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**Detroit News/WXYZ poll**

# Romney, McCain duel for lead in Michigan GOP primary race

**Gordon Trowbridge / Detroit News Washington Bureau**

With just two days left before the primary, Michigan's volatile Republican presidential race is going down to the wire for frontrunners John McCain and Mitt Romney.

And Mike Huckabee is still a factor.

A Detroit News/WXYZ Action News poll shows McCain with 27 percent, Romney at 26 percent; and Huckabee at 19 percent. All three campaigned in Michigan on Saturday. McCain, a senator from Arizona, and Michigan-born Romney, a former Massachusetts governor, are scheduled to continue their sprint drive Sunday. Huckabee, a former Arkansas governor, is campaigning in South Carolina on Sunday, but is expected to return to Michigan on Monday, election eve.

The poll of 604 likely GOP primary voters, conducted Wednesday through Saturday, suggests Tuesday's result likely will depend on who treks to the poll. The error margin is four percentage points.

Even now, the Republican race remains fluid. Just over half of likely voters in that race say they are very certain of their vote; the other 45 percent are undecided or could change their preference.

In the marginalized Democratic primary, Sen. Hillary Clinton -- the only viable Democratic contender on the ballot -- leads at 56 percent. One-third of likely Democratic voters said they would cast "uncommitted" votes, which would send uncommitted delegates to this summer's Democratic National Convention.

Supporters of Sen. Barack Obama and former Sen. John Edwards have encouraged uncommitted votes; they both removed their names from the Michigan ballot over the state's primary scheduling dispute with the national party. That survey, of 600 likely Democratic voters, also carries a four-point error margin.

John Puetz, 41, an investment adviser in Traverse City who saw Romney speak Saturday morning, said he is wavering between Romney and McCain.

"It's a tough call," he said. "I like Romney's business experience, but Bush said he would bring people together and he campaigned as an outsider who could do that. McCain has a history of bringing Democrats and Republicans together. I am sick and tired of partisan battles."

The results show a race that depends, in the end, on who shows up.

McCain hopes his appeal to independents and moderate Democrats would encourage them to vote in the GOP contest, and he leads those voters, who make up about one in six likely Republican primary voters. About one in 11 voters made up their minds after McCain's victory in last Tuesday's New Hampshire primary, and he leads among them 2-to-1.

Romney leads 27-24 percent among self-described Republicans, with Huckabee at 20 percent. Romney also leads in the three-county Detroit area, while McCain and Huckabee do better in the rest of the state. And among the nine percent of voters who said they had already voted by absentee ballot, Romney leads 3-to-1.

As expected, Huckabee is strongest among Christian conservatives and those who cite "values" as their most important criterion. About one in three voters described themselves as born-again or evangelical Christians, and Huckabee leads by a substantial margin with both groups. Most dramatically, he leads more than 3-to-1 among voters who say it matters a great deal that the candidate they vote for shares their values.

McCain aide John Yob, a Michigan native, said big crowds at his candidate's Michigan events have energized the campaign.

"The momentum we're feeling at town halls as we cross the state with the Straight Talk express is showing up in your poll data," Yob said.

Romney's campaign believes his constant calls for aid to the auto industry will make a difference in a close race.

"Michigan is personal for Governor Romney," said campaign spokeswoman Sarah Pompei. "He grew up here and has a unique understanding of the issues facing the state today. ... We've always known this was going to be a close election."

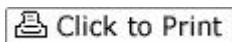
Among the other Republican candidates, former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani had 6 percent, Fred Thompson had 5 and Ron Paul had 4 percent. Another 10 percent said they were undecided.

A survey released Saturday night by Mitchell Interactive showed a similarly tight race: McCain with 22 percent, Romney at 21 and Huckabee at 12.

*Staff writer Deb Price contributed to this report. You can reach Gordon Trowbridge at (202) 662-8738 or [gtrowbridge@detnews.com](mailto:gtrowbridge@detnews.com).*

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