend partisanship among registered voters in the South. With both Republicans and Democrats voting yesterday to overwhelmingly reject his plan to close Guantanamo, that test might be here."

Adds Belk, "The results clearly demonstrate that while southern Republicans and Democrats are looking at the same economic, political, and social indicators, they see things very differently. For instance, while both Republicans and Democrats believe that the nation is in dire economic straits, Democrats are much more hopeful about the Obama administration's ability to meet the challenges of our time. Republicans, though, do not share their enthusiasm."

Among the **Winthrop/ETV Poll** findings:

- Currently, over 56 percent of those polled are either very or somewhat confident in the president's ability to handle threats to the United States. But the majority (hovering around 50 percent) also reveal that they have held this same opinion since Mr. Obama first took office.
- Overall, 56 percent also disagree with the president's decision to release the Bush administration memos about CIA interrogation techniques, including 85 percent of Republicans, 63 percent of Independents and 21 percent of Democrats.
- With other national polls finding Pres. Obama's approval rating hovering around the 60 percent mark, respondents in this poll gave the president a 48.8 percent approval, with southern Republicans giving him only 18 percent approval.
- When asked about the current path that our nation is taking, 48.9 percent of all respondents felt the country was headed in the wrong direction. However, overwhelmingly, 74.1 percent of Democrats felt the country is on the right track.
- Close to, or over 50 percent of respondents said the Economy is the most important problem facing the country today, with no other category breaking double-digits. The second most important problem among Republicans was Moral Values (6.5 percent), while Democrats said Health Care (8.5 percent).
- The majority of those polled (54.5 percent) felt that, in general, more government regulation of business is bad—a full 22 percentage points ahead of those who felt more government regulation is good.
- Almost 71 percent of southerners feel that African Americans don't need special treatment in order to get ahead, and 49.7 percent don't feel that generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way up.
- Topping the list of potential Republican presidential nominees in 2012 was "Can't think of anyone" at almost 63 percent among all respondents. Tied for second were Mitt Romney and Sarah Palin with 7.6 percent each. The same trifecta appeared when asked of Republicans only, with percents of 50.8, 11.9 and 9.8, respectively.

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