

Election 2008: Florida Presidential Election

Florida: Obama Ahead by One
Wednesday, July 23, 2008

Barack Obama has caught up to John McCain in Florida. The latest Rasmussen Reports telephone survey in the state finds Obama with a statistically insignificant one-point advantage over his rival, 46% to 45%. When “leaners” are included, the Democrat leads 49% to 47%.

Over the past six months, McCain has maintained leads ranging from seven to sixteen percentage points. Last month, McCain led 48% to 41% in the Sunshine State.

A big push for Obama this month in Florida comes from unaffiliated voters. Last month, he had just a three-point lead in this demographic. This month, he leads by twenty-three.

Obama leads 50% to 43% among women in Florida, while McCain leads 47% to 41% among men. The Democrat has double-digit leads among voters under 40 years of age, while McCain has a big lead among senior citizens.

This month, Obama is viewed favorably by 51% of Florida voters, up from 44% last month. He is viewed unfavorably by 47%, down from 53% last month. McCain’s numbers are 60% favorable, up from 57% last month, and 39% unfavorable, up from 38% last month.

Nearly half of voters in Florida (49%) say economic issues are the most important in the upcoming election. Of those voters, 63% choose Obama while just 27% choose McCain. In a very distant second, 19% of voters choose National Security issues as the most important in the Presidential election. Among those voters, McCain has a 79% to 18% advantage.

Though Florida has cast its twenty-seven Electoral College votes for Republican candidates in eight out of the last ten elections, it is often referred to as a swing state due to recent close--and controversial--election outcomes. In 2004, George W. Bush defeated John Kerry 52% to 47%. In 2000, it took over a month to decide the state’s winner after controversy over erroneous ballot techniques. According to the Rasmussen Reports daily Presidential Tracking Poll, Obama is currently polling about five percentage points better than Kerry’s 2004 results. It is interesting to note that his Florida numbers are better than Kerry’s by a similar margin.

Florida is included in a list of several locations being considered for drilling in offshore oil wells. Among voters in the state 57% are in favor of offshore drilling, while 32% do not think it should be allowed. Those numbers remain relatively unchanged over the past month. Over half of voters in Florida (51%) think it is more important to reduce gas prices than protecting the environment. Thirty-six percent (36%) take the opposite view.

Fifty-seven percent (57%) of Florida voters think the United States is winning the War on Terror. That number is even more optimistic than the national percentage. Just 17% of Floridians think

the terrorists are winning. Generally, across the nation, confidence in the War on Terror is at its highest level since the fall of 2004.

Still, 48% of voters agree with Obama that Iraq is not the “central front” of the war, while 42% think Afghanistan is. Forty-three percent (43%) think Afghanistan is a bigger threat than Iraq to the United States.

The majority of Florida voters (55%) think most reporters are trying to help Obama win the election. That is a bit higher than the national average. Just 7% think the media tries to help McCain, while 24% think reporters offer unbiased coverage of the election. In terms of the ailing economy, most voters in Florida (57%) think the media makes the situation seem worse than it really is. Just 15% say reporters portray the situation as better than it really is, while 23% say they present an accurate picture. Despite current difficulties, 42% of voters think the United States still has one of the best economies in the world, while 49% disagree.

Florida Governor Charlie Crist (R) earns good or excellent ratings from 49% of voters. Just 15% of voters say he is doing a poor job as governor. Crist has been mentioned often as a possible Vice Presidential candidate to McCain. Nationally, however, just 7% of voters think Crist would be the best choice for the Republican nominee.

President Bush earns good or excellent ratings from 35% of voters in Florida, while 48% say he is doing a poor job. Nationally, his approval ratings remain at record lows.