

Poll: Clinton and McCain well ahead in Arizona

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Arizona Sen. John McCain has opened a wide lead in his home state for the Feb. 5 Republican presidential primary, according to a poll released Tuesday. New York Sen. Hillary Clinton leads fellow Democrats by a similar margin.

McCain was the choice of 41 percent of likely GOP voters surveyed in [Arizona State University'](#) Cronkite/Eight poll. His closest rival, former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney, drew the support of 18 percent, leaving four other hopefuls with single digits.

On the Democratic side, Clinton claimed 45 percent of the voters polled, putting her well ahead of Illinois Sen. Barack Obama, who drew just 24 percent. Obama gained little ground since the last poll, even after winning the endorsement of Gov. Janet Napolitano.

"In Arizona, it's a done deal for McCain," said Bruce Merrill, director of the poll and a professor at ASU's Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication. "That's a huge lead for him. There's no question his winning in New Hampshire and South Carolina strengthens his position in his home state."

About one in five voters remains undecided, the poll said.

McCain's lead represents a sharp rebound from a statewide poll last fall that put him behind former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani. The new poll also suggests that voters are supporting McCain despite the strong distrust of him by many core GOP conservatives in the state and the nation.

Merrill said one reason McCain and Clinton have built such a wide lead in Arizona is because they have attracted a broader base of support among voters, while other candidates seemed to appeal to narrower constituencies.

Pollsters asked people why they supported a

particular candidate. The question was open-ended, allowing for any response. McCain's supporters mentioned a range of factors, such as positions on issues, experience, his military background and the view that he is a straight talker. No more than 21 percent listed any single factor.

For Romney, 40 percent of those surveyed said they liked him because he was the most conservative candidate and an additional 18 percent listed his [business](#) and management background. The appeal of former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee was even more pointed: Two-thirds of those who support him do so because of his Christian views and values.

On the Democratic side, Clinton's supporters also mentioned a longer list of issues, with her experience the reason given by 38 percent. Obama appeals strongly to people who want change: Nearly half of his supporters cite that as the reason they plan to vote for him, the poll said.

"It's an interesting dynamic," Merrill said. "Clinton's got to use her experience but not to the extent that it identifies her as an insider."

Also striking: Among Clinton's supporters, 12 percent said they would vote for her because they like her husband, former President Bill Clinton, and 9 percent said the country needs a woman president. Among Obama supporters, 7 percent said they chose him because they opposed Clinton.

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