

April 27, 2015

***Bush tops Clinton in battleground Virginia;
Republican 2016 field still largely wide open,
while Democrats rally strongly around Clinton***

Summary of Key Findings

1. Virginia voters overall appear to soften on Clinton, with Jeb Bush beating her for the first time in a hypothetical 2016 match-up.
2. Clinton beats all other potential Republican challengers, but is unable to achieve 50% of the vote against any of them.
3. Clinton has higher favorability ratings than any Republican, but her favorability rating has dropped slightly and her unfavorability has gone up slightly since the Wason Center poll in February.
4. Virginia Democrats strongly prefer Clinton. The Republican field is wide open, with Bush and Rubio leading.
5. President Obama's approval stands at 41%, while 59% of Virginians think the country is moving in the wrong direction.

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Analysis

The State of Things: Virginians are less happy with the direction of the country than they were in February, with 59% saying things in the United States are mostly going in the wrong direction. President Barack Obama's job approval among registered Virginia voters dropped by 2 points since February, standing at 41%, with 52% disapproving and 7% not sure. Obama's approval has hovered in the mid-40% range among Virginia voters for several years, jumping above 50% in January 2013 as he took the oath of office for his second term, but dropping into the low-40% range since the start of 2015.

Overall, would you say things in the United States are heading more in the _____ direction?	Right	31
	Mixed (vol)	8
	Wrong	59
	Dk/ref (vol)	2

Trends:	Feb. 2015	Jan. 2015	Jan. 2014	Jan. 2013	Feb. 2012
Right	35	34	30	35	23
Mixed (vol)	10	11	10	11	12
Wrong	53	54	57	52	62
Dk/ref (vol)	2	2	2	1	3

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as President?	Approve	41
	Disapprove	52
	Dk/ref (vol)	7

Trends:	Feb. 2015	Jan. 2015	Feb. 2014	Jan. 2013	Feb. 2012
Approve	43	44	46	51	43
Disapprove	53	50	48	43	53
Dk/ref (vol)	4	6	6	5	4

Clinton has highest favorable and nearly highest unfavorable ratings:

Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has the highest favorability rating among Virginia voters at 44%, but she also has among the highest unfavorable ratings at 52%. Among Democrats, Vice President Joe Biden and former Virginia Senator Jim Webb, who has announced that he is considering a run for the White House in 2016, have favorability ratings of 35%. Former Florida Governor Jeb Bush and Florida Senator Marco Rubio have the highest favorability rating among Republicans, at 33%. Kentucky Senator Rand Paul's favorability rating stands at 30%, followed by Texas Senator Ted Cruz at 28%, New Jersey Governor Chris Christie at 27%, former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee at 25%, and Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker at 23%. Vice President Biden has the highest unfavorable rating at 57%. Among Republicans, Christie and Huckabee have the highest unfavorable ratings at 44% each, followed by Paul and Bush at 43% each. With far more voters saying they don't know Walker than other potential Republican candidates (53%), Walker may have extra room to improve his standing.

	Favorable	Unfavorable	Don't know	Refused (vol)
Hillary Clinton	44	52	4	
Joe Biden	35	57	8	
Jim Webb	35	32	33	
Jeb Bush	33	43	24	
Marco Rubio	33	26	41	
Rand Paul	30	43	26	
Ted Cruz	28	42	30	
Chris Christie	27	44	28	
Mike Huckabee	25	44	30	1
Scott Walker	23	24	53	
Martin O'Malley	14	27	58	
Bernie Sanders	11	20	69	

Still no clear Republican front-runner: While more Republican presidential candidates are making it official, none has yet to establish a convincing lead. Asked who they would vote for in a primary, Republicans and Republican-leaning independents put Jeb Bush (17%) and Marco Rubio (16%) at the front of the pack, followed by Chris Christie, Rand Paul, and Scott Walker at 10%. Tied with retired surgeon Ben Carson at only 7%, Ted Cruz's choice of announcing his candidacy at Liberty University in Lynchburg does not appear to have helped him in the Commonwealth.

"The Republican field continues to be very fluid," said Tom Kramer, Assistant Director of the Wason Center for Public Policy. "While there are no break-out candidates yet, we do see a sorting taking place, with Bush and Rubio emerging as top-tier candidates, and Christie, Paul, and Walker forming a solid second-tier."

If the 2016 Republican Presidential Primary in Virginia were held today and the candidates were [Names rotated]...for whom would you vote?	
Jeb Bush	17
Marco Rubio	16
Chris Christie	10
Rand Paul	10
Scott Walker	10
Ben Carson	7
Ted Cruz	7
Mike Huckabee	6
Donald Trump	5
Bobby Jindal	2
Carly Fiorina	1
John Kasich	<1
Rick Perry	<1
Rick Santorum	<1
Someone else (vol)	<1
Undecided/Dk/ref (vol)	7

Clinton strengthens her lead among Democrats: Virginia Democrats' enthusiasm for Hillary Clinton has grown stronger since February. If the 2016 Democratic presidential primary in Virginia were held today, Clinton would cruise to a commanding victory with 80% of Democrats and Democrat-leaning independents saying they would vote for her rather than any of the other potential challengers, up from 65% in February.

“For Democrats, Virginia is Hillary country,” said Kramer. “She has strengthened her position since February relative to any of her potential Democratic challengers.”

If the 2016 Democratic Presidential Primary in Virginia were held today and the candidates were [Names rotated]...for whom would you vote?	
Hillary Clinton	80
Jim Webb	6
Joe Biden	5
Bernie Sanders	2
Martin O'Malley	1
Lincoln Chafee	<1
Someone else (vol)	2
Undecided/Dk/ref (vol)	3

If the 2016 election were held today, Bush is the only Republican who would beat Clinton, but other Republicans are gaining on her: If Clinton's dominance among Virginia Democrats has grown, her position among Virginia's general electorate appears to have softened since the Wason Center's February survey. In February, Clinton beat all Republicans in hypothetical head-to-head 2016 match-ups, most with over 50% of the vote. However, in April's head-to-head match-ups, Clinton is unable to win 50% of the voters against any of them. Former Florida Governor Jeb Bush beats Clinton 48-46. Clinton's dominance over other announced or potential Republican challengers also appears to be diminished from February, now mostly within the margin of error of this survey. She beats Christie by 2%, 47%-45%; she beats Paul by 2%, 49%-47%; she beats Huckabee by 3%, 49%-46%; she beats Rubio by 4%, 49%-45%; she beats Cruz by 5%, 49%-44%; and she beats Walker by 5%, 48%-43%.

“Battleground Virginia will live up to its name in 2016,” said Kramer. “In the face of a barrage of attacks from her real and potential Republican challengers, Hillary Clinton's once formidable position has weakened, as we knew it would. Even at this very early stage, the 2016 presidential election in Virginia is shaping up to be a closely fought contest.”

If the 2016 presidential elections were being held today and the candidates were [Rotate: Hillary Clinton, the Democrat or Jeb Bush, the Republican], for whom would you vote?		
	Current	February 2015
Clinton	46	48
Bush	48	43
Undecided (vol.)	6	9

If the 2016 presidential elections were being held today and the candidates were [Rotate: Hillary Clinton, the Democrat or Chris Christie, the Republican], for whom would you vote?		
	Current	February 2015
Clinton	47	49
Christie	45	42
Undecided (vol.)	8	9

If the 2016 presidential elections were being held today and the candidates were [Rotate: Hillary Clinton, the Democrat or Mike Huckabee, the Republican], for whom would you vote?		
	Current	February 2015
Clinton	49	52
Huckabee	46	42
Undecided (vol.)	5	6

If the 2016 presidential elections were being held today and the candidates were [Rotate: Hillary Clinton, the Democrat or Rand Paul, the Republican], for whom would you vote?		
	Current	February 2015
Clinton	49	52
Paul	47	42
Undecided (vol.)	4	6

If the 2016 presidential elections were being held today and the candidates were [Rotate: Hillary Clinton, the Democrat or Marco Rubio, the Republican], for whom would you vote?		
	Current	February 2015
Clinton	49	51
Rubio	45	42
Undecided (vol.)	6	7

If the 2016 presidential elections were being held today and the candidates were [Rotate: Hillary Clinton, the Democrat or Ted Cruz, the Republican], for whom would you vote?		
	Current	
Clinton	49	
Cruz	44	
Undecided (vol.)	7	

If the 2016 presidential elections were being held today and the candidates were [Rotate: Hillary Clinton, the Democrat or Scott Walker, the Republican], for whom would you vote?		
	Current	
Clinton	48	
Walker	43	
Undecided (vol.)	9	

Demographic Toplines

EDUC:	
High school or less	16
Some college	24
Vocational or technical training	3
College graduate	36
Graduate study or more	20
Dk/ref (vol)	1

HISPANIC:	
Yes	6
No	93
Dk/ref (vol)	1

RACE:	
Black or African American	19
White	70
Other	11

RELIG:	
Protestant	25
Christian (non-specific) (vol)	21
Catholic	12
Jewish	1
Other	20
None	18
Dk/ref (vol)	3

IDEOLOG:	
Strong liberal	7
Liberal	15
Moderate, leaning liberal	18
Moderate, leaning conservative	20
Conservative	23
Strong Conservative	11
Dk/ref (vol)	6

PARTYID:	
Republican	22
Independent lean Republican	23
Independent	13
Independent lean Democrat	16
Democrat	24
No preference/other party (vol)	1
Dk/ref (vol)	1

TEAPARTY:	
Support	21
Oppose	37
No view either way	40
Dk/ref (vol)	2

AGE:	
18-24	10
25-34	15
35-44	15
45-54	25
55 & older	35

REGION:	
Northern Virginia	33
Richmond/Central	21
Hampton Roads	24
South/Southwest	22

SEX:	
Male	48
Female	52

How the survey was conducted:

The results of this poll are based on 658 interviews of registered Virginia voters, including 388 on landline and 270 on cell phone, conducted April 13-24, 2015. Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding. The margin of error for the whole survey is +/- 4.6% at the 95% level of confidence. All error margins have been adjusted to account for the survey's design effect, which is 1.47 in this survey. The design effect is a factor representing the survey's deviation from a simple random sample, and takes into account decreases in precision due to sample design and weighting procedures. In addition to sampling error, the other potential sources of error include non-response, question wording, and interviewer error. The response rate (AAPOR RRI Standard Definition) for the survey was 19%. Five callbacks were employed in the fielding process. Live calling was conducted by trained interviewers at the Wason Center for Public Policy Survey Research Lab at Christopher Newport University. The data reported here are weighted using an iterative weighting process on sex, age, race and region of residence to reflect as closely as possible the demographic composition of registered voters in Virginia. The survey was designed by Dr. Quentin Kidd of the Wason Center for Public Policy at Christopher Newport University.