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ETV Poll Finds Thompson, Giuliani and Romney in Dead Heat as Clinton Widens Lead Over Obama

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ETV Poll Finds Thompson, Giuliani and Romney in Dead Heat as Clinton Widens Lead Over Obama

Quick Facts

- The results of the latest Winthrop/ETV Poll will be released Nov. 1 during S.C. ETV's "The Big Picture Show."
- The poll was conducted among 522 likely Republican primary voters and 534 likely Democratic primary voters.

COLUMBIA, S.C. - The results of the latest [Winthrop/ETV Poll \(pdf - 134.99 KB\)](#), conducted between Oct. 7 and Oct. 28, 2007, are in just a few months before South Carolinians will be going to the primaries to decide the presidential nominees.

The results will be released exclusively during the Nov. 1 edition of South Carolina ETV's "The Big Picture" show at 7:30 p.m. ETV is the public television and radio network in South Carolina.

The **Winthrop/ETV Poll** was conducted among 522 likely Republican primary voters and 534 likely Democratic primary voters, and has a margin of error of plus/minus 4.29 percent for likely Republican primary voters and plus/minus 4.24 percent for likely Democratic primary voters. Respondents were randomly selected from lists of registered voters in South Carolina. As is true with all survey data, reported results that use only a subset of the data will have a slightly higher margin of error.

Commenting on the results, Dr. Scott Huffmon, director of the **Winthrop/ETV Poll** initiative, said, "Since 1980, no one has ever won the Republican nomination for the presidency if they haven't won South Carolina. That means Fred Thompson, Rudy Giuliani and Mitt Romney have three months to distinguish themselves to South Carolina voters. Our poll is good news for Fred Thompson and Mitt Romney, and surprising, but consistent good news for Giuliani. Thompson's job now is to continue to mine the ore among the undecideds. His message has to be, 'I am the real conservative you have been waiting for.' In terms of Romney, even though it took awhile for the returns on his campaign spending to pay off, our poll shows that his investment definitely has. Romney's job now is to convince South Carolinians that Giuliani is not the only one who can beat Clinton. Giuliani has just the opposite challenge – he needs to convince primary voters that he is the only one who can beat Clinton.

"The strong organization that Hillary Clinton has in South Carolina is reaping dividends. She is the candidate a lot of establishment Democrats feel can win back the presidency. While she doesn't run as well in some constituencies as others, she is clearly the overall front-runner. In order to win over South Carolina voters, Barack Obama needs to highlight Clinton as a polarizing figure. He needs to convince South Carolinians that the only way Democrats will lose the race in 2008 is if they nominate her. The message for Obama now is that you have to go directly at the person in the lead. It is not just about President Bush or Iraq anymore. It has to be about why Obama is better than Clinton.

"As for the McCain and Edwards' campaigns: Edwards' strategy is focused on Iowa. His goal is to hold on to his faithful supporters for now, win in Iowa, and pull others onto his bandwagon. Meanwhile, McCain came into the race as the establishment candidate, and the presumptive

nominee. But his support was quite obviously soft, and when people found any reason to peel off to another candidate, they took it. With the 'No Surrender' tour, McCain is back to fundamentals and trying to firm up his soft supporters, but he is just not winning them over in the numbers he needs. McCain has to stress the core issues important to Republicans, and try to convince people to turn away from the front-runners, while simultaneously coaxing back the voters he lost to them."

Among the Winthrop/ETV Poll findings:

The top three Republican candidates are in a statistical dead-heat, with Fred Thompson getting 17.9 percent of the vote, and Rudolph Giuliani and Mitt Romney each receiving 16.5 percent. In the previous Winthrop/ETV horserace poll, conducted in May 2007, when Thompson had yet to declare his candidacy, Giuliani led the pack with 18.6 percent, Romney had 11.7 percent and the undeclared Thompson posted 6.4 percent. This means that since May, among registered Republican voters in SC, Thompson has gone up 179.7 percent, Romney, who has waged an aggressive ad campaign in the Palmetto State, has increased 41 percent, and Giuliani has dropped 11.3 percent.

In this most recent poll, McCain posted 9.2 percent. The previous horserace poll in May had him at 14.4 percent. So, in the past five months, McCain's ability to win the nod from registered Republicans against the field, has dropped 36.1 percent.

Among registered likely Democratic voters, Hillary Clinton has widened her lead over her next-closest challenger, Barack Obama. According to this latest Winthrop/ETV poll, Clinton snagged 33 percent of the vote to Obama's 22.7. When the two last went head-to-head in a Winthrop/ETV poll back in May, Clinton was at 29.2 percent and Obama at 20.8. This means Clinton has increased the margin of her lead over Obama by 22.6 percent in the last five months.

For registered Democrats, John Edwards remains a distant third, garnering only 9.6 percent of the vote, reflecting a drop of 10.3 percent over what he received in May (when he won 10.7 percent of the vote).

Almost one-third of registered Republicans and registered Democrats in South Carolina remain undecided as to whom they will vote for in the primaries. This duplicates the results from the Winthrop/ETV poll in May 2007 that found an identical number of Republicans unsure (29.9 percent) and Democrats virtually the same—29.6 percent in the just completed poll, compared to 30.4 percent in May.

When asked if Rudolph Giuliani and Hillary Clinton should go on to become the candidates for their respective parties, almost 10 percent of Republicans said that they would vote for NEITHER Giuliani nor Clinton, while over 80 percent said they would select Giuliani. In the Democratic camp, only 4 percent said they would vote for NEITHER, while almost 80 percent said they would elect Clinton the president.

In other poll findings:

Over 66 percent of registered Republicans think that their party should make a special effort to reach out to minority voters such as blacks and Hispanics. And of those, almost 50 percent feel that the party is not currently doing enough in that direction.

Registered Democrats and registered Republicans chose "honesty" as the most important quality when it comes to them selecting a candidate for the presidency. By an almost identical number — Democrats 36.4, Republicans 34.1 — honesty easily bested any of the other options. For Democrats, "knowledge/intelligence" came in second with 17.8 percent, while "exhibits values similar" to theirs came in second for Republicans with 26.4 percent.

On the subject of which issue they would most like to hear the presidential candidates discuss, the Iraq war was selected number one by Democrats (30.8 percent), while for the Republicans, illegal immigration got their vote (18.2 percent). The Iraq war took second place in importance for Republicans (16.4 percent), while Dems selected healthcare (24.8 percent).

When those of both parties who said they voted for George W. Bush as president in 2004 were asked if they would change their vote if they could go back and do so, almost 92 percent of Republicans said no and over one-third of Democrats said they would (33.8 percent), while 62.3 percent of them said they stood by their original decision.

Almost 80 percent of registered Democrats and Republicans said that who the vice presidential candidate is matters a great deal, or somewhat, when deciding who to vote for in the presidential race. Among Democrats, 79.6 percent felt that way, while 78.5 percent of Republicans shared that sentiment. Respondents from both parties also felt similarly when asked if they would ever choose to vote AGAINST their preferred presidential candidate because of who was running with them on the ticket, 18 percent of Democrats said they would, while 19.4 percent of Republicans felt that way. When asked if having a Southerner as the vice-presidential candidate made a difference to them, by

an overwhelming majority, members of each party said no (74.1 percent of Democrats, 77.1 percent of Republicans).

Almost 90 percent of Democrats disapprove of George W. Bush's handling of the war in Iraq (89.4 percent), while almost 60 percent of Republicans approve (59.1 percent).

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