Romney and Obama Are in a Tight Contest, Poll Finds

By DALIA SUSSMAN

Mitt Romney has solidified support within his party for the presidential nomination after Rick Santorum’s exit from the race, but is locked in a tight race with President Obama as attention turns to the general election phase of the campaign, the latest New York Times/CBS News poll finds.

Registered voters are evenly split between Mr. Romney and Mr. Obama. The poll finds 46 percent support Mr. Obama, while as many prefer Mr. Romney. Last month’s Times/CBS News poll also showed a close race, with 47 percent supporting Mr. Obama and 44 percent Mr. Romney.

A majority of Republican primary voters—now say they would like to see Mr. Romney nominated, including a plurality of evangelical Christians, a group that had formed Mr. Santorum’s base of support. Newt Gingrich is backed by 20 percent of Republican voters, while Ron Paul draws 12 percent support.

But the poll continues to show a lack of strong enthusiasm among many Republican voters for Mr. Romney’s candidacy. One in three say they would enthusiastically support him in November. That’s hardly a resounding endorsement from the party faithful. Perhaps reflecting the prolonged nature of the Republican nominating contest, more Republican primary voters, say they will support him but with reservations, while another 18 percent say they will support him only because he is the Republican nominee, and 8 percent say they will not support him.

Evangelical Christians are far more likely than others to say they have reservations about him.

But at the same time, a broad majority of Republican primary voters—say Mr. Santorum did the right thing in suspending his campaign last week, including most evangelical Christians. Still, about 4 in 10 evangelical Christians say he should have stayed in the race, compared with
just over 2 in 10 among others.

Additional results from this poll, including how different demographic groups divide between Mr. Obama and Mr. Romney, will be available after 6:30 p.m. Eastern time at NYTimes.com.

The nationwide poll is based on telephone interviews conducted April 13-17 on landlines and cellphones with 852 registered voters, including 268 Republican primary or caucus voters. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus three percentage points among all voters and six percentage points among Republican primary voters.

---

**Summary**

- 46% each, Obama and Romney
- Sample: 268 Republican primary voters:
  - 584 Others
  - 852

- 54% support Romney to be nominated
- 40% support Romney with reservations
- 18% support only because he is Republican
- 8% likely not support
- 63% say Santorum right to drop out

- ±3 percentage points
- ±6 percentage points

---

**For \( \hat{p} = 0.46 \)**

\[
SE(\hat{p}) = \sqrt{\frac{\hat{p}(1-\hat{p})}{n}} = \sqrt{\frac{0.46 \times 0.54}{852}} = 0.017
\]

95% CI: \( 0.46 \pm 2 \times 0.017 \)

\( 0.46 \pm 0.034 \)

"3 percentage points"

---

**For \( \hat{p} = 0.54 \)**

\[
SE(\hat{p}) = \sqrt{\frac{\hat{p}(1-\hat{p})}{n}} = \sqrt{\frac{0.54 \times 0.46}{268}} = 0.027
\]

95% CI: \( 0.54 \pm 2 \times 0.027 \)

\( 0.54 \pm 0.054 \)

"5 percentage points"

---

**For \( \hat{p} = 0.08 \)**

\[
SE(\hat{p}) = \sqrt{\frac{\hat{p}(1-\hat{p})}{n}} = \sqrt{\frac{0.08 \times 0.92}{268}} = 0.017
\]

95% CI: \( 0.08 \pm 2 \times 0.017 \)

\( 0.08 \pm 0.034 \)

"3 percentage points"

---

**Note:** Smaller than for \( \hat{p} = 0.54 \)

04/18/2012 03:15 PM