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Its April in South Carolina – Spring is here, baseball is starting to get exciting, and the air is filled with pollen and the lovely sounds of people running for President. In keeping with South Carolina’s new found fame as a stop for everyone and anyone looking to be the leader of the Free World, we at the SCIndex have decided to take a little detour in our normal coverage of the opinions of Palmetto state voters and see how support for the current crop of Republican and Democratic presidential primary candidates was shaping up across the state.

This quarter, voters from the statewide sample were asked to determine if they were likely to participate in either the Republican or Democratic presidential primary scheduled for early next year. Only voters who indicated that they were definitely going to participate in either the Democratic or Republican presidential primaries were asked which candidate they were most likely to support.*

39% of all voters in the survey identified themselves as Republican primary participants while 36% said they would definitely vote in the Democratic presidential primary. 25% of all voters surveyed said they would not participate in either primary. Here’s what they think of the crowd so far ...

Republican Choices

Voter support for the Republican presidential hopefuls in South Carolina looks similar to most national polls. In South Carolina Rudy Giuliani leads the field with 29% followed by John McCain with 16% and 8% for Mitt Romney. The other announced candidates had little to no support across the state, though unannounced potential candidate Fred Thompson did pull in a surprising 4%. Almost 4 out of 10 Republican presidential primary voters say they are currently undecided.

Giuliani’s current lead is built primarily on support from women. 37% of all female Republican presidential primary voters indicate that they support the former New York Mayor. 15% of women who plan to vote in the Republican presidential primary support John McCain. McCain and Giuliani split support among male voters with each candidate getting 20% of their vote.

Democratic Dynamics

Democrats across the country are gearing up for what is likely to be a historic presidential primary race. With South Carolina slated as the second primary, all of the major candidates have already made a visit to the Palmetto State. Nationally, the South Carolina primary is crucial because it takes place just before the new “Super Primary” day when California, Florida, and other states with a large number of delegates have their primary elections. The SCIndex results show that New York Senator Hillary Clinton commands a respectful lead over Senators Barack Obama and John Edwards. Voters who plan to vote in the Democratic presidential primary divided their support among these top tier candidates, with 32% for Clinton, 23% for Obama and 21% for Edwards. 24% are currently undecided.

The demographic dynamics of each candidate’s support groups shows some interesting early trends for each campaign. Clinton is leading Obama among African American females, 41% to 29%. Obama is leading Clinton among African American males 34% to 28%. Among all women Clinton receives 38% to Edwards’ 19% and Obama’s 22%. Clinton has a slight edge on Edwards with white females 35% to 33%. Edwards has the lead among white males with 45% to Obama’s 10% and Clinton’s 10%.

Smokin’ Taxes

Although South Carolina voters have very different views about who should be our next president, a strong majority of voters share support for increasing the state’s cigarette tax. 70% of voters in our statewide sample said they wanted to see the state’s cigarette tax raised in order to fund needed healthcare programs. Support for increasing the cigarette tax has remained constant. The fall 2006 SCIndex had the results for raising the cigarette tax at 71% support, 24% oppose and 5% undecided.

Yeah, but what have you done for me lately ...

Just prior to Election Day 2006 and at the tail end of the Governor’s re-election media blitz, the SCIndex reported that 60% of all South Carolina voters thought Mark Sanford was doing an excellent to good job as governor. Sanford’s strong job approval ratings certainly foretold his impressive showing on Election Day.

Now, comfortably back in the Governor’s’ Mansion with a landslide win under his belt, Sanford has shown little interest in leading the public toward a plan or vision for his final term. As Sanford contemplates a potential Vice Presidential bid, his job performance rating has started to slip. Currently, only 50% of the state’s voters think the governor is doing an excellent to good job. 38% say Sanford is only doing a fair job while 10% give the governor a poor rating. We’ll be curious to see if this negative trend continues in next quarter’s SCIndex.

*The SCIndex is not the type of computer generated autocall poll which has become popular with companies looking for media attention. The SCIndex is a telephone survey conducted by live, trained data collection personnel. The SCIndex is not affiliated with any Presidential campaigns or candidate committees. This administration of the SCIndex was conducted between April 3 – 4,

2007. 401 interviews were conducted among active registered voters across the state. The demographics of the statewide sample are:

Gender

43% - Male
57% - Female

Race

73% - White
27% - African American

Party Identification

37% - Democrat
44% - Republican
16% - Independent

Age

54% - Under 55
53% - Over 55
3% - Refused

Survey participants saying they were either participating in the Republican or Democratic presidential primary divided into the following demographic categories:

Self Identified Republican Primary Participants N=155

Gender

49% - Male
51% - Female

Race

99% - White
1% - African American

Party Identification

1% - Democrat
90% - Republican
8% - Independent

Age

58% - Under 55
40% - Over 55
2% - Refused to give their age

Self Identified Democratic Primary Participants N=146

Gender

35% - Male
65% - Female

Race

42% - White
58% - African American

Party Identification

85% - Democrat
1% - Republican
14% - Independent

Age

52% - Under 55
48% - Over 55

SCIndex - Tell your friends!

Remember, you can share all the juicy info in the SCIndex with your friends and neighbors. Just have them send a blank email with "SCIndex" in the subject line to scindex@campaignsystems.com and they'll automatically receive the SCIndex.

REMEMBER - If you'd like to know how South Carolinians feel about a specific issue, you can tag a question onto the SCIndex without having to do an expensive poll. Call Wil Brown at 803-206-0901 for more information.

The SCIndex is a private publication not intended for public use. The SCIndex is a joint production of Campaign Systems, Crantford & Associates, and the Southern Political Information Network (SPIN). Any questions, comments, and requests for use of this information publicly should be directed to Wil Brown via email – scindex@campaignsystems.com or phone – 803-206-0901.

Information contained in the SCIndex was compiled from a poll of likely General Election voters conducted April 3-4, 2007, and has an error of +/- 4.9 percentage points.

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