



**NBC News/Marist Poll:
No Clear GOP Front-Runner in Iowa**

*** Complete Tables for Poll Appended ***

For Immediate Release: Tuesday, October 11, 2011

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This NBC News/Marist Poll Reports:

Mitt Romney and Herman Cain are in a tight battle as they vie for the support of Iowa's likely Republican caucus-goers. And, with a notable proportion yet to choose a candidate, the race in the Hawkeye State is very competitive.

Here is how the contest stands among **likely Republican caucus-goers**:

- 23% for Mitt Romney
- 20% for Herman Cain
- 11% for Ron Paul
- 10% for Rick Perry
- 10% for Michele Bachmann
- 4% for Newt Gingrich
- 3% for Rick Santorum
- 1% for Jon Huntsman
- 1% for Gary Johnson
- 16% are undecided

“Right now, Iowa is shaping up as a two candidate contest. But, caucus participation is always the key in this low-turnout environment,” says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion. “Watch for the strength of the candidates' field organizations to move poll numbers and determine the eventual winner.”

How does the contest shape up when **those who are undecided yet leaning toward a candidate** are considered? 26% of likely Republican caucus-goers including those who are leaning toward a candidate support Romney. One in five -- 20% -- favor Cain, and 12% back Paul. Bachmann and Perry each receive 11%, 5% are behind Gingrich while Santorum garners 3%. One percent is for Huntsman while the same proportion -- 1% -- throws their support behind Johnson. One in ten -- 10% -- is still undecided.

Iowa's pool of potential participants for Iowa's Republican Presidential Caucus is more undecided. 23% are for Romney, 16% support Cain, and 12% choose Paul. 10% back Perry while the same proportion -- 10% -- favors Bachmann. Four percent rally for Gingrich, 2% support Santorum, and Huntsman and Johnson each receive 1%. A notable one in five -- 20% -- is undecided.

Key points:

- Herman Cain -- 31% -- leads among **likely Republican caucus-goers who support the Tea Party**.
- 41% of **likely Republican caucus-goers who strongly support the Tea Party** back Herman Cain.
- Nearly one in four **likely Republican caucus-goers who plan to participate for the first time** -- 24% -- support Romney. 16% are behind Cain, and 14% back Paul.
- Among **likely Republican caucus-goers who are Evangelical Christians**, Cain receives 24% of the vote to 23% for Romney.
- 24% of **Conservative likely Republican caucus-goers** support Cain while 21% back Romney.

Slightly More than Four in Ten Strongly Support Candidate

There is plenty of time for movement within this Republican field. Among likely Republican caucus-goers, only 41% report they strongly support their choice of candidate, including 48% of Tea Party supporters. 36% say they somewhat support their pick, and 20% might change their mind. Three percent are unsure.

Key points:

- 56% of **likely Republican caucus-goers who support Cain** are firmly committed to him. 29% of **likely Republican caucus-goers who back Romney** have a similar level of commitment.

What Matters Most? Values and Issues Top Check List

30% of Iowa's likely Republican caucus-goers say they want a GOP candidate who shares their values while a similar proportion -- 29% -- prefer one who is closest to their position on the issues. One in five -- 20% -- say a candidate who can defeat President Obama in the general election tops their list of factors for a candidate while 17% want someone with experience. Four percent are unsure.

Key points:

- Among **likely Republican caucus-goers who think a candidate's position on the issues** is the most important, Cain and Paul each receive the support of 21%. 17% of these voters are behind Romney.

- 24% of **likely Republican caucus-goers who cite shared values** as the key factor support Cain while 21% back Romney.
- Looking at **likely Republican caucus-goers who think a Republican candidate should be able to defeat the president**, 26% rally for Cain while 24% tout Romney.
- Romney receives the support of a plurality -- 42% -- of **likely Republican caucus-goers who say experience** trumps all other qualities in a Republican candidate.

Competitive Race Between Obama and Romney...Obama Outpaces Perry

In a hypothetical contest between President Barack Obama and Mitt Romney, the two are neck and neck among registered voters in Iowa. Obama receives 43% of the vote to Romney's 40%. 17% of registered voters are undecided. In 2008, Obama carried Iowa handily against John McCain.

When matched against Rick Perry, Obama leads 46% to 37% for Perry. Nearly one in five -- 18% -- are undecided.

Key points:

- Independents make the difference. Romney and Obama are competitive among this group -- 39% for Romney and 37% for Obama. Obama, however, leads Perry among this group with 41% supporting Obama and 34% backing Perry.

Obama's Approval Rating at 42% in Iowa...More Than Two-Thirds View Nation on Wrong Path

Just 42% of registered voters in Iowa approve of the job President Obama is doing in office while 47% disapprove, and 11% are unsure.

By party:

- Not surprisingly, 74% of Democrats approve of the president's job performance while 85% of Republicans disapprove. Nearly half of independents -- 48% -- are dissatisfied with how Mr. Obama is doing in office.

68% of adults in Iowa believe the nation is moving in the wrong direction while just 21% think it is moving on the proper path. 11% are unsure.