NBC News/Marist Poll:
Obama and Romney Competitive in Florida
*** Complete Tables for Poll Appended ***

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This NBC News/Marist Poll Reports:

President Barack Obama and Republican Mitt Romney are neck and neck in the presidential contest in Florida. According to this NBC News/Marist Poll of the state, Obama receives 48% to 44% for Romney among registered voters in Florida including those who are undecided yet leaning toward a candidate. One percent supports another candidate, and 7% are undecided.

“Mitt Romney is within striking distance of President Obama in Florida,” says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion. “But neither Marco Rubio nor Jeb Bush pushes Romney ahead in the race for Florida’s 29 electoral votes.”

Key points:

- By party, 79% of Democrats support Obama while 84% of Republicans rally for Romney.
- Obama -- 52% -- leads Romney -- 37% -- among independent voters.
- The president -- 48% -- and Romney -- 46% -- are competitive among voters with an excellent or good chance of voting in November.
- Among those with a high level of enthusiasm about the presidential election, Obama -- 50% -- and Romney -- 47% -- are neck and neck. Looking at those who are moderately enthusiastic, President Obama has majority support -- 52% -- compared with 40% for Romney. However, Romney -- 45% -- is ahead among those who express a low degree of enthusiasm. Obama receives 33%.
- Among those who have a high level of interest in the presidential election, Obama -- 49% -- and Romney -- 46% -- vie for the lead. However, Obama -- 45% -- does better against Romney -- 37% -- among those who have a moderate degree of interest. Among those with a low level of interest in the contest, Obama receives 42% to 41% for Romney.
A majority of voters who strongly support their choice of candidate -- 55% -- are for Obama while 45% are for Romney.

There is a gender gap. Romney -- 49% -- edges President Obama -- 45% -- among men. Obama -- 50% -- leads Romney -- 40% -- among women.

Looking at age, the president -- 65% -- outpaces Romney -- 28% -- among voters under 30. However, things are decidedly different among older voters. President Obama receives 46% to 42% for Romney among voters 30 to 44. Among those 45 to 59, Obama has 47% to Romney’s 44%. Romney -- 50% -- leads Obama -- 44% -- among voters 60 and older.

Nearly Eight in Ten Strongly Support Choice of Candidate

78% of registered voters in Florida are firmly committed to their choice of candidate while 16% are somewhat behind their pick. Six percent believe they might cast their ballot differently on Election Day, and only 1% is unsure.

Key points:

- 81% of voters for Obama are strongly committed to him. This compares with 74% of Romney’s backers who have a similar level of commitment to their candidate.

Slim Majority Very Enthusiastic about Voting in November

51% of registered voters in Florida report they are very enthusiastic about voting this fall. 30% are somewhat enthusiastic while 15% are not too enthusiastic. Four percent are not enthusiastic at all.

Key points:

- A majority of registered voters who support President Obama -- 54% -- are very enthusiastic about voting. The same proportion of Romney backers -- 54% -- shares this level of enthusiasm.

Any Bounce with Rubio or Bush as Running Mate?

If Marco Rubio were Romney’s running mate, would Rubio help Romney’s electoral chances? In this scenario, 48% of registered voters in Florida support President Obama and Vice President Joe Biden while 44% are for Romney and Rubio. Two percent back another candidate, and 7% are undecided.

What if Romney teamed up with Jeb Bush? Here, 47% back the Democrats while 45% are behind Romney and Bush. Two percent report they will vote for someone else, and 7% are undecided.
Among registered voters in Florida not including those who are undecided yet leaning toward a candidate, 45% are for Obama while 40% are behind Romney. One percent supports another candidate, and 14% are undecided.

**Obama Approval Rating at 48% in Florida**

When it comes to President Obama’s job performance, registered voters in Florida divide. 48% approve of how he is doing while 45% disapprove. Six percent are unsure.

When the NBC News/Marist Poll last reported this question in January, Florida voters divided. 46% approved of the president’s job performance while 46% disapproved. Eight percent, at the time, were unsure.

**Majority Views Obama Favorably…Electorate Divides about Romney**

52% of registered voters in Florida have a positive impression of President Obama while 43% have a less than stellar impression of the president. Five percent are unsure.

Romney receives mixed reviews from Florida’s electorate. 45% perceive him favorably while 43% do not. 12% are unsure.

**Four in Ten Say Same-Sex Marriage Issue Has Little Impact on Vote**

More than three in ten registered voters -- 32% -- report they are more likely to vote for Romney because he opposes same-sex marriage while 22% say they are more likely to cast their ballot for the president because he supports same-sex marriage. However, a plurality -- 44% -- believes a candidate’s stance does not make much difference to their vote. Two percent are undecided.

**Economy Higher on Florida Voters’ Priority List than Social Issues**

More than three in four registered voters in Florida -- 77% -- report the economy is more important than social issues when deciding their vote for president. 17%, however, say social issues are more important. Six percent are unsure.

When it comes to the candidate who will do a better job handling the economy, voters divide. 46% believe President Obama will better handle the task compared with 44% who have this perception of Governor Romney. Nine percent are unsure.

On social issues, 48% report the president comes closer to their views. This compares with 43% who think Romney better reflects their positions on these issues. Nine percent are unsure.
On other issues:

- When it comes to foreign policy, 49% believe the president is better equipped to handle this area while 40% report Romney is. 11% are unsure.
- A majority of registered voters -- 51% -- say President Obama is the candidate who best understands voters' problems. 40%, however, have this impression of Governor Romney. Nine percent are unsure.
- Romney -- 49% -- is thought to be the candidate who will do a better job reducing the national debt while 41% say Obama can better tackle the issue. 11% are unsure.

Majority Views Economic Conditions as Inherited…Growing Economic Optimism

56% of registered voters in Florida believe the president mostly inherited the nation’s current economic conditions. 37%, though, believe they are a result of his policies. Six percent are unsure.

Florida voters express greater optimism about the state of the U.S. economy. 51% think the worst of the nation’s economic conditions are behind us while 41% say the worst is yet to come. Eight percent are unsure.

What will the U.S. economy look like in the next 12 months? 40% of registered voters in Florida say it will be better. 16% think it will be worse, and 40% believe it will be about the same. Four percent are unsure.

Looking at personal family finances, nearly six in ten registered voters in Florida -- 57% -- report their financial picture will be steady. 32% believe their money matters will improve. 11% think their finances will get worse.

U.S. Needs to Get Back on Track, Say Nearly Six in Ten

57% of registered voters in Florida say things in the nation are off on the wrong track. However, 39% believe they are headed in the right direction. Four percent are unsure.

Nelson and Mack in Tight Battle in Florida

In the race for U.S. Senate in Florida, Democrat Bill Nelson has a slight lead over Republican Connie Mack, 46% to 42%, among registered voters. 12% are undecided.