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## June 9, 2011

# Anzalone Liszt Research National Polling Summary

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Friends,

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

In its present composition, two-thirds of the top tier of the Republican Presidential field is comprised of of Mormon faith(Romney and Huntsman). This week, our summary includes the potential impact that p faith may have on the primary process, but also casts a wider net and examines the role of religion in An and the impact it has in the public arena.

Following our analysis are additional news items and data we thought you'd enjoy. Also, please check o recent ALR poll releases linked at the end.

John Anzalone and Jeff Liszt

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### **STORY THIS WEEK: A Rabbi, a Priest, and a Pollster walk into a bar...**

America's roots in Europe's religious conflicts laid a unique foundation that virtually guaranteed a comp idiosyncratic relationship between the United States and the religious beliefs and practices of its populac attitudes and mores shift with each generation, and it's undeniable that the contemporary American appr religion would be mostly unrecognizable to early generations of Americans. However, while today's Am religiosity might exhibit itself differently, in many ways we still symbolically carry the religious gene th such an integral role in the forming of our country. In matters religious, to some degree as a nation we're mothers' daughters and our fathers' sons.

### **Religiosity in America and the World**

#### ***Belief in God***

No matter what other religious beliefs or customs may have atrophied over the course of the American e a belief in God is nearly unanimous among Americans. May 2011 Gallup [polling](#) shows 92% of Americ "believe in God" - a number that has remained roughly static since World War II. In the 1970s, Gallup b asking about the more expansive belief in "God or a universal spirit", with that number also tracking in t mid 90% range in the last thirty-five years. Currently, Americans who were asked about "a belief in God and those asked about "belief in a God or a universal spirit" (91%) show almost identical responses.

Gallup finds that women (94%) show slightly greater belief than men (90%), with Americans age 18-29 the lowest level among any major subgroup (84%). Though belief in God is overwhelming across the board, other subgroups that don't show quite as high a level include those: with post-graduate education who live in the East (86%), liberals (85%), and political independents (89%). The South is the most devout region, and conservatives (98%) and Republicans (98%) show almost unanimous levels of belief.

### ***Religion in Daily Life***

Though more than nine in ten Americans express a belief in God, the same Gallup [polling](#) reveals less than three (65%) indicate "religion is an important part of their daily life". International Gallup [polling](#) from 2001 shows Argentina and Kosovo with very similar religiosity scores as the United States. Gallup identifies Israel (100%), Bangladesh (99%), and Sri Lanka (99%) as the "most religious" countries, with five African countries, Indonesia, and the United Arab Emirates only very slightly behind the top three with 98% of their population indicating religion is an important component of their daily life. Estonia (14%), Sweden (17%), Denmark and Norway (20%) rank as the "least religious" countries.

Among U.S. [states](#), the top ten "most religious" are Southern or border states, starting with Mississippi (85%) through Texas and Kentucky (74%). Vermont is the "least religious" state (42%), and the ten least religious consist of only New England and Western Pacific states (plus Alaska). North Carolina is the only top ten "most religious" state won by President Obama in 2008, while Alaska is the only top ten "least religious" state won by John McCain. Gallup's [findings](#) also allow for parallels to be drawn between the religiosity of American states and those of foreign countries. For example, by Gallup's measure, Mississippi (85%) is more religious than Israel (50%), and Alaska's percentage (51%) is almost identical to Switzerland's (50%), and Vermont and Switzerland both clock in at 42%.

### ***Trends among Protestants and Catholics***

American belief in God has remained above 90% since Gallup began probing the question almost seven decades ago, but the composition of American believers has changed significantly in that time. While the percentage of American Catholics (22-28%) and Jews (2-4%) has remained relatively static since the 1940s, Gallup's [polling](#) from 1948-2004 has shown a steep decline among American Protestants. In 1955, seven in ten Americans identified themselves as Protestants, while the latest Gallup figures (from 2004) show that number has fallen to a little over 50%. The same polling shows 10% identifying as non-Protestant / non-Catholic Christians, the number of Americans expressing no religious affiliation reaching a new high with 9%, and 3% labeling themselves as followers of other religions (neither Christian nor Jewish). Among mainline Protestants, Baptists (16% of Americans), Methodists (8%), Lutherans (5%), Presbyterians (3%), and Episcopalians (2%) have all seen their market share shrink in the past forty years.

Protestant identification is dropping but Protestant church attendance remains relatively [static](#). In fact, the percentage of Protestants who say they've attended church in the last seven days is a slight uptick from the same measure (42%) - though Protestant attendance has generally measured in the low-mid 40% range over the past several decades. Conversely, Catholics (whose percentage of the American public has remained largely stable) face declining attendance rates. In 2009, only 42% of Catholics indicated they attended church in the last seven days compared to 75% in the 1950s. Catholics and Protestants face different problems, but both have caused for concern that their overall participation is trending in the wrong direction.

### **American Religiosity's Impact on Politics and Public Policy**

More than 90% of Americans believe in God and almost two-thirds say religion plays an important role in their daily life. However, these personal characteristics don't necessarily translate outward. Gallup [numbers](#) from 2001

January of this year indicate only 39% of Americans would like to see religion have "more influence" in with 29% each preferring "less influence" or the status quo. Even more fundamentally, a majority of Am (58%) are "satisfied with the influence of organized religion in America" (36% Dissatisfied).

### ***Believers at the Ballot Box - Presidential Elections***

The early 1980s saw the birth of the Jerry Falwell-led Moral Majority, and Democratic incumbent (and l Southern Baptist Sunday School teacher) Jimmy Carter went from taking 41% among white Protestants 1984 nominee Walter Mondale carrying just 27%. Since Carter's 1976 election, [exit polling indicates](#) no Democratic candidate for President has broken the 40% mark with white Protestants; Bill Clinton in 199 and Barack Obama in 2008 (34%) have scored the highest Democratic vote share among white Protestar 1976.

As the Moral Majority turned into the Christian Coalition, and the Christian Coalition turned into the ba Republican Party, Republicans now must run up huge margins among religious voters to win at the natic However, as white Protestants comprise a smaller and smaller piece of the American pie, Republicans m increasingly expand from their religious conservative base to win. John McCain's margin among white F (34% Obama / 65% McCain) was actually slightly greater than George W. Bush's margin in 2000 (34% Bush) - but where Bush won a narrow Electoral College victory, McCain lost decisively.

Similarly, despite taking roughly 53% of the popular vote in 2008, Obama carried only 34% of white Pr Comparatively, Bill Clinton carried a similar 33% of white Protestants in his 1992 election when he rece of the popular vote - ten points less than Obama's '08 popular vote share. Obama's ability to run up a big margin without really moving the needle with white Protestants demonstrates that, simply put, America : becoming less white and less Protestant.

Barack Obama's campaign did exceed traditional Democratic performance among "born-again / evangel Christians" (41% Obama / 57% McCain) and weekly church-goers (43% Obama / 55% McCain) - reach Democratic highs since such questions were initially asked in exit polling in 1980. However, these numt somewhat deceiving. The 2008 Obama performance among African Americans and Hispanics (two grou generally show [higher](#) average church attendance than whites) masked a lack of movement among white Protestants.

### ***Believers at the Ballot Box - 2010***

Of course, off-year electorates are a different animal, and religious voters certainly played a crucial role GOP wave. In [2010](#), Republican candidates won white Protestants by 41 points (28% Dem / 69% GOP) evangelicals by almost 60 points (19% Dem / 77% GOP). Democrats took it on the chin among these gr 2006 as well, but were able to keep the margin with white Protestants to 24 points (37% Dem / 61% GO points among white evangelicals (28% Dem / 70% GOP). Though successful in 2010, the necessity of ru 60-point margin among white evangelicals to achieve national success is a heavy burden even for today' Republican Party.

### ***The Mormon Factor***

The 2008 Republican Presidential primary has the opportunity to serve as a crucible for the involvement Mormons at the highest level of Republican politics. Mitt Romney was certainly a top-tier candidate in t primaries and won nominating contests from Maine to Minnesota to Montana, but failed to break throug South. Last cycle, Romney was competing against Southern favorite-son Mike Huckabee and establishr John McCain. In 2012 however, with at least a plurality share of establishment support in his camp and i candidate in the field a natural fit to consolidate Southern Republicans, Mitt Romney is the closest thing

has to a front-runner. Even beyond Romney, borderline top-tier Republican candidate Jon Huntsman is a Mormon. In only one example of the curious composition of the Republican presidential field, there are Mormon candidates and arguably no viable Christian conservative from the South.

Testing for religious bias is always a difficult proposition, and Romney and Huntsman can take some so recent [numbers](#) from the Pew Center that show only 25% of voters admitting to be less likely to support candidate. And Democrats, perhaps because of Romney's high-profile as a Mormon candidate, are actually more likely to support such a candidate (31% Less Likely) than Republicans (23% Less Likely). However, more than three white evangelicals (34%) indicate they are less likely to support a Mormon. Perhaps Romney or Huntsman can win Southern primaries without significant evangelical support or perhaps they can win the nomination by racking up Southern delegates. But, in a vacuum, the "Mormon factor" seems to pose at least a speed-bump to Romney or Huntsman's path to the nomination, and potentially an even more significant hurdle.

### ***The Importance Voters Place on Belief***

Beyond voting behavior, Americans are split on the importance of a political candidate's religious beliefs. A [CBS News Poll](#) revealed that roughly half of voters thought it was appropriate for "political candidates to share their religious beliefs as part of their political campaigns" (50%), and a similar amount (48%) believe it is inappropriate. The same survey found a solid majority of Americans thought it inappropriate for "religious candidates to urge people to vote for or against a political candidate" (27% Appropriate / 70% Inappropriate).

The 2007 [CBS News poll](#) also found voters less concerned that a political candidate shares the respondent's religious beliefs (38% Important / 61% Not Important), than a candidate has "strong" beliefs regardless of whether they are shared with the individual (63% Important / 36% Not Important). The lesson from these numbers would be that it's less important what a candidate believes, just that he or she believes *something*-though Mitt Romney may be inclined to take exception to that notion in the near future.

### **Additional Items of Interest:**

- [Frequency of American church attendance by ethnic, age, political, education, and geographic](#)
- [The Pew Forum's data on the religious composition of the members of the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress](#)
- [The CIA's estimate of religious affiliation in each country](#)

### **OTHER NEWS FROM THE POLLING AND POLITICAL WORLD**

**ALR's Jeff Liszt appeared as a guest on The Rachel Maddow Show last week.** Armed with fresh data from the Herndon Alliance / Know Your Care poll, Jeff explains why Republican fealty to the Ryan Budget will have consequences for the GOP. Jeff starts around the 8:30 mark: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/26315908/>

**Romney Strongest Republican against Obama:** Likely buoyed by press surrounding his announcement, a [Washington Post Polling released this week](#) shows Mitt Romney the most competitive against the President. Romney actually leads the President by three points (46% Obama / 49% Romney) while the President leads the Republican field by 6-15 points. Again, this poll conducted on the heels of the Romney announcement have caught him at his high water mark.

**Bin Laden Raid Boosted Obama on Terrorism, Foreign Affairs:** Virtually every pollster showed a bump in the President's job rating, but Gallup is able to identify the increase on issue-specific job ratings. [Mid-May C](#)

[numbers](#) show the President's positive job rating on terrorism jumping 15 points (from 48% to 63%), and gains of 6 points on Afghanistan (47% to 53%) and 5 points on foreign affairs (46% to 51%).

**Nate Silver weighs in on the economy's impact on the President's re-election:** In a typically well-reasoned fashion, [Nate Silver](#) dissects the potential effectiveness of an "Are you better off than you were five years ago?" Republican argument in 2012. Silver demonstrates President Obama's numbers are exceeding historical presidential performance during times of economic anxiety. Nothing can be guaranteed at this juncture, but Silver still identifies the President as the favorite and is skeptical the "Are you better off?" line used so effectively by Reagan in 1980 will have the same impact next year.

**Many Republican freshmen campaigned as budget hawks, governing as spendthrifts:** [Politico shine](#) looks at the spending habits of several Republican House freshmen. Though they campaigned on a Tea Party-esque commitment to rein in spending, these members seem to have no compunction spending taxpayer money on their political standing. For example, Adam Kinzinger (IL-11) has averaged a \$900 a day spending habit on communications - to the tune of \$78,000.

**New Jersey Voters Souring on Christie:** Chris Christie might be the toast of the D.C. Republican crowd, but his actual constituents are not as enamored of late. A [May Survey USA poll](#) shows a majority of NJ voters disapproving of the job he's doing (38% Approve / 56% Disapprove). Perhaps using a [state helicopter to fund little league games](#) and having [Ann Coulter sing your praises](#) is not a recipe for political success in the Garden State.

**And finally, if you've ever wondered with which Turkish political party you would be most closely aligned:** [Al Jazeera provides a thirty question test](#) to provide guidance.

## PUBLIC POLLING

PRESIDENT OBAMA'S JOB RATING				
Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Approve	Disapprove
Daily Kos/SEIU	6/2-5/11	Registered voters	46%	48%
Rasmussen	5/31-6/2/11	Likely voters	49%	50%
Gallup	5/31-6/2/11	Adults	51%	42%
YouGov/Polimetrix	5/28-31/11	Adults	45%	46%
Gallup	5/29-6/1/11	Adults	53%	39%
Pew	5/25-30/11	Adults	52%	39%
CNN/ORC	5/24-26/11	Adults	54%	45%

Fox	5/15-17/11	Registered voters	55%	41%
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<b>PARTY SELF ID</b>					
<b>Polling Firm</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Dem</b>	<b>Rep</b>	<b>Ind / other</b>
Pollster.com Trend	6/6/11	Adults	33.5%	24.5%	34.6%

<b>GENERIC HOUSE BALLOT</b>					
<b>Polling Firm</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Dem</b>	<b>Rep</b>	<b>Unsure</b>
Democracy Corps	5/21-25/11	Likely voters	46%	45%	7%
GWU/Politico Battleground	5/8-12/11	Likely voters	42%	41%	16%
CNN/Opinion Research Corp.	4/29-5/1/11	Registered voters	50%	46%	1%
Quinnipiac	3/22-28/11	Registered voters	37%	40%	20%

<b>DIRECTION OF THE COUNTRY</b>				
<b>Polling Firm</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Right Direction</b>	<b>Wrong Track</b>
Daily Kos/SEIU	6/2-5/11	Registered voters	29%	62%
YouGov/Polimetrix	5/28-31/11	Adults	24%	58%
Rasmussen	5/23-29/11	Likely voters	26%	66%
Democracy Corps/Women's Voices. Women Vote.	5/21-25/11	Likely voters	33%	58%
YouGov/Polimetrix	5/21-24/11	Adults	24%	62%
Rasmussen	5/16-22/11	Likely voters	29%	63%
YouGov/Polimetrix	5/14-17/11	Adults	25%	58%

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<b>CONGRESSIONAL DEMOCRATS' JOB RATING</b>				
<b>Polling Firm</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Approve</b>	<b>Disapprove</b>
Daily Kos/SEIU	6/2-5/11	Registered voters	33%	54%
AP-GfK	5/5-9/11	Adults	43%	56%

ABC/Washington Post	4/14-17/11	Adults	36%	60%
Gallup	3/25-27/11	Adults	32%	64%
CNN/Opinion Research Corp.	3/18-20/11	Adults	35%	62%

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<b>CONGRESSIONAL REPUBLICANS' JOB RATING</b>				
<b>Polling Firm</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Approve</b>	<b>Disapprove</b>
Daily Kos/SEIU	6/2-5/11	Registered voters	28%	57%
AP-GfK	5/5-9/11	Adults	32%	66%
ABC/Washington Post	4/14-17/11	Adults	34%	63%
Gallup	3/25-27/11	Adults	31%	63%
CNN/Opinion Research Corp.	3/18-20/11	Adults	34%	64%

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