

**OBAMA SURGES PAST CLINTON IN NATIONAL PRIMARY BALLOT;
BOTH DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATES STRUGGLING AGAINST MCCAIN**

*The Economy Still Dominates as Top Issue Facing the Country,
Which Could Spell Trouble for McCain*

New York, April 4, 2008 – With just over two months left in the official primary season for Democrats, Barack Obama has taken a substantial lead over Hillary Clinton among registered voters who say they vote in Democratic primaries. While the race has been at a statistical dead heat in the Diageo/Hotline Poll since December 2007 (see Table 1), this month Obama has taken a decisive lead over Clinton.

Table 1: Primary Vote Among Democratic Primary Voters

	December (n=336)	January (n=380)	February (n=361)	March (n=342)
Barack Obama	30%	35%	43%	50%
Hillary Clinton	35%	38%	45%	38%

In the Diageo/Hotline Poll of 799 registered voters conducted by FD from March 28-31, 2008, Obama's favorability rating is stable among registered voters at 56% (February, 57%) and has risen 7 points among self-identified Democrats (March, 77%; February, 70%). In contrast, Clinton's favorability rating has declined 11% since last month (March, 43%; February, 54%). This decline is driven in part by the 13 point drop in registered voters who self-identify as Democrats that view Clinton favorably (March, 71%; February, 84%).

Another challenge for Hillary Clinton evident in this month's poll is Democratic primary voters' views regarding which of the candidates is attacking the other unfairly (see Table 2). Democratic primary voters are more than twice as likely to say that Hillary Clinton is attacking Obama unfairly, and there is a 29 point difference between those who say Obama has not been attacking unfairly compared to those who say the same for Clinton.

**Table 2: Unfair Attacks Among Democratic Primary Voters
(n=342)**

	Yes, has been attacking [opponent] unfairly	No, has not been attacking [opponent] unfairly
Hillary Clinton	49%	41%
Barack Obama	22%	70%

Looking ahead to the general election, John McCain leads Hillary Clinton by 9 points, a one point improvement from last month, while he now edges Obama by a statistically insignificant 2 points. However, this is a drastic improvement from his 8 point deficit to Obama in last month's poll (see Table 3).

Table 3: Vote Results among Top Presidential Candidates

	McCain vs. Clinton	McCain vs. Obama
February	48% - 40%	40% - 48%
March	50% - 41%	46% - 44%

When Independent candidate Ralph Nader is also included, we see no major shifts in the general election vote choices. McCain still has a 7 point lead over Clinton when Nader is included, though McCain's lead over Obama increases to 4 points, placing it just outside the margin of error for this poll.

Attitudes Toward the State of the Country and Economy

This month voters registered the strongest negative attitudes toward the direction of the country in the history of the Diageo/*Hotline* poll, with just 17% saying the country is headed in the right direction while nearly three-fourths (74%) say the country is on the wrong track.

The economy is once again in the top spot as the most important issue facing the country at 37%, leaving the Iraq War in a distant second place at 16%. Supporting this rating of top-of-mind issues, 71% of registered voters say that state of the economy is poor, with "pocketbook issues" driving these impressions most (see *Table 4*).

Table 4: Top Signs of a Poor Economy
(n = 571)

	Total
Rising cost of oil/gas/electricity/heat/ food/other/common goods	32%
Housing issues	21%
Employment Issues	17%
Inflation	6%

When asked which party would do the best job handling the nation's economy, registered voters say Democrats over Republicans, 54% to 33%. When asked which candidate among the three leading contenders they think will do the best job handling the nation's economy, McCain receives only 35%, compared to a combined 51% for the two Democrats (Obama, 31%; Clinton, 20%). McCain performs much better on the question of who would best handle the nation's security leading both Democrats 48% to 42% (Obama, 23%; Clinton, 19%). However, when asked which party would best handle the nation's security, Republicans are statistically tied with Democrats, 43% to 40%.

"While McCain is currently benefitting from the Democratic in-fighting, voter concerns about the economy could emerge as his Achilles heel," says Amy Walter, Editor-in-Chief of *The Hotline*. "Before the general election truly gets under way, he and his party must find a way to better compete with the Democrats on this vital issue."



To obtain complete poll results, please see www.diageohotlinepoll.com.

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Methodology: The Diageo/*Hotline* Poll was conducted by telephone from March 28 through March 31, 2008, among a random, representative sample of 799 registered voters, age 18 and older (margin of error +/- 3.5%). The sample included a sub-sample of both 342 Democratic primary voters (margin of error +/- 5.3%) and 311 Republican primary voters (margin of error +/- 5.6%).

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