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Obama Bests McCain in First UW Dept. of Political Science/WisPolitics.com General Election Poll

--Bad environment for GOP in Badger State Cited--

MADISON (June 12, 2008) -- In the inaugural UW Dept. of Political Science/WisPolitics.com survey taken immediately after Hillary Clinton suspended her campaign, Barack Obama leads John McCain by a 13-percentage point margin in the Badger state.

The survey of 506 randomly selected probable voters was conducted by phone from June 8- June 10 under the direction of Charles Franklin and Ken Goldstein from the University of Wisconsin Department of Political Science (www.polisci.wisc.edu). It has a margin of error of plus or minus 4.5 percentage points.

Consistent with evidence from other national surveys, the study paints a picture of a hostile political environment in the swing state of Wisconsin for Republicans in 2008. Eight in 10 Wisconsin voters think the country is going in the wrong direction, President George W. Bush has a favorability rating of only 30 percent, 66 percent believe that the war in Iraq was not worth fighting, and the top two issue concerns are the economy and getting U.S. soldiers out of Iraq.

Wisconsin was a key battleground in the presidential contests of 2000 and 2004 and saw extraordinarily tight contests in both years. Al Gore beat George W. Bush by 5,708 votes (0.2 percent) in 2000, and John Kerry bested Bush by 11,384 votes in 2004 (0.38 percent). Goldstein points out, "In both 2000 and 2004, party attachments in the state were virtually identical with equal numbers of voters identifying with the Democrats and the GOP. One of the striking results in this poll and consistent with other survey work I have done in the state, the Democrats now enjoy a major advantage in party identification." In the study, 38 percent of probable voters identified with the Democrats and 24 percent with Republicans.

Obama has very strong favorable ratings with 64 percent of Wisconsin probable voters saying they have a favorable opinion and 32 percent having an unfavorable opinion. McCain also has relatively strong favorables, too, at 53 percent to 44 percent. Obama is seen as the candidate to bring about change (70 percent to McCain's 42 percent) while McCain is seen as the experienced candidate (84 percent to Obama's 43 percent). Still, as the evidence shows, McCain faces a stiff headwind in Wisconsin

Party polarization is a striking feature of Wisconsin opinion at this time with 87 percent of Democrats and 89 percent of Republicans saying they would vote for their party's nominee if the election were held today. "For all the talk about a new politics, the electorate is sharply split,"

said Franklin. Among independents, Obama holds a nine-point lead, 46 percent to 37 percent for McCain with 17 percent undecided.

Despite widespread speculation about lingering divisions within both parties, there is little evidence of it in the poll. Democrats with favorable views of Hillary Clinton were as favorable towards Obama, and as likely to vote for him, as were those less supportive of Clinton. And 55 percent of those surveyed said Obama choosing Clinton as a running mate would “have no effect on (the) likelihood of voting for Barack Obama.” Among undecided voters, the results were also a wash with equal proportions of undecided voters saying a Hillary Clinton pick for vice president would help, hurt, or make no difference.

On the Republican side, there was no evidence of a split in support for McCain among the more conservative Republican voters, despite criticism from some conservative commentators. “The party bases have come together despite sometimes divisive primaries,” concluded Franklin.

This is the first in a series of at least three UW Dept. of Political Science/WisPolitics.com polls this general election season.

“WisPolitics.com is a believer in emphasizing good polling, and we’re confident Professors Goldstein and Franklin will provide top-notch survey work to help us better understand the dynamics of this historic election,” said Jeff Mayers, president of WisPolitics.com.

WisPolitics.com, based in Madison, Wis. and launched in 2000, is an independent, non-partisan online news service that runs www.wispolitics.com, www.wisbusiness.com, www.wisopinion.com and www.iowapolitics.com

SELECTED QUESTIONS

Q2:

Generally speaking, how much attention do you pay to what is going on in government and politics...

N =	506	100%
A great deal	177	35%
Quite a bit	208	41%
Some.....	104	21%
Very little.....	14	3%
None	3	1%
Don't know / Refused (DO NOT READ)	0	0%

Q3:

Thinking about things in the United States, do you think things in the country are generally going in the right direction, or do you feel things have gotten off on the wrong track?

N =	506	100%
Right direction.....	80	16%
Wrong track.....	403	80%
Don't know / Refused	23	5%

Q4:

What do you think should be the top priority of the President and the U.S. Congress?

N =	506	100%
Making health care and prescription drugs more affordable01	50	10%
Holding the line on taxes and government spending02	26	5%
Improving economy and protecting jobs03	185	37%
Improving education.....04	8	2%
Protecting the environment.....05	9	2%
Fighting violent crime06	2	0%
Winning war in Iraq.....07	31	6%
Gasoline prices08	40	8%
Winning the war on terror09	9	2%
Getting U.S. out of Iraq10	55	11%
Other (SPECIFY)11	82	16%
Don't know / Refused12	9	2%

Q7:

Barack (buh-rock) Obama (o-BAHM-uh)
 PROMPT IF NECESSARY: Do you have a favorable or unfavorable impression of... IF FAVORABLE/UNFAVORABLE, ASK: Would that be a STRONGLY or just a SOMEWHAT (FAVORABLE/UNFAVORABLE) impression?

N =	506	100%
Strongly favorable1	169	33%
Somewhat favorable2	157	31%
Somewhat unfavorable3	85	17%
Strongly unfavorable4	77	15%
Don't know / Refused9	18	4%

Q8:

George W. Bush
 PROMPT IF NECESSARY: Do you have a favorable or unfavorable impression of... IF FAVORABLE/UNFAVORABLE, ASK: Would that be a STRONGLY or just a SOMEWHAT (FAVORABLE/UNFAVORABLE) impression?

N =	506	100%
Strongly favorable1	44	9%
Somewhat favorable2	108	21%
Somewhat unfavorable3	100	20%
Strongly unfavorable4	252	50%
Don't know / Refused9	2	0%

Q11:

John McCain
 PROMPT IF NECESSARY: Do you have a favorable or unfavorable impression of... IF FAVORABLE/UNFAVORABLE, ASK: Would that be a STRONGLY or just a SOMEWHAT (FAVORABLE/UNFAVORABLE) impression?

N =	506	100%
Strongly favorable1	81	16%
Somewhat favorable2	189	37%
Somewhat unfavorable3	124	25%
Strongly unfavorable4	96	19%
Don't know / Refused9	16	3%

Q15:

If the election for President were held today, for whom would you vote...

N =	506	100%
John McCain.....1	186	37%
Barack Obama2	255	50%
Undecided (DO NOT READ)5	49	10%
Refused (DO NOT READ)6	16	3%

Q26:

All in all, considering the costs to the United States versus the benefits to the United States, do you think the war with Iraq was worth fighting or not?

IF YES, WORTH FIGHTING/NO, NOT WORTH FIGHTING, ASK: Do you feel that STRONGLY or SOMEWHAT?

N =	506	100%
Strongly worth fighting1	98	19%
Somewhat worth fighting2	63	12%
Somewhat not worth fighting3	71	14%
Strongly not worth fighting4	261	52%
Don't know / Refused5	13	3%

Q27:

If Barack Obama chose Hillary Clinton as the vice presidential nominee, would that make you more likely, less likely, or have no effect on your likelihood of voting for Barack Obama?

N =	506	100%
More likely1	107	21%
Less likely.....2	110	22%
Have no effect3	276	55%
Don't know / Refused4	13	3%

Q41:

Generally speaking, do you consider yourself a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or something else?

N =	506	100%
Republican.....1	123	24%
Democrat2	190	38%
Independent3	145	29%
Other preference / No preference4	43	8%
Don't know / Refused9	5	1%