

*The Morning Call*  
**Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion**

The 2008 Presidential Election  
**EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA POLL**

**KEY FINDINGS REPORT**

September, 2007

## **KEY FINDINGS:**

1. With the Presidential election of 2008 just over a year away, voters in eastern Pennsylvania indicate that the War in Iraq, terrorism, the economy, taxes and health care are the most important issues in determining their vote for president.
2. In an match-up of party frontrunners, New York Senator and former First Lady Hillary Clinton holds a 6% lead over former New York City Mayor Rudi Guliani.
3. In addition to holding a lead over Guliani, Senator Clinton holds double digit leads over prominent Republican contenders Mitt Romney and Fred Thompson.
4. While trailing against Hillary Clinton, Giuliani holds a lead over Democratic contender Senator Barack Obama of Illinois.
5. Senator Clinton's lead in Eastern Pennsylvania is being buoyed by her ability to win a majority of female voters while splitting the region's male voters.
6. In addition to strong performances among independents, the leading GOP candidates are being helped by considerable cross-over appeal among Democratic voters.
7. President Bush continues to get very low approval marks from voters in Eastern Pennsylvania, with both his overall job ratings and handling of the situation in Iraq drawing positive marks from less than 30% of regional voters.
8. A majority of voters in Eastern Pennsylvania prefer that the United States set a timetable for the withdrawal of troops from Iraq.

**METHODOLOGY:** The following key findings report summarizes data collected in a telephone survey of 459 registered voters in 8 eastern Pennsylvania Counties ( Berks, Bucks, Carbon, Lehigh, Monroe, Montgomery, Northampton, Schuylkill ) from September 18 to September 21, 2007. Individual households throughout the region were selected randomly for inclusion in the study. The sample of phone numbers used in the survey was generated by Genesys Sampling Systems of Ft. Washington, PA. This number of completions results in a margin of error of +/- 4.6% at the 95% confidence interval. However the margin of errors for sub groups (i.e. women, Republicans) is larger due to smaller sample size. Percentages throughout the survey have been rounded to the nearest percentage, thus many totals in the results will not equal 100. The data has been weighted to account for an over sampling of women voters. The survey questionnaire was designed by Christopher Borick, Ph.D. of the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion in consultation with staff members of the *Morning Call*. Analysis and report writing were completed by the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion under the direction of Dr. Borick.

## ANALYSIS

With the 2008 presidential elections just over a year away, the Morning Call/ Muhlenberg College survey focuses on the race in a key 8 county region in eastern Pennsylvania that includes the Lehigh Valley and much of suburban Philadelphia. The results of the survey show regional voters focused on a handful of issues that they indicate will shape their vote next November. From the War in Iraq to jobs and taxes, eastern Pennsylvania voters stressed the importance of numerous issues in determining their presidential selection. And in the race itself, Democratic frontrunner Hillary Clinton holds leads over the leading Republican candidates including former New York City Mayor Rudi Giuliani.

### CLINTON vs. THE REPUBLICANS

With most national polls showing New York Senator and former First Lady Hillary Clinton strengthening her position as frontrunner in the race for the Democratic nomination for president, this study examined how she matches up in key matches against the leading Republican candidates. As can be seen in Table One, Senator Clinton holds a 6 point lead over the early Republican favorite Rudi Giuliani.

**Table One**

#### **Giuliani v. Clinton**

|                    | <b><u>Giuliani</u></b> | <b><u>Clinton</u></b> | <b><u>Other/Undecided</u></b> | <b><u>Margin</u></b> |
|--------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| Eastern PA         | 36%                    | 42%                   | 21%                           | Clinton +6           |
| National (Sept 10) | 42%                    | 49%                   | 9%                            | Clinton +7           |

Clinton's lead over Giuliani is being buoyed by strong performances among the region's Democratic and independent voters. Despite the claim of crossover appeal, "America's Mayor" only takes 13% of Democratic voters away from Clinton, a mark statistically equal to the amount of Republican votes that she takes from him. In addition Clinton maintains a 6 point margin over the form New York City Mayor among the key "independent" voter block.

**Table Two**

#### **Giuliani v. Clinton By Party Affiliation**

|              | <b><u>Giuliani</u></b> | <b><u>Clinton</u></b> | <b><u>Other/Undecided</u></b> |
|--------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Democrats    | 13%                    | 72%                   | 15%                           |
| Republicans  | 62%                    | 14%                   | 24%                           |
| Independents | 32%                    | 38%                   | 30%                           |

As Hillary Clinton strives to be the first female President of the United States, the role of gender is sure to be an interesting element of the race. In a head-to-head match-up between the two New York political heavyweights, Guliani and Clinton split the male vote evenly (Giuliani 41% to Clinton 41%). However, the Democratic frontrunner holds a 10 point lead (43% to 33%) among male voters in this section of the Commonwealth..

**Table Three**

**Guliani v. Clinton  
By Voter Gender**

|        | <b><u>Guliani</u></b> | <b><u>Clinton</u></b> | <b><u>Other/Undecided</u></b> |
|--------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Male   | 41%                   | 41%                   | 17%                           |
| Female | 43%                   | 33%                   | 24%                           |

In addition to her 6 point lead over Giuliani, Senator Clinton maintains a double-digit lead over former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney and former Tennessee Senator Fred Thompson. These leads appear to be consistent with recent national polls that found Clinton beating these key Republican challengers by considerable margins.

**Table Four**

**Clinton v. Romney**

|                    | <b><u>Romney</u></b> | <b><u>Clinton</u></b> | <b><u>Other/Undecided</u></b> | <b><u>Margin</u></b> |
|--------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| Eastern PA         | 31%                  | 46%                   | 24%                           | Clinton +15          |
| National (Sept 10) | 38%                  | 51%                   | 11%                           | Clinton +13          |

**Table Five**

**Clinton v. Thompson**

|                    | <b><u>Thompson</u></b> | <b><u>Clinton</u></b> | <b><u>Other/Undecided</u></b> | <b><u>Margin</u></b> |
|--------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| Eastern PA         | 29%                    | 47%                   | 24%                           | Clinton +16          |
| National (Sept 10) | 41%                    | 50%                   | 9%                            | Clinton +9           |

imilar to the margin that Guliani holds over Clinton, the Illinois Senator is doing better among independent and Republican voters than the former First Lady. As can be seen in a comparison of Tables Six and Two, Obama gains greater shares of GOP and independent voters than Clinton, but does not perform as well among Democratic loyalists.

## **OBAMA v. THE REPUBLICANS**

While trailing Hillary Clinton in most national and state polls, Illinois Senator Barack Obama is generally considered the strongest challenger to Clinton's candidacy for the Democratic nomination. Thus we match Obama up against the leading Republican candidates to test his strength in this key section of the Keystone State.

In a match up between Obama and Giuliani, the former New York City Mayor out polls the Illinois Senator by 6 points. This lead is similar to the results of recent nation polls that show Obama trailing Giuliani by 4 points.

**Table Six**

### **Obama v. Giuliani**

|                    | <b><u>Giuliani</u></b> | <b><u>Obama</u></b> | <b><u>Other/Undecided</u></b> | <b><u>Margin</u></b> |
|--------------------|------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| Eastern PA         | 41%                    | 35%                 | 24%                           | Giuliani +6%         |
| National (Sept 10) | 49%                    | 45%                 | 6%                            | Giuliani +4%         |

Unlike his match-up with Clinton, Giuliani outperforms Obama among independent voters in the area. This lead among the area's independents appears to make the difference in the Giuliani-Obama match up, with the candidates garnering similar levels of support from their party faithful.

**Table Seven**

### **Obama v. Giuliani By Party Affiliation**

|              | <b><u>Giuliani</u></b> | <b><u>Obama</u></b> | <b><u>Other/Undecided</u></b> |
|--------------|------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| Democrats    | 25% (13%)              | 56% (72%)           | 19% (15%)                     |
| Republicans  | 56% (62%)              | 18% (14%)           | 26% (24%)                     |
| Independents | 45% (32%)              | 30% (38%)           | 25% (30%)                     |

Giuliani v Clinton numbers in parenthesis

With Senator Obama seen as the first African American candidate to be considered a serious threat for a party nomination, the issue of race is clearly spotlighted in the campaign. Interestingly, Obama's performance among non-white voters in this area of the commonwealth is not as good as Hillary Clinton's standing. In particular, Obama does beat Giuliani by 16 points in a head to head match-up, but Clinton actually beats Giuliani by 49 points within the same group.

**Table Eight**

**Obama v. Giuliani  
By Race**

|           | <u>Giuliani</u> | <u>Obama</u> | <u>Other/Undecided</u> |
|-----------|-----------------|--------------|------------------------|
| White     | 41% (38%)       | 34% (40%)    | 19% (21%)              |
| Non White | 35% (16%)       | 51% (65%)    | 14% (19%)              |

Giuliani v Clinton numbers in parenthesis

Finally, Senator Obama holds solid leads over both Romney and Thompson in this poll. The Illinois Senator maintains a healthy 14 point lead over Romney, and a 16 point lead over the former Senator and *Law and Order* star Fred Thompson. The results of these surveys are found in Tables Nine and Ten below.

**Table Nine**

**Obama v. Romney**

|                    | <u>Romney</u> | <u>Obama</u> | <u>Other/Undecided</u> | <u>Margin</u> |
|--------------------|---------------|--------------|------------------------|---------------|
| Eastern PA         | 28%           | 42%          | 30%                    | Obama +14%    |
| National (Sept 10) | 34%           | 51%          | 15%                    | Obama +17%    |

**Table Ten**

**Obama v. Thompson**

|                    | <u>Thompson</u> | <u>Obama</u> | <u>Other/Undecided</u> | <u>Margin</u> |
|--------------------|-----------------|--------------|------------------------|---------------|
| Eastern PA         | 26%             | 42%          | 31%                    | Obama +16%    |
| National (Sept 10) | 38%             | 47%          | 15%                    | Obama +9%     |

**THE BUSH FACTOR**

As the election of 2008 draws closer the impact of President Bush's public standing remains a highly discussed aspect of the campaign. With very low job approval ratings the President is being looked at as a substantial liability for Republican candidates in many parts of the country. Thus this survey sought to explore how President Bush is perceived in the key 8 county region of eastern Pennsylvania.

The results of the survey indicate that Bush’s overall work and his work managing the war in Iraq are poorly received by residents of Eastern Pennsylvania. In particular, by over a two to one margin, regional voters disapprove of the way President Bush is handling his job. These numbers, presented in Table Eleven below, are very similar to national ratings of the president’s work. The results also show the overwhelming disapproval of the president among Democrats and the more moderate approval ratings within local GOP ranks.

**Table Eleven**

“Do you approve or disapprove of the job George W. Bush is doing as President of the United States?”

|             | Approve | Disapprove | Not sure |
|-------------|---------|------------|----------|
| Overall     | 27%     | 62%        | 10%      |
| National*   | 29%     | 64%        | 7%       |
| Democrats   | 8%      | 88%        | 3%       |
| Republicans | 50%     | 36%        | 14%      |

On par with his poor overall approval ratings in the region, President Bush’s efforts in managing the War in Iraq are received in an equally poor manner in the area. More specifically, under 1 in 4 voters in this Eastern Pennsylvania region said they approve of the way Bush is handling the war, with 2 out of 3 regional voters giving the commander-in-chief bad marks in this aspect of his work as president. Perhaps most damning for the President, local members of his own party are in essence equally divided on his handling of Iraq, with 43% of GOP voters approving of his management of Iraq and 41% disapproving.

**Table Twelve**

“Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling the situation with Iraq?”

|             | Approve | Disapprove | Not sure |
|-------------|---------|------------|----------|
| Overall     | 24%     | 66%        | 10%      |
| National    | 25%     | 70%        | 5%       |
| Democrats   | 9%      | 87%        | 4%       |
| Republicans | 43%     | 41%        | 16%      |

## THE ISSUES

Finally, the canvass of local voters included a battery of questions regarding the issue that are most likely to impact the 2008 presidential race. Survey respondents were asked both open ended questions and closed-ended questions to measure issue saliency within the area. First, regional voters were asked an open ended question that solicited the issue that they felt would be most important in deciding their vote next year. The results which are presented in Table Thirteen below demonstrate the array of issue identified in the poll.

**Table Thirteen**

“Thinking ahead to the November 2008 presidential election, what is the single most important issue in your choice for president?”

|                        | Percent Responding |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| The War in Iraq        | 13%                |
| Health Care            | 7%                 |
| The Economy            | 13%                |
| Terrorism/Security     | 2%                 |
| Taxes                  | 12%                |
| Ethics.Govt.Corruption | 2%                 |
| Immigration            | 4%                 |
| Morals/Family Values   | <1%                |
| The Environment        | 5%                 |
| Education              | 1%                 |
| Crime                  | 4%                 |
| Transportation         | 2%                 |
| Other Issue            | 13%                |
| Not Sure               | 21%                |

As can be seen in Table Thirteen, three issues gather double-digit levels of identification as the single most important issue among respondents in the survey. The War in Iraq, the economy and taxes draw near equal levels of support as the key issue for voters in the 2008 races, with health care, immigration, the environment and crime all drawing significant levels of identification.

Respondents were also asked to rate a series of issue in terms of the issue’s importance in the 2008 presidential race. While the results once again show the war, taxes and the economy as leading issues, terrorism and health care come across among the most important issues in voter’s minds. Interestingly, party affiliation plays a significant role in determining the key issues in the presidential campaign among voters in this section of the Keystone State. While Democrats gave the Iraq war the highest score in terms of importance, Republican voters gave terrorism the highest score in terms of importance in the 2008 race for the White House.

## Table Fourteen

### Ratings of Issue Saliency Among Eastern Pennsylvania Voters In Terms of 2008 Presidential Election By Party Affiliation

(Percentages are sum of voters that identified the issue as either Extremely or Very Important)

|                     | All Voters | Republican Voters | Democratic Voters |
|---------------------|------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Situation in Iraq   | 84% (1)    | 78% (2)           | <b>89% (1)</b>    |
| Terrorism           | 82% (2)    | <b>86% (1)</b>    | 78%(2)            |
| Illegal Immigration | 56% (6)    | <b>61% (6)</b>    | 49% (9)           |
| Healthcare          | 77% (3)    | 69% (3)           | <b>77% (4)</b>    |
| The Economy         | 72% (4)    | 65% (5)           | <b>78%(2)</b>     |
| Taxes               | 63% (5)    | <b>66% (4)</b>    | 60% (6)           |
| Abortion            | 37% (10)   | <b>41% (9)</b>    | 35% (10)          |
| Gun Policy          | 46% (9)    | 42% (8)           | <b>52% (8)</b>    |
| Global Warming      | 49% (8)    | 37%(10)           | <b>61% (5)</b>    |
| Gas Prices          | 55% (7)    | 54% (7)           | <b>55% (7)</b>    |

Numbers in parenthesis are rankings within groups.

## CONCLUSION

In our first poll of the key eastern Pennsylvania region from the Philadelphia suburbs to the Pocono's, we find very competitive match-ups between frontrunners Hillary Clinton and Rudi Giuliani. While holding a narrow lead over Giuliani, Senator Clinton maintains large leads over other major contenders on the GOP side. These poll results come about as President Bush' popularity continues to flounder in the region, and the War in Iraq plays a key roll among area voters.

*Christopher P. Borick, Director  
Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion*