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CLINTON, GIULIANI EARLY '08 FRONT-RUNNERS AMONG DEMOCRATIC, REPUBLICAN VOTERS

*Voters Forming General Opinions of Presidential Candidates but Lack Knowledge of
Key Religious and Political Beliefs*

*Obama Continues to Garner Strong Favorability Ratings,
But Voters Unclear of his Stance on Key Issues*

NEW YORK, February 27, 2007 – Two New Yorkers, Senator Hillary Clinton and former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani, are the early front-runners among Democratic and Republican voters, respectively, in the 2008 presidential race, despite voters' unfamiliarity with where the candidates stand on key issues, their religious affiliation and their age.

Sen. Clinton leads the field of potential Democratic contenders with 32% of Democratic voters reporting support for Clinton. Sen. Barack Obama is a distant second with 20% of Democratic voters expressing support for his election, followed by John Edwards, who garners only 6%. Among Republican voters, 17% would like to see Rudy Giuliani elected president, while 12% support Sen. John McCain. Former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney, who recently announced his presidential candidacy, is third among Republican candidates at 7%.

"There's a clear enthusiasm gap between Democratic and Republican voters," says Chuck Todd, Editor in Chief of *The Hotline*. "Democrats are not only more familiar with their presidential candidates, but they also seem to be more excited by them. In the coming months, Republicans will not only have to educate the general public, but the Republican base as well."

Outside of general support for a few candidates, voters lack knowledge of the 2008 presidential candidates in key areas, including some of the basic political and religious views of candidates. In terms of political ideology, Sen. Clinton is seen as "very liberal" by 40% of voters, with 67% of Republicans saying she's "very liberal" compared to only 20% of Democrats. 56% of voters are unable to describe her religious affiliation, including 61% of Republicans and 47% of Democrats. Giuliani is seen as moderate compared to the Democratic front-runner, with 35% of voters saying Giuliani is "moderate" or "moderate/leans conservative". 46% of Republicans say Giuliani is "moderate" or "moderate/leans conservative" compared to 27% of Democrats. 60% of voters are unable to identify him as a Catholic, including 56% of both Republicans and Democrats.

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Table 1: Perceived Support of Issue Positions (among registered voters)

	Hillary Clinton	Barack Obama	John Edwards	Rudy Giuliani	John McCain	Mitt Romney
Pro-Choice	45%	31%	29%	28%	11%	4%
Increase minimum wage	54%	45%	44%	29%	27%	14%
Same-sex marriage	28%	18%	15%	14%	4%	3%
Strong border enforcement	27%	21%	23%	34%	38%	18%
Troop "surge"	5%	4%	5%	26%	33%	13%
Initial decision to go to War	35%	8%	17%	34%	39%	13%
Don't know/Not sure	17%	37%	37%	32%	31%	65%

Barack Obama's favorability ratings continue to climb -- up five points from January to 50%, including 66% approval among Democrats -- yet voters report very little knowledge of his political views or religious beliefs. When asked if they would describe Obama as a "born-again" or evangelical, 56% of voters are unsure and 67% of voters cannot describe Obama's religious affiliation. In terms of issues, 45% associate Obama with "increasing the minimum wage," but 37% say they can't identify any position that Obama supports.

Independents display a significant shift in impressions of key potential candidates in the span of one month. 53% of Independents report favorable impressions of John McCain, compared to 43% in January and 25% now report favorable impressions of Mitt Romney, compared to 15% last month. Similarly, Independents are now more favorable toward Democratic contenders, with a 13-point gain in favorability (from 36% to 49%) for Barack Obama and a 7-point gain in favorability (from 36% to 43%) for Hillary Clinton from last month.

The Iraq War overshadows all issues by a wide margin among voters. With 32% opposing the War (including 50% of Democrats) and 6% of voters saying support for the War is the most pressing item on the national agenda, Iraq continues to dominate the issue landscape. The economy is a distant second, with only 8% of voters citing it as the most important issue facing the country today.

A month after President Bush's announcement to send more troops to Iraq and a week after heated debate in both chambers of Congress about the "Surge" plan, The Diageo/Hotline Poll of 800 registered voters, conducted by Financial Dynamics from February 21-24, shows the President's favorability rating down four points from January, from 39% to 35%. Voter disapproval of Bush's handling of the situation in Iraq continues to drive the President's negative ratings: voters disapprove of the Administration's handling of Iraq by a 64% to 30% margin. The core of voter disapproval on Bush's handling of the war is among Democrats (91% disapprove/6% approve), but 67% of Independents also disapprove, with 53% of Independents expressing "strong" disapproval.

Perhaps as a result of the heated debate about the Iraq War in Congress, the new Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi's favorability ratings decline to 33% in February, down three points from January. Significantly, the biggest drop in Pelosi's favorability this month is within her own party: only 51% of Democrats view Pelosi favorably, a nine point decline from last month.

Overall Congressional job approval is down one point this month, with only 30% of voters approving and 55% disapproving.

“Post-election, voters are looking to Speaker Pelosi and Democrats in Congress for results,” said Republican strategist Ed Rollins. “If the situation in Iraq remains the same, Democrats will start shouldering some of the blame. That’s the burden of leadership.”

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 21-24, 2007, among a random, nationally representative sample of 800 registered voters (margin of error +/- 3.5%), age 18 and older. Complete results available at www.diageohotlinepoll.com

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