

campaign 2008

Obama, Clinton split Colo. voters

Romney leads GOP

By Michael Booth and Michael Riley
The Denver Post

Article Last Updated: 01/27/2008 01:46:48 AM MST

Mitt Romney enjoys a dominant, 19-point lead over John McCain among Republicans likely to attend Colorado caucuses Feb. 5, with Mike Huckabee trailing and Ron Paul and Rudy Giuliani barely registering a nod, according to a Denver Post poll.

The Democratic caucuses hold more potential for high drama in the presidential race, with Colorado voters split evenly between Barack Obama at 34 percent and Hillary Rodham Clinton at 32 percent — well within the poll's 3.5 percentage-point margin of error. John Edwards was the choice of 17 percent of likely caucus-goers. Fourteen percent said they were still undecided.

Obama's strength in Colorado may come from the fact that the state's Democrats see the desire for change as a driving issue in the campaign. The poll showed 51 percent of Democrats see change as more important than experience — and the ability to bring change is a trait they overwhelmingly

associate with the Illinois senator.

The issues on voters' minds are familiar,

Results

- [Watch Post photojournalist RJ Sangosti's campaign journal, depicting the frenzy and fatigue of the campaign trail.](#)
- [View a slide show of images from the South Carolina DEM primary.](#)
- [View South Carolina primary results](#)
- [View South Carolina delegate allocation](#)
- [Browse up-to-date primary news.](#)
- [View state-by-state GOP presidential candidate delegate allocation](#)
- [View state-by-state DEM presidential candidate delegate allocation](#)

with the economy, the war, health care, immigration and homeland security topping the list. But poll results show those issues play very differently depending on party affiliation.

The war is the biggest issue on the minds of Democrats, but it ranks relatively low with Republicans. Immigration is an important issue with Republicans but not Democrats. And the economy, while important to voters of both

Advertisement

TARGET COUPON

EXPIRES 3/8/08

FREE Twenty 4x6" basic prints

Offer available at Target One-hour Photo Labs. Go to Target.com/photo for the location nearest you. One-hour service limited to machine capacity. Limit one item or offer per coupon. Offer not available for prints made on the Kodak Picture Kiosk. Void if copied, transferred, purchased, sold or prohibited by law. No cash value. Maximum retail value \$4.40 for combined free offer.



9856-0113-2647-5849-0376-5806-89

Print Powered By FormatDynamics™

parties, tops the list as the most important issue in the campaign because it is the biggest issue on the minds of unaffiliated voters. That group — more than a third of Colorado voters — won't be participating in the caucuses, however.

Democrats in the state have been predicting a heavy turnout for their caucuses this year after a calendar change moved up their vote to a week when the race is still on. In 2004 and 2000, Colorado Democrats voted so late that John Kerry and Al Gore had long since whipped the field.

The state's Republican caucuses last considered a presidential candidate in 2000, when George W. Bush solidly beat John McCain.

The poll results put added pressure on the Clinton and Obama turnout machines, with many voters saying they are comfortable with the tossup.

"It's tough, because I do like Hillary Clinton and I do like John Edwards," said Obama fan Jennifer Howie of Longmont. "I have bounced back and forth. I think Hillary and Barack are pretty similar on their electability."

Romney the businessman

Colorado Republicans leaning toward former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney latch on to his successful businessman image and, like other Western voters, are more open to his Mormon roots, according to the voters and a poll analyst.

"He's put together, more than most of the candidates," said Leo Schmitz of Castle Rock. "Being a good businessman, maybe that's what we need with the economy the way it is."

But, like Clinton for the Democrats, Romney was perceived far more negatively than positively among all respondents, suggesting he'll have trouble appealing to a wider audience that includes Colorado's swing voters. He's too scripted and lacks warmth, many voters said.

"I'm the kind of person who gets gut feelings. His mannerisms, the way he talks, it just doesn't seem sincere," Shawn Schultz, a 52-year-old Qwest employee from Elizabeth, said of Romney.

Romney dominated the Nevada caucuses and has done well throughout the West, where Mormons are neighbors instead of a distant question mark, said Brad Coker of the polling firm Mason-Dixon. Coker's firm called 800 registered Colorado voters Jan. 21-23 and narrowed the responses down to those most likely to go to their party's caucuses.

The poll doesn't reflect the candidate preferences of independent voters, a key swing group on the rise in Colorado, and that's an important caveat in an election season featuring wide swerves in affinity.

Likely Republican caucus-goers tipped to Romney over Arizona Sen. McCain by 43 percent to 24 percent, with former Arkansas Gov. Huckabee at 17 percent. U.S. Rep. Ron Paul had 5

Advertisement

TARGET COUPON

EXPIRES 3/8/08

FREE Twenty 4x6" basic prints

Offer available at Target One-hour Photo Labs. Go to Target.com/photo for the location nearest you. One-hour service limited to machine capacity. Limit one item or offer per coupon. Offer not available for prints made on the Kodak Picture Kiosk. Void if copied, transferred, purchased, sold or prohibited by law. No cash value. Maximum retail value \$4.40 for combined free offer.



9856-0113-2647-5849-0376-5806-89

Print Powered By FormatDynamics™

percent, while former New York Mayor Giuliani, a former front-runner who has been concentrating on Florida, was at 4 percent.

But those preferences veil big differences in the way Republicans see their party's field. They tend to vote based on the issues important to them, helping to explain the difficulty voters nationwide are having rallying behind one candidate. Republicans in Colorado clearly see Romney as best on immigration, McCain best on terrorism, and Huckabee best on values.

Experience vs. change

For the state's Democrats, their perceptions of the candidates upend some conventional wisdom. Despite Clinton's long association with the nation's health care debate, they see Barack Obama as better able to deal with that issue than the former first lady. And although Obama voted against the initial Iraq war resolution and has made that opposition a centerpiece of his campaign, Democrats believe Clinton is better able to deal with the war.

"She's probably had more experience working with the military than Obama has," said Nancy Goese, a Greeley Democrat and retiree who said the war is by far her most important voting issue.

"On that first vote, everyone thought they were looking for weapons of mass destruction. Everyone would have voted for it because Bush said it was about protecting the United States,"

Goese said.

And the gap between the perceptions of party voters is no better illustrated than by the way they see the former first lady. Asked which of the candidates would best be able to work with Republicans, Democrats picked Clinton by a wide margin. Asked which of the Democrats would best be able to work with them, just 8 percent of Republicans chose Clinton — putting her at the bottom of the list.

By narrowing the respondents down to likely caucus-goers, the poll's margin of error rose to 9 percent for Republicans and 8 percent for Democrats. The poll was taken before Saturday's Democratic primary in South Carolina and the important contest for both parties in Florida on Tuesday. For Democrats at least, Colorado's final results are wide open, given the margin and the big news to come before caucus day, Coker said.

Colorado voters were surprisingly optimistic about the nation's future, despite weeks of troubling economic news. Forty-seven percent of voters expected things "to get better," while only 21 percent said they would get worse, and 20 percent expected more of the same.

Poll methodology

This poll was conducted by Mason-Dixon Polling & Research Inc. of Washington, D.C., from Jan. 21 to 23. A total of 800 registered Colorado voters were interviewed statewide by telephone. All stated they vote regularly in state elections.

Advertisement

TARGET COUPON

EXPIRES 3/8/08

FREE Twenty 4x6" basic prints

Offer available at Target One-hour Photo Labs. Go to Target.com/photo for the location nearest you. One-hour service limited to machine capacity. Limit one item or offer per coupon. Offer not available for prints made on the Kodak Picture Kiosk. Void if copied, transferred, purchased, sold or prohibited by law. No cash value. Maximum retail value \$4.40 for combined free offer.



9856-0113-2647-5849-0376-5806-89

Print Powered By FormatDynamics™

Those interviewed were selected by the random variation of the last four digits of telephone numbers. A cross-section of exchanges was used in order to ensure an accurate reflection of the state. Quotas were assigned to reflect the voter turnout by county.

The margin for error, according to standards customarily used by statisticians, is no more than plus or minus 3.5 percentage points. This means there is a 95 percent probability that the "true" figure would fall within that range if the entire population were sampled. The margin for error is higher for any subgroup, such as a regional or gender grouping.

POWER OF THE POLLS: WHO'S FOR REAL?

The most reliable polls include the major media polls like NBC/Wall Street Journal, ABC News, CBS News, CNN and major daily newspapers. They tend to be professionally assembled and are usually accurate reflections of opinion at the time the polls are conducted.

Be suspect of polls released by campaigns or special-interest groups, or conducted only through the Internet.

Look for reputable names when it comes to examining the firms who conducted the polls. The Pew Research Center and Mason-Dixon Polling & Research, for example, are known and respected poll takers.

Poll junkies can keep up with the latest buzz at pollster.com , which offers a wealth of poll

blogs.

- Colleen O'Connor, *The Denver Post*

Advertisement

TARGET COUPON

EXPIRES 3/8/08

FREE Twenty 4x6" basic prints

Offer available at Target One-hour Photo Labs. Go to Target.com/photo for the location nearest you. One-hour service limited to machine capacity. Limit one item or offer per coupon. Offer not available for prints made on the Kodak Picture Kiosk. Void if copied, transferred, purchased, sold or prohibited by law. No cash value. Maximum retail value \$4.40 for combined free offer.



9856-0113-2647-5849-0376-5806-89