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POLL: MCCAIN CLINGS TO LEAD IN CALIFORNIA GOP PRIMARY

2/3/2008

On the heels of a Florida win and recent endorsements from former presidential candidate Rudy Giuliani and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, John McCain (39 percent) led Mitt Romney (32 percent) in California three days left before Super Tuesday, according to a poll released by the Suffolk University Political Research Center. Meanwhile, a second Suffolk University poll showed Barack Obama (40 percent) leading Hillary Clinton (39 percent) by the thinnest of margins among likely Democratic voters.

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Early voters key in GOP

McCain's strength is seen in early voting and absentee ballots, where he led Romney 45 percent-to-22 percent. Among voters very likely to cast ballots Tuesday, McCain and Romney are running neck and neck, with McCain leading Romney 37 percent-to-35 percent. However, 17 percent of likely Republican voters said they were very likely or somewhat likely to change their mind.

In 2000, about one-fourth of the ballots cast in the presidential election came by mail. That grew to 33 percent in 2004. This year, analysts and campaign officials say it could be more than half.

"The early bird catches the worm," said David Paleologos, director of the Suffolk University Political Research Center. "McCain's early advantage in California – thanks to previous wins in South Carolina and Florida – has provided him with votes in the bank and forces Romney to win remaining undecideds by a wider margin than in states with no early voting."

Mike Huckabee (8 percent) was a distant third, and Ron Paul (4 percent) rounded out the major choices, while 14 percent were undecided.

Democrats look to undecideds

A crucial 19 percent of Democratic and independent voters were undecided, according to the poll.

"If young voters, men and independents show up, it is Obama's prize," said David Paleologos, director of the Suffolk University Political Research Center. "If lots more women and older voters dominate, then it's Clinton's for the taking. Fasten your seat belts."

In other Suffolk University findings, the economy (41 percent) was the most important issue to California Democratic voters, followed closely by the war in Iraq (30 percent), and health care

(12 percent).

Methodology

The Suffolk University poll of likely Republican voters was conducted Thursday, Jan. 31, and Friday, Feb. 1, 2008. The margin of error on the statewide survey of 500 is +/- 4.38 percent at a 95 percent level of confidence. All respondents from the statewide survey were likely Republican voters in the California Presidential Primary on Feb. 5. Marginals and 72 pages of cross-tabulation data are available on the [Suffolk University Political Research Center Web site](#).

The Suffolk University poll of the Democratic contest was conducted Friday, Feb. 1, through Sunday, Feb. 3, 2008. The margin of error on the statewide survey of 700 is +/- 3.70 percent at a 95 percent level of confidence. All respondents from the statewide survey were likely Democratic voters in the California Presidential Primary on Feb. 5. [Frequencies/marginals and 80 pages of cross-tabulation data](#) are available on the Suffolk University Political Research Center Web site.

For more information, contact David Paleologos at 781-290-9310.

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