

Wall Street Plaza
88 Pine Street, 32nd Floor
New York, NY 10005, USA
Tel +1 212 850 5600

VOTERS OPEN TO MAKING PRESIDENTIAL HISTORY: READY FOR AN AFRICAN-AMERICAN OR WOMAN PRESIDENT

Diageo/Hotline Poll Conducted by Financial Dynamics Shows Sen. Hillary Clinton is “Tough” and “Strong” As Support Rises Among Democrats, Independent Voters; New House Majority Leader John Boehner Unknown Among Voters

NEW YORK, February 23, 2006 – While a majority of American voters believe that the country is ready to elect an African-American (52%) or woman (56%) commander-in-chief, only 27% of voters believe America is ready to elect a Hispanic president. The majority of men (57%) and women (55%) agreed that a female candidate could be elected president.

As the country marks Black History Month, the Diageo/Hotline Poll of 807 registered voters, conducted by Financial Dynamics from February 16 to 19, with analysis by Ed Reilly (D) and Ed Rollins (R), found compelling racial differences on perceptions of race relations in the US. The poll found that 55% of white voters, and 49% of Hispanic voters believe the country is ready to elect an African-American president. However, only 31% of African-American voters believe the U.S. is ready to elect an African-American to the highest office in the US. All three groups are less inclined to say the country is ready for a Hispanic president; just 33% of Hispanic voters, 30% of white voters, and 8% of African-Americans believe that a Hispanic candidate could be elected.

The poll also found a disparity in voters' attitudes toward the overall state of race relations in the United States, with 39% of white voters and 43% of Hispanic voters rating the current state of race relations as “excellent” or “good,” while only 20% of black voters said the same. Overall, a plurality of voters rate the state of race relations in the U.S. as only fair (43%) and a minority of respondents believe that they are either excellent or good (3% and 34%, respectively).

And looking at the 2008 presidential landscape, this month's Diageo/Hotline Poll contains good news for Sen. Hillary Clinton. Despite a month of highly visible Republican jabs at her character, Sen. Clinton's favorability rating is up 4% from January, to 52% – a figure that is up among Democrats (85% in February vs. 75% in January) and among Independents (54% in February vs. 49% in January).

In a hypothetical presidential race against Sen. John McCain, Sen. Clinton gained 2% against Sen. McCain since last month. McCain captures 50% of the vote to Clinton's 40%, compared to 51-38% in January. McCain's slip this month can be attributed to an increase in support for Clinton from Independents and Democrats since last month. In January, 75% of Democrats and 49% of Independents supported Clinton. This month, Democrats' support for Clinton increased to 85%, and Independent support for Clinton increased to 54%.

WWW.FD-US.COM

A MEMBER OF THE FD INTERNATIONAL NETWORK

ATHENS, BAHRAIN, BOSTON, DUBLIN, FRANKFURT, LONDON
NEW YORK, PARIS, SAN FRANCISCO, STOCKHOLM, WASHINGTON, D.C.

US Headquarters
Wall Street Plaza
88 Pine Street, 32nd Floor
New York, NY 10005, USA
Tel +1 212 850 5600
Fax +1 212 850 5790

99 Summer Street, Suite 350
Boston, MA 02110, USA
Tel +1 617 747 3600
Fax +1 617 747 3636

44 Montgomery Street, Suite 1500
San Francisco, CA 94104, USA
Tel +1 415 439 4500
Fax +1 415 296 0446

700 13th Street, Suite 930
Washington, D.C. 20005, USA
Tel +1 202 434 0600
Fax +1 202 393 1996

"Republicans may be second-guessing themselves on the decision to engage Senator Clinton since the more attention she gets, the more favorable voters find her, " said Chuck Todd, Editor-in-Chief of *The Hotline*.

So far, attacks on Sen. Clinton's character have worked in her favor, with more American voters associating her with positive attributes than negative. The vast majority of voters say that she's "tough" and has "strong conviction" (82% and 77%), while far fewer believe that Sen. Clinton is "irrational" and "angry" (40% and 49%). As expected, far more Republicans associate Sen. Clinton with negative traits such as "angry," (72% of Republicans vs. 30% of Democrats), and Republicans are almost three times as likely as Democrats to call her "irrational" (61% vs. 21%).

Turning to the new Republican leadership in the House, the Diageo/*Hotline* Poll found the majority (72%) of voters have not heard of new Republican House Majority Leader, Rep. John Boehner. By comparison, only 24% of voters have not heard of Boehner's predecessor, Rep. Tom Delay. And when asked outright who replaced DeLay as the House Majority Leader, 91% of voters could not offer John Boehner's name.

More trouble for Congress lies in a loss of support for Republicans since last month. Only 29% of voters say that Congress would be better off with a Republican majority, compared to 35% of voters in January. Yet support for a Democratically-controlled Congress remains almost unchanged this month at 38%, versus 37% of voters supporting Democrats controlling Congress in January, with a 3% increase in the idea that neither party will take better care of Congress (21% in February vs. 8% in January).

"Congressional Republicans should be concerned about their decreased favorability numbers, but should be encouraged by the fact that favorability ratings for Democrats are not increasing," said Republican strategist Ed Rollins.

To obtain complete poll results please see www.diageohotlinepoll.com. To schedule an interview with Ed Rollins, Ed Reilly or Chuck Todd, contact Megha Narayan at (212) 850-5600 or Megha.Narayan@fd.com.

Methodology

The Diageo/*Hotline* Poll was conducted by telephone from February 16 to 19 among a random, nationally representative sample of 807 registered voters (margin of error +/-3.5%), ages 18 and older.

Complete results available at www.diageohotlinepoll.com

About Diageo

Diageo (Dee-AH-Gee-O) is the world's leading premium drinks business with an outstanding collection of beverage alcohol brands across spirits, wines, and beer categories. These brands include Johnnie Walker, Guinness, Smirnoff, J&B, Baileys, Cuervo, Tanqueray, Captain Morgan, Crown Royal, Beaulieu Vineyard and Sterling Vineyards wines. Diageo is a global company, trading in more than 200 countries around the world. The company is listed on both the New York Stock Exchange (DEO) and the London Stock Exchange (DGE). Celebrating life, every day, everywhere, responsibly. For more information about Diageo, its people, brands, and performance, visit us at <http://www.diageo.com/>

About *The Hotline* & National Journal Group

The Hotline is National Journal's daily briefing on politics. National Journal Group Inc. is a leading publisher of magazines, newsletters, books and directories for people who have a professional interest in politics, policy and government. Based in Washington, D.C., National Journal Group Inc. is committed to providing publications and services that are nonpartisan, reliable and of the highest quality. www.nationaljournal.com

About Financial Dynamics

FD is a leading business communications and consulting firm with a 20-year history of advising clients' senior managements in corporate and financial public relations, investor relations, transaction communications public affairs and crisis communications. Co-headquartered in London and New York, FD provides seamless cross-border support through a network of offices across Europe, North America, Scandinavia, Russia, India and the Far East. FD recently formed a Business Consulting practice through the acquisition of management consulting firm Westhill Partners to provide clients with a broader range of solutions to address the critical business issues facing their organizations. FD is an industry leader in applying cutting-edge quantitative and qualitative research techniques to provide Fortune 500 companies, executives, individuals and non-profits with the best information on issues of reputation, crisis, policy, internal communications, brand development and litigation matters. The firm is structured around specialist sector teams operating on an international basis and is management owned in partnership with private equity firm Advent International. www.fd.com

###