

April 27, 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 take you on a tour of the battleground states and regions that will decide the 2012 race.

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

John Anzalone and Jeff Liszt

STORY THIS WEEK: SWINGOLOGY

Mitt Romney's five-state romp on Tuesday night effectively ended the Republican primary process. Now, the full attention of the political world turns to the general election, where a handful of all-important swing states will decide the race. This week, we outline three battleground regions: the Southeast, West, and the Rust Belt. In 2008, the Obama campaign won almost all of these battleground states, forcing any Romney path to victory to pull a majority of them back to the Republican column. While Team Obama will be largely playing defense and there are no shortage of takeover opportunities for Romney, it's important to remember that Obama just has to hold states he won by at least 8.5% in 2008 to reach the winning 270 mark.

SOUTHEAST

No region better represents the success of the 2008 Obama effort than the Southeast. Florida has been a battleground since the 1996 campaign and the 2000 recount cemented Florida's role as the prototypical swing state. However, at the beginning of 2008 most pundits saw Virginia as a long-shot for the Obama campaign – with North Carolina barely on the radar. Yet through turning out the Democratic base at historic levels and connecting with swing voters on issues like trade, the Obama campaign narrowly won North Carolina and won Virginia by 6+ points.

State	2008 Result		Electoral Votes
	OBAMA	McCAIN	

FLORIDA	51%	48%	29
NORTH CAROLINA	50%	49%	15
VIRGINIA	53%	46%	13

Florida has picked the eventual winner in each of the last four Presidential elections, and it gains even greater importance in 2012 with the addition of two electoral votes – a reward for its explosive population growth. Surveys show Obama holding a small but steady lead in the Sunshine State – 4.2 points across all public polls in the past month (47% Obama / 43% Romney), according to a [rolling average](#) kept by RealClearPolitics.com.

Those numbers have moved in Obama’s direction since the beginning of the year, when three polls in three weeks found Romney with a slim advantage. The President’s turnaround has been driven by Independent voters. In 2008, Obama won 52% of self-ID Independents en route to narrow statewide victory. After trailing Romney by seven points among Independents in a [December PPP poll](#) (46% Romney / 39% Obama), [PPP now finds](#) the President closer to his winning 2008 margin with Independents. Statewide, the poll gives Obama a five-point lead (50% Obama / 45% Romney). And while Marco Rubio is a hot VP choice among the chattering class, a Fox News Poll [finds](#) his addition to the ticket makes no statistical difference in his home state.

Florida guru Steve Schale [makes the case](#) that central Florida could offer President Obama a hidden advantage come November. The metro-Orlando market – specifically Orange, Osceola and Seminole Counties – has shifted from Republican-leaning to Democrat-friendly over the last few cycles, thanks to an influx of African American and Puerto Rican voters. In 1992, Republicans won metro-Orlando by 51,000 votes; in 2008, Obama won by over 100,000. Moreover, the area is accounting for a larger share of the statewide vote – almost a tenth (9.1%) in 2008, and growing. Schale believes the data indicate that metro-Orlando is changing the dynamic of statewide campaigns. As this area drifts further towards Democrats, the GOP will be hard-pressed to make up those votes elsewhere in the state. Another storyline to watch is the controversy surrounding [Florida’s new anti-voter fraud law](#), which restricts voter registration activity and truncates early voting. The voters it disproportionately affects (African Americans and Hispanics) are predominantly Obama supporters (reminiscent of the [2000 Florida voter “caging” scandal](#)).

In Virginia and North Carolina, the President will have to focus on replicating his successful 2008 strategy of turning out African Americans and carrying enough white voters to reach a statewide majority. Recent polling in both states show Obama’s white support roughly in line with 2008 exits. He secured 35% support among North Carolina white voters, and PPP’s latest N.C. [poll](#) places his white support at 37%. This is a 5-point boost from [February](#), helping Obama open up a 5-point lead (49% Obama / 44% Romney). In Virginia, Obama’s share among white voters was 39%, indicating the President needs 36-37% among white voters in 2012 (under a

similar turnout dynamic) to again capture the state. A mid-March [Quinnipiac](#) survey puts Obama at 36% among whites; overall, he leads Romney by an average of 4 points across all Virginia polling.

In both North Carolina and Virginia, the Obama campaign's success with white voters was driven by support from women, voters under 30, Independents, and college graduates. Presumably, the 2012 Obama campaign will look toward those same voters to build their winning re-election coalition.

WEST

Given the emergence of the interior West as a prime political battleground in 2008 – a phenomenon not seen in the razor-thin 2000 and 2004 campaigns – it's easy to forget that the Obama campaign won the competitive states by relatively healthy margins. Obama carried Nevada (+12) and New Mexico (+15) by double digits, and Colorado by nine points. Arizona's place at the swing state table was delayed a cycle due to McCain's home state edge, but the Obama campaign has indicated [they consider Arizona](#) to be one of their most likely pick-up opportunities.

State	2008 Result		2012 Electoral Votes
	OBAMA	McCAIN	
NEVADA	55%	43%	6
ARIZONA	45%	54%	11
COLORADO	54%	45%	9
NEW MEXICO	57%	42%	5

Nevada, Colorado and New Mexico have significant Hispanic populations that have continued to grow since 2008. Nevada's Hispanics voted for Obama by more than a [3:1 margin](#) (76% Obama / 22% McCain), and the state has added over [44,000 eligible Hispanic voters](#) since then. Similar trends in Colorado and New Mexico help explain why Obama holds firm leads in all three states: ahead 6.7 points in the [RCP average](#) of Nevada polling, up 13 in PPP's latest Colorado [survey](#) and up 16 in Rasmussen's New Mexico [poll](#). It is also worth noting that Nevada features a relatively [large Mormon population](#) – 6.5% of the total – which played a major role in the Republican caucuses there, and could be a source of grassroots strength for Romney that is hard to quantify in a poll.

Arizona has supported only one Democratic presidential candidate since Truman, and in 2008 sided with native son John McCain. But Obama won majorities among [two important subgroups](#) in 2008: voters under 30 (52% Obama / 48% McCain) and Hispanics (56% Obama / 41% McCain). Consequently, the Obama campaign is mounting [a major organizing push](#) on college

campuses and in heavily Hispanic areas to register voters. Obama could reasonably expect to garner greater Hispanic support than he did in 2008 – a nationwide March [poll](#) found that 40% of Latinos who voted for McCain intend to vote for Obama this year – but turnout is crucial. To that end, one variable working in Democrats favor might be Dr. Richard Carmona, the Hispanic Senate candidate and former U.S. Surgeon General. A robust Carmona effort could generate more Hispanic registration and turnout, which would certainly aid the President’s efforts. The latest [polling](#) puts Obama and Romney in a statistical dead-heat (42% Romney / 40% Obama), with 18 percent still undecided. For the first time in years, Arizona is a true toss-up.

RUST BELT

The storied industrial centers that stud the Rust Belt have been among the places hardest hit by the Great Recession. About a [third](#) (31%) of all manufacturing jobs lost during the downturn have been from the Midwest. Unemployment in places like Toledo, Youngstown, Detroit, and Dayton bred pockets of [concentrated poverty](#). And approaching the 2010 midterm elections, the unemployment rate in Michigan, Indiana and Ohio were all [higher than the national average](#), allowing Republicans to pick up Senate seats in Indiana and Pennsylvania, plus the Governors’ Mansions in Ohio and Michigan.

With Michigan leaning Democrat (Obama averages an [11-point cushion](#)) and Indiana leaning Republican (Romney’s up 9 in latest [poll](#)), Ohio and Pennsylvania represent the fiercest battlegrounds within this region. And in spite of the bleak midterm results, President Obama can find solace in recent statewide polls that suggest voters are not sold on Mitt Romney.

State	2008 Result		2012 Electoral Votes
	OBAMA	McCAIN	
OHIO	51%	47%	18
PENNSYLVANIA	54%	44%	20
MICHIGAN	57%	41%	16
INDIANA	49%*	49%	11

* President Obama won by about 23,000 votes out of more than 2.7 million cast

In the Buckeye State, a new [Fox News poll](#) shows the President leading Romney by 6 points (45% Obama / 39% Romney) thanks to rising job approval and Romney’s inability to connect with this electorate. The presumptive GOP nominee is viewed unfavorably statewide (36% favorable / 46% unfavorable), and by a majority of Independents (28% favorable / 52% unfavorable). Indeed, most Romney supporters (63%) say their vote is more “*against* Barack Obama” than “*for* Mitt Romney”.

In Pennsylvania, the latest [Quinnipiac poll](#) shows Obama holding a narrow 3-point lead (45% Obama / 42% Romney), basically unchanged since last fall (45% Obama / 43% Romney). The challenge for President Obama is to translate positive economic sentiment into more votes:

roughly six in ten Pennsylvanians (57%) think the economy is “beginning to recover”, but more think Romney would do a better job on the economy (48% Romney / 42% Obama).

Ohio and Pennsylvania may be the truest test of the candidates’ competing economic narratives: does Obama receive blame for the recession but no credit for a recovery? Or will Romney’s “vulture capital” background and history of outsourcing discount his job-creating credentials?

It’s difficult to overstate the importance of these three regions, and Romney’s Vice Presidential choice could have an impact. Choosing Bob McDonnell or Rob Portman would certainly give the Romney campaign an initial boost in their respective homes states, but neither would guarantee the state for Romney. Other states like Missouri, New Hampshire, Wisconsin, or even Texas could plausibly be among the most competitive tier of states depending on the trajectory of the race. With seven months to go until Election Day, an initial survey of the swing states seems to indicate more paths to 270 available for Obama than Romney. But most Americans (especially swing voters) have yet to truly tune into the race, leaving enough undecided or “soft” supporters up for grabs to generate sizable nationwide swings. Nonetheless, these recent polls are evidence that in the states that matter most, President Obama is making an effective case for re-election.

OTHER NEWS FROM THE POLLING AND POLITICAL WORLD

Latest [PurplePoll](#) shows Obama leading Romney, 48% - 44%, among likely voters in a dozen crucial swing states. Obama has held on to a narrow lead in this poll since last November.

Swings within swings. [Campaigns & Elections](#) magazine counts down the top 10 “swing counties” Romney needs to win this November.

Definitely Obama, Maybe Voting. Voters ages 18 to 29 support Obama over Romney by 35 points, but only 56% say they will definitely vote this year, according to [Gallup](#). On the other end of the spectrum, voters 65+ back Romney by 12 points, and 86% vow to vote in the general election.

[Growing pains for community colleges.](#) As they take on ever-greater numbers of students seeking job preparation, career changes or paths into 4-year institutions, community colleges must grapple with low graduation rates and demands for accountability.

[Hispanics in America](#) features visuals and information about Hispanic demographics, policy concerns and party affiliation ahead of 2012 election.

[“Net Migration from Mexico Falls to Zero—and Perhaps Less”](#) according to new study by the Pew Hispanic Center.

Continental Shift. Recent [polling out of the UK](#) shows the ruling Conservative Party dropping, while center-left Labour hits their highest support level since 2003. In France, President Sarkozy will go head-to-head against Francois Hollande in a run-off election on May 6, with Sarkozy the [underdog](#).

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>	April 22-24	Adults	50%	44%
<i>NBC News/WSJ</i>	April 13-17	Adults	49%	46%
<i>CBS News/NYT</i>	April 13-17	Adults	48%	42%

PRESIDENTIAL HEAD TO HEAD

Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Obama	Romney
<i>Gallup</i>	April 20-24	Reg. Voters	49%	43%
<i>National Journal</i>	April 19-22	Adults	47%	39%

PARTY SELF ID

Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Dem	Rep	Ind/Other
<i>Pollster.com Trend</i>	April 26	Adults	35.5%	30.1%	31.9%

GENERIC HOUSE BALLOT

Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Dem	Rep
<i>Quinnipiac</i>	April 11-17	Reg. Voters	40%	39%
<i>Reuters/Ipsos</i>	April 12-15	Reg. Voters	42%	41%

OBAMA POPULAR VOTE SHARE

Polling Firm	Date	Polly Vote	Polls	Iowa Electronic Markets	Econometric Models	Index Models
<i>PollyVote</i>	April 23	52.1%	52.0%	52.9%	49.9%	54.6%

DIRECTION OF THE COUNTRY

Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Right Direction	Wrong Track
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<i>NBC News/WSJ</i>	April 13-17	Adults	33%	59%
<i>CBS News/NYT</i>	April 13-17	Adults	31%	61%