

March 23, 2012

Anzalone Liszt Research

National Polling Summary

Friends,

Below you will find the weekly Anzalone Liszt Research National Polling Summary, which provides a pollster's take on data and trends that affect political campaigns.

This week, we examine whether Newt Gingrich dropping out of the GOP Presidential race would really benefit Rick Santorum as much as Rick Santorum claims it would.

Following our analysis are additional news items and data we thought you'd enjoy.

John Anzalone and Jeff Liszt

STORY THIS WEEK: Could Gingrich Withdrawing Hurt Santorum?

After handily winning the Illinois primary on Tuesday night, Mitt Romney [sounded like the Republican nominee for President](#), congratulating his rivals for a hard-fought contest before moving on to a broad indictment of President Obama and his policies. But Romney's rivals have shown no surrender: instead, they are quick to point out that even on a good day Romney failed to achieve a majority in Illinois, and that more than 53% of the votes cast went against him.

Rick Santorum is still itching for a head-to-head matchup against the frontrunner, and he has been clamoring for Newt Gingrich to step aside. Santorum's theory is that this would allow the conservative base to coalesce around him, and he could ride the anti-Romney rhetoric all the way to victory. Are Santorum's calls wise, or are they counterproductive? Is there evidence that Gingrich's followers would migrate en masse to Santorum? And even if they did, would it be enough to prevent Mitt Romney from capturing the nomination?

Nationally, Gingrich's Exit Does Little for Santorum

On a national scale, there's little support for Santorum's theory. Last week's Gallup [poll](#), for instance, finds that the Romney-Santorum margin would be virtually unchanged without Gingrich in the race (40% Romney / 33% Santorum) compared to where would be with him in it (34% Romney / 28% Santorum / 19% Gingrich). Gallup also debunks the conventional wisdom that Gingrich and Santorum are splitting the most conservative voters, leaving Romney with a bloc of moderates and an unfettered path to frontrunner status. While Santorum wins a higher percentage of voters who identify as very conservative (45%) than he does of the electorate overall (28%), Gingrich's 21% among very conservative voters is barely better than his overall

support (15%)-his voters aren't much more conservative than the overall electorate. Gingrich also does statistically no better than Mitt Romney does among very conservative voters (19%), suggesting that very conservative voters aren't as "anyone but Romney" as the media narrative suggests, and that anti-Romney voters have reasons outside ideology [to oppose him](#).

Two other recent national surveys pit Romney and Santorum in a head-to-head matchup, to see how support for Gingrich and Ron Paul gets divvied up between the two candidates.

<u>Rasmussen</u>	Romney	Santorum	Romney - Santorum	Gingrich	Paul
<i>4-Way</i>	37%	28%	+9	17%	10%
<i>2-Way</i>	47%	42%	+5	-	-

<u>NBC/WSJ</u>	Romney	Santorum	Romney - Santorum	Gingrich	Paul
<i>4-Way</i>	38%	32%	+6	13%	13%
<i>2-Way</i>	50%	45%	+5	-	-

In both cases, Santorum gets a plurality of Gingrich/Paul voters but fails to attract enough of them to make a real dent in Romney's lead. The caveat, though, is that these numbers reflect nationwide surveys, while in reality primaries (and delegates) are won and lost on a state-by-state basis.

Gingrich Leaving Would Be a Boon to Santorum in the South

Gingrich's only real strength is within a few hundred miles of his Georgia roots. Although only half of all the primary votes cast so far have come from the South, 77% of Gingrich's votes are from the South along with 89% of his delegates even with his goose-egg in Virginia where he failed to qualify for the ballot (full numbers by region [here](#)). And in Southern states, Gingrich voters disproportionately pick Santorum as their second choice. In North Carolina, for example, a PPP [survey](#) finds Santorum erasing Romney's lead with the aid of Gingrich voters. Romney leads Santorum (31% Romney / 27% Santorum) in a 4 way contest, but Gingrich's hypothetical departure sends two-thirds of his support Santorum's way and gives Santorum the lead (42% Santorum / 38% Romney). Without Gingrich in the race, Santorum could conceivably rack up big wins in delegate-rich states like Texas, North Carolina and others (e.g., LA, AR, KY, WV), helping him change the race's narrative.

Newt's Exit Might Hurt Santorum in Delegate Race

Unfortunately for Santorum, he has proven woefully inept at translating votes into vouched

delegates. Ohio is a good example: Santorum finished just behind Romney at the polls, 37.9% - 37.1%, but took home only 21 of 56 delegates, meaning he lost the delegate race to Romney in a landslide, 63% - 37%. In Mississippi, Santorum narrowly won the popular vote but actually ended up with [fewer total delegates](#) than Romney. Elsewhere, his shoestring campaign has failed to file a full delegate slate - like in Illinois, where he was [ineligible](#) for 10 of the 69 available delegates because he hadn't filed enough signatures (contributing to his 43-10 delegate loss to Romney).

Romney has won 55% of the pledged delegates so far. According to our back-of-the-envelope projections based on election results and state-by-state polling where available (you can review our numbers [here](#)), Romney will have about 52% of all the elected delegates by the end of the primaries if Gingrich remains in the race. This would put Romney at 1130 bound delegates, inches away from the 1144 needed to cross the finish line (and over that line with the 33 superdelegates he already has). In that case, the 77 unallocated superdelegates would be under enormous pressure from party leaders to side with Romney on the first ballot and put this brutal primary season out of its misery.

If Gingrich exits the race, it may even boost Romney on his march to 1144. Even if one assumes that three-quarters of Gingrich's potential voters (and 120 potential delegates) move to Santorum, that would still give Romney 25% of them. This would be 30 extra delegates for Romney that would push him closer to clinching the nomination. Newt's 135 current delegates are also not bound to him in the convention if he ends rather than suspends his campaign, and some of those delegates would invariably flock to Romney, padding his total.

The bottom line, however, is that Rick Santorum needs a game-changing event in order to wrest the nomination away from Mitt Romney, whether that means winning outright or blockading Romney from his delegate majority long enough to prompt a brokered convention. Even Santorum's voters plus Gingrich's would not keep Romney from securing a majority of delegates on the campaign's current trajectory. Nate Silver of the FiveThirtyEight blog is [more optimistic](#) about the effect of a Gingrich departure on Santorum's chances, but he acknowledges that it would not be enough by itself to hoist Santorum into the lead. It is possible that a Gingrich exit could shake up the race in unpredictable ways that benefit Santorum and throw the election to him. However, for Santorum, the end result will likely not be as uniformly positive or as simple as a "Santorum + Gingrich = More Than Romney" calculation.

OTHER NEWS FROM THE POLLING AND POLITICAL WORLD

[President Obama leads Romney](#) by 8 points among independents in swing states.

Interactive [delegate calculator](#) from *The New York Times*' Nate Silver lets you see how well Romney must perform to clinch the nomination; so, for example, if Mitt wins half of the remaining delegates, there is a 72% chance he reaches 1144.

Romney's [flip-flop](#) on high gas prices.

White House [graph](#) showing how Paul Ryan's budget hurts the middle class.

From [Pew survey on religion in politics](#): nearly four-in-ten Americans (38%) say there has been "too much religious talk" by political leaders, an all-time high, while 30% say there has been too little; within the GOP, 60% of Rick Santorum's supporters think churches should express their views on political issues, while only 39% of Mitt Romney's backers agree.

The GOP presidential race in [5 charts](#).

Compulsive Outliers. *Washington Post's* Jonathan Bernstein [cautions reporters and pundits](#) against reading too much into the results of a single poll, like last week's CBS/Times poll that showed a big drop in Obama's approval numbers. Subsequent polling has shown his approval numbers to be significantly higher.

Missed a past newsletter? They can be found on our website, [here](#).

PUBLIC POLLING

PRESIDENT OBAMA'S JOB RATING

Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Approve	Disapprove
<i>Gallup</i>	March 18-20	Adults	46%	46%
<i>Rasmussen</i>	March 18-20	Likely Voters	50%	48%
<i>ARG</i>	March 17-20	Adults	46%	48%

PRESIDENTIAL HEAD TO HEAD

Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Obama	Romney
<i>Rasmussen</i>	March 18-20	Likely Voters	47%	44%
<i>YouGov/Polimetrix</i>	March 17-20	Reg. Voters	49%	42%

Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Obama	Santorum
<i>Rasmussen</i>	March 18-20	Likely Voters	49%	40%
<i>YouGov/Polimetrix</i>	March 17-20	Reg. Voters	52%	40%

PARTY SELF ID

Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Dem	Rep	Ind/Other
<i>Pollster.com Trend</i>	March 22	Adults	34.8%	30.1%	32.1%

GOP NATIONWIDE PRIMARY

Polling Firm	Date	Sample
<i>YouGov/Polimetrix</i>	March 17-20	Likely Voters
Romney	31%	
Santorum	23%	
Gingrich	21%	
Paul	12%	

GENERIC HOUSE BALLOT

Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Dem	Rep
<i>Rasmussen</i>	March 12-18	Likely Voters	40%	44%
<i>Bloomberg</i>	March 8-11	Likely Voters	44%	46%

OBAMA POPULAR VOTE SHARE

Polling Firm	Date	Polly Vote	Polls	Iowa Electronic Markets	Econometric Models	Index Models
<i>PollyVote</i>	March 22	51.6%	50.7%	51.6%	49.9%	54.4%

DIRECTION OF THE COUNTRY

Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Right Direction	Wrong Track
<i>Rasmussen</i>	March 12-18	Adults	31%	61%
<i>CBS/NYT</i>	March 7-11	Adults	29%	63%

UPCOMING PRIMARIES

	Size	Date	Romney	Santorum	Gingrich	Paul
Louisiana						
<i>PPP</i>	650	March 21-22	28%	42%	18%	8%
<i>Rasmussen</i>	750	March 21	31%	43%	16%	5%
Pennsylvania						
<i>Quinnipiac</i>	508	March 7-12	22%	36%	8%	12%
<i>PPP</i>	564	March 8-11	25%	43%	13%	9%
North Carolina						
<i>SurveyUSA</i>	403	March 16-20	26%	34%	18%	10%
<i>PPP</i>	492	March 8-11	31%	27%	24%	8%