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Siena New York Poll:

Rudy Falls Behind McCain; Hillary Still Has 2-to-1 Lead

Spitzer Favorable Rating Edges Positive; Sees Gain in Job Performance

**Voters Overwhelmingly Support Property Tax Cap and S-CHIP Expansion;
Also Support Higher Education Endowment with Lottery Sale or Lease**

On King Day, Less than Half of NYers Think Race Relations Are Excellent or Good

Loudonville, NY Former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani trails Senator John McCain by 12 points among Republicans in the upcoming New York presidential primary and Senator Hillary Clinton continues to have a commanding lead over Senator Barack Obama in the Democratic primary, according to a new Siena (College) Research Institute poll of registered voters released today. The Siena New York poll shows that Governor Eliot Spitzer has improved his standing, with more voters having a favorable view of the Governor than an unfavorable view for the first time since October. Voters told Siena they strongly support a property tax cap and an expansion of the S-CHIP program to provide health insurance for children, and they support Spitzer's proposal to create an endowment for public higher education. As we commemorate the holiday for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., voters are split on the state of race relations in New York.

"In a stunning turnaround, John McCain has turned a 33-point deficit with Republican voters in December into a 12-point lead over Rudy Giuliani today," said Steven Greenberg, Siena New York Poll spokesman.

"While America's mayor still has strong support among New York City Republicans, he is getting beat by McCain in the suburbs and trounced upstate. Republican women give Rudy a small edge, however, Republican men are behind McCain nearly three-to-one."

McCain has the support of 36 percent of Republicans, followed by Giuliani at 24 percent, former Governor Mitt Romney at 10 percent, Governor Mike Huckabee at 7 percent, and former Senator Fred Thompson at 6 percent. Seventeen percent of Republicans remain undecided. Giuliani led McCain 48-15 percent on December 10. Giuliani leads McCain in New York City 45-23 percent. McCain leads in the downstate suburbs 39-30 percent and upstate 37-15 percent. Among Republican men, McCain leads 44-16 percent, while Giuliani leads among women 33-28 percent.

McCain is viewed favorably by 56 percent of New York voters and unfavorably by 27 percent. For the first time ever in a Siena New York poll, more voters view Giuliani unfavorably, 48 percent, than favorably, 44 percent. Among Republicans only, Giuliani has a 63-31 percent favorable rating, while McCain has an even stronger 71-19 percent favorable rating.

“Among Democrats, Hillary Clinton still has a strong home field advantage, maintaining a two-to-one lead over Barack Obama,” Greenberg said. “While he has picked up considerable support with African- and Caribbean-American Democrats, Obama still trails Clinton 46-36 percent among black Democrats, and Clinton has a 50-18 percent lead with white Democrats. Hillary leads by at least 30 points with voters 35 and older, however, Obama leads 40-38 percent with Democrats younger than 35 years of age.”

Clinton leads the primary with 48 percent, followed by Obama at 23 percent, and former Senator John Edwards at 10 percent. Nineteen percent of Democrats are still undecided. Clinton has at least 47 percent support in each of the three regions of the state. Clinton is viewed favorably by 60 percent of voters and unfavorably by 35 percent, her strongest results since January 2007. Obama has a comparable 57-28 percent favorable rating. Among Democrats, however, Clinton has an 80-17 percent favorability rating, compared to Obama’s 63-23 percent rating.

In hypothetical general election match-ups, Clinton’s lead over Giuliani, 56-34 percent, is the largest ever in a Siena New York poll. She leads McCain by a 53-39 percent margin. Obama leads Giuliani 53-35 percent and he has a small 44-42 percent lead over McCain. Adding Mayor Michael Bloomberg as an independent does not weaken Clinton’s lead. She gets 46 percent to 23 percent each for Giuliani and Bloomberg. And in another three way contest, Clinton gets 44 percent, to 27 percent for McCain and 22 percent for Bloomberg.

“With nine months until the November election, Hillary is in a strong position to keep New York in the ‘blue’ column regardless of who her opponent is or opponents are,” Greenberg said. “However, if it turns into a McCain vs. Obama match-up with no home court advantage, for the moment, New York is a jump ball.”

Questions Concerning Governor Spitzer and New York State Issues

“For the moment, Governor Spitzer’s meteoric fall with voters has stopped,” Greenberg said. “It would be an overstatement to say he has turned the ugly poll numbers around, however, it may be fair to say he is turning a corner. For the first time since October, more voters have a favorable view of Spitzer than an unfavorable view. There was small but significant improvement in the rating of his job performance, and improvement in the question posed to voters about their inclination to re-elect Spitzer.”

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Spitzer's favorable/unfavorable rating is 44-41 percent, up from 36-50 percent in December. Thirty-two percent of voters give him a positive (excellent or good) job performance rating, compared to 64 percent who rate his job performance as negative (fair or poor). In December, it was 27-70 percent. Currently, 27 percent of voters are prepared to re-elect Spitzer (up from 23 percent in December), while 46 percent (down from 56 percent) would prefer "someone else." In a hypothetical 2010 gubernatorial match-up, Bloomberg would beat Spitzer 50-32 percent (it was 50-37 percent in October).

By a 72-19 percent margin, voters support a property tax cap. It is supported by at least 80 percent of non-New York City voters. The Governor's proposal to expand the S-CHIP program and have the state fund it has the overwhelming support of 79 percent of voters, and is opposed by 16 percent.

A majority of voters support Governor Spitzer's proposal to sell or lease part of the state lottery to fund an endowment for public higher education. It is supported by a 54-35 percent margin. And his proposal to rename New York City's Triborough Bridge the Robert F. Kennedy Bridge has the support of 45 percent of voters. It is opposed by 30 percent, and 25 percent do not have an opinion.

"New Yorkers give state leaders a resounding 'yes' to a property tax cap and to S-CHIP expansion," Greenberg said. They also say 'yes' to the Governor's public higher education endowment proposal, including privatizing some portion of the state lottery.

"As the 40th anniversary of Senator Robert F. Kennedy's assassination approaches, renaming the Triborough Bridge in his honor has support, but it is among the more controversial of the Governor's proposals. Ironically, strongest support for renaming the bridge comes upstate. A plurality of Republicans are opposed."

The 40th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. will also be marked this year.

"As we commemorate Dr. King's life today, on the holiday created in his honor, it is interesting to note that voters are very divided – 48 percent positive, 49 percent negative – on the state of race relations in New York State today," Greenberg said. "Only three percent of voters describe race relations as excellent, with 45 percent saying good. On the negative side, 36 percent call race relations fair, with 13 percent saying poor. African American voters are most negative, with 40 percent saying fair and 30 percent saying poor. While it is encouraging that young people are a little more optimistic about the state of race relations (55-43 percent), it is disappointing that no demographic group rises above that 55 percent mark."

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This SRI survey was conducted January 14-17, 2008 by telephone calls to 625 registered New York State voters. It has a margin of error of ± 3.9 percentage points. The survey includes 311 Democrats, with a margin of error ± 5.6 percentage points, and 174 Republicans, with a margin of error of ± 7.4 percentage points. For more information, please call Steven Greenberg at 518-469-9858. Survey cross-tabulations and frequencies can be found at: www.siena.edu/sri/snyjanuary08.