

**NATIONAL RACE OPENS UP FOR GOP PRIMARY CANDIDATES,
TIGHTENS FOR DEMOCRATIC COUNTERPARTS**

***McCain Gains Decisive Lead over Republican Rivals,
Obama and Clinton Deadlocked in Democratic Race***

NEW YORK, January 16, 2008 – Following the contests in Iowa and New Hampshire, the national Democratic and Republican primary races are beginning to take clearer shape. In the GOP primary horserace, Sen. John McCain has catapulted to first place (32%), a 22 point leap from the 10% he garnered last month, and a full 15 points ahead of his nearest rival Mike Huckabee (17%). As for the other GOP candidates, Mitt Romney has ticked up a statistically insignificant 2 points to 15%, while Rudy Giuliani has dropped 9 points since last month to 12%, and Fred Thompson has moved down 4 points to 7%.

When asked about each candidate’s likelihood of eventually clinching the nomination, 82% of Republican primary voters think that it is likely that McCain will be the party’s nominee, as opposed to 56% who say the same for Huckabee and 53% for Mitt Romney. Despite McCain’s strong position in the primary ballot, there is the potential for change in the race – a large majority of Republican primary voters (59%) says it’s possible they may change their minds between now and their state’s primary.

The Diageo/*Hotline* Poll of 803 registered voters conducted by FD from January 10-12, 2008 shows that the Democratic race is a tight one between frontrunners Sen. Hillary Clinton and Sen. Barack Obama, who are in a statistical dead heat for first place (Clinton, 38%; Obama, 35%). Clinton’s lead over Obama is tighter than it was in December, with her 5 point margin last month (35% to 30%) shrinking to 3 points this month. Democratic primary voters were asked the likelihood of each candidate winning the nomination, with the result that 89% say that Clinton is likely to be their party’s nominee, compared to 82% saying the same for Obama.

There appears to be less fluidity in the Democratic race than in the Republican race, as a clear majority of Democratic primary voters (56%) say they will definitely support their chosen candidate. Moreover, supporters for the top two candidates are even firmer in their convictions: 61% of Clinton’s supporters and 59% of Obama’s supporters say their support is definite.

**Table 1: Primary Vote among
Democratic Primary Voters**
(n=380)

	Total
Hillary Clinton	38%
Barack Obama	35%
John Edwards	13%
Dennis Kucinich	2%
Mike Gravel	*

**Table 2: Primary Vote among
Republican Primary Voters**
(n=266)

	Total
John McCain	32%
Mike Huckabee	17%
Mitt Romney	15%
Rudy Giuliani	12%
Fred Thompson	7%
Ron Paul	4%
Duncan Hunter	2%

“With the nomination races for both Democrats and Republicans becoming clearer, all signs point to February 5th as the day that may very well make or break the candidates still in the race,” said *Hotline* Editor-in-Chief, Amy Walter. “John McCain needs to continue to perform well in the early primary contests and maintain his current frontrunner status. As for the Democrats, with both leading candidates well-liked and popular among the party faithful, Democratic primary voters must ultimately decide which of the two, Clinton or Obama, best fits their image of the ideal Democratic nominee.”

Presidential Traits

This month’s Diageo/*Hotline* poll also asked voters which presidential traits are most important for a candidate to have. Overall, priorities remain stable since last month’s poll – Democratic primary voters continue to say that being able to “lead the country in a new direction” is the most important trait (December, 50%; January, 50%). For Republican primary voters, the most important trait for a presidential candidate remains having “the experience necessary to be President” (December, 36%; January, 39%).

Sen. John McCain has gained considerable ground since last month on all key presidential traits. Conversely, the former Mayor of New York, Rudy Giuliani, has fallen sharply on all key traits. McCain has soared 40 points from last month’s poll to 46% of Republican primary voters saying he “has the best chance of winning the general election,” compared to Giuliani at 17% on the same trait (a 24 point drop from December). Similarly, for the trait “has the experience necessary to be President,” McCain comes in at 47% (a 25 point jump from December), with Giuliani at 18% (a 12% drop from December).

Among Democratic primary voters, Clinton leads on two key presidential traits: “has the best chance of winning the general election” (Clinton, 51%; Obama, 32%) and “has the experience necessary to be President” (Clinton, 62%; Obama, 17%). Obama has made major strides on voters’ association with him on all key traits since last month, most significantly on “is inspirational” at 51% (a 13 point gain) and “has the best chance of winning the general election” at 32% (a 10 point gain). Also, Obama has taken a clear lead on the “change candidate” association: he jumped 7 points from December on “will lead the country in a new direction” (from 37% to 44%). That said, Clinton’s standing has solidified on having the “experience necessary to be President,” jumping 10 points from last month (from 52% to 62%).

General Election

In terms of the eventual victor of the general election, Democrats are viewed to be in a better position than Republicans. Registered voters say they would vote for a Democratic candidate over a Republican candidate 48% to 33% in a generic ballot question. In addition, a substantial majority expects that the 2008 presidential election will be won by the Democratic candidate (Democratic candidate, 62%; Republican candidate, 23%). Underscoring this perception, in head-to-head match-ups the Democratic candidates come out on top virtually across the board, with Obama enjoying the biggest margins over the top Republicans. By contrast, Clinton has the smallest margins of victory against GOP contenders. McCain is seen as the only Republican candidate that would either tie or beat outright his Democratic counterparts.

Table 3: Margin of Victory among Top Presidential Candidates
(n=407; n=396)

	John McCain	Mike Huckabee	Mitt Romney	Rudy Giuliani
Hillary Clinton	(R) +3%	(D) +9%	(D) +11%	(D) +10%
Barack Obama	(D) +1%	(D) +23%	(D) +30%	(D) +22%
John Edwards	(R) +8%	(D) +15%	(D) +16%	(D) +20%

To obtain complete poll results please see www.diageohotlinepoll.com.

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Methodology: The Diageo/*Hotline* Poll was conducted by telephone from January 10 through January 12, 2008, among a random, representative sample of 803 registered voters, age 18 and older (margin of error +/- 3.5%). The sample included a sub-sample of both 380 Democratic primary voters (margin of error +/- 5.0%) and 266 Republican primary voters (margin of error +/- 6.0%).

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