

**AS GENERAL ELECTION OFFICIALLY BEGINS,  
RACE BETWEEN OBAMA AND MCCAIN IS TIGHT**

**OBAMA BEATS MCCAIN ON ECONOMY AND HEALTHCARE,  
WILL BRING CHANGE THAT “MATTERS MOST” TO VOTERS**

***Democratic Voters like Clinton as VP, but not a Deal-breaker on Obama Vote  
Economy Remains Number One Issue, with Gas Prices Skyrocketing as Voter Concern***

New York, June 12, 2008 – In a poll fielded immediately following Barack Obama’s clinching of a historic Democratic nomination, and with Hillary Clinton bowing out of the field, the race for the Presidency is officially underway in what appears to be a close contest.

The Diageo/*Hotline* Poll of 806 registered voters conducted by FD from June 5 – June 8, 2008, shows that most GOP primary voters (52%) say they are satisfied with McCain as their nominee, reflecting a 10-point jump since last month’s poll (May, 42%). And, the vast majority of Democratic primary voters (68%) say the same for Obama. 60% of Democratic primary voters say they “will vote enthusiastically” for Obama, with 46% of their GOP counterparts saying the same for McCain. In the head-to-head match-up, Obama and McCain are in a statistical dead heat, with Obama edging out McCain by only 2 points, 44% to 42%.

Both Obama and McCain’s favorability ratings have increased since last month’s poll. Obama’s favorability has jumped 5 points (May, 52% favorable; June, 57% favorable) among registered voters with a 12-point increase among Democratic voters (May, 72% favorable; June, 84% favorable). McCain has seen an increase, though less dramatic, among GOP voters: his favorability moved from 76% in May to 79% this month.

Despite leaving the race as a presidential candidate, Clinton has seen a 4-point uptick in favorability ratings among the Democratic base (May, 69%; June, 73%). When asked about whether they would like Obama to select Clinton as his running mate, most Democratic primary voters say they like the idea (59%). But when asked if they would be more likely to vote for Obama based on this factor, the vast majority indicates that it would not affect their vote choice (74%). However, among a plurality of registered voters (43%), there is a sense that an Obama - Clinton ticket would mostly help the Obama campaign.

***The State of the Country and Top Issues***

The perception that the country is on the wrong track is virtually the same as last month’s poll with 76% of voters saying the country is heading in the wrong direction (May, 75%). The economy continues to be seen as the top issue facing the country at 33%; and, as gas prices broke the \$4 mark nationally, gas/fuel/oil prices has jumped another 8 points from last month as a top issue for voters (May, 10%; June, 18%).

Within this context, almost a third of voters (32%) say that the top priority that the next President should address is the economy. The second place priority for the next President to address is the war in Iraq (16%), followed by gas prices (11%).

When asked which party would do the best job handling the nation’s economy, registered voters continue to say Democrats over Republicans, 54% to 28%. This shows a 5-point jump since last month for the Democratic Party (May, 49% to 36%). Obama enjoys a solid lead over McCain on his perceived ability to handle the nation’s economy (43% to 37%) as well as healthcare (44% to 31%). However, McCain is seen as the candidate best able to handle the war in Iraq (49% to 41%). When looking at their perceived ability to handle the economy and healthcare, the margin is much closer when comparing Obama to McCain, than when comparing Obama to the generic GOP candidate (see *Table 1*).

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**Table 1: Best at Dealing with Top Issues**  
(n =406/401)

	The Economy	War in Iraq	Healthcare
<b>Democrats</b>	54%	46%	54%
<b>Republicans</b>	28%	34%	24%

	The Economy	War in Iraq	Healthcare
<b>Barack Obama</b>	43%	41%	44%
<b>John McCain</b>	37%	49%	31%

“It’s clear that the long Democratic primary season hasn’t provided a major breakthrough for either Obama or McCain,” says Amy Walter, Editor-in-Chief of *The Hotline*. “On key voter issues, Obama maintains his lead over McCain, with the exception of the war in Iraq. The silver lining for McCain is that Obama’s lead is not as significant when comparing him to the generic Republican candidate, reflecting the power of McCain’s personal appeal.”

### Traits of the Next President

When asked what traits they will look for in the next President, the top two traits registered voters cite are “will focus on issues that matter in our day to day lives, not just issues that grab headlines” (27%), followed by “does what’s right for voters, regardless of what either party says” (23%). And, when asked which candidate out of the two will best implement the “kind of change that matters most”, most voters say Obama over McCain (49% to 32%). Finally, almost half of self-identified Independents (40%) say Obama will best implement the kind of change that matters most to them.

To obtain complete poll results, please see [www.diageohotlinepoll.com](http://www.diageohotlinepoll.com).

To schedule an interview with Ed Reilly, contact Smriti Sateesh at (212) 850-5600 or [Smriti.Sateesh@fd.com](mailto:Smriti.Sateesh@fd.com).

**Methodology:** The Diageo/*Hotline* Poll was conducted by telephone from June 5 through 8, 2008, among a random, representative sample of 806 registered voters, age 18 and older (margin of error +/- 3.5%). The sample included a sub-sample of 365 Democratic primary voters (margin of error +/- 5.1%) and 284 Republican primary voters (margin of error +/- 5.8%).

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