



## **The Battleground: The Presidential Race in Virginia**

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This Marist Poll reports:

### **Presidential Race in Virginia:**

- **Majority of Likely Voters Back Barack Obama...McCain Close Behind:** With Virginia's 13 electoral votes up for grabs, Senator Barack Obama and Senator John McCain are engaged in a competitive contest in Virginia. Obama leads McCain by 6 percentage points among registered voters. When looking at Virginia's likely voters including those who are undecided yet leaning toward a candidate, Obama receives a majority of the vote -- 51% -- to McCain's 47%, a four percentage point margin. Support for the candidates breaks along party lines. 93% of Democrats favor Obama while 87% of Republicans back John McCain. However, Obama gets nearly twice the proportion of Republicans as McCain gets Democrats. A majority of Independent voters -- 54% -- report they are behind John McCain compared with 42% who support Barack Obama.

**Question Wording:** If next week's presidential election were held today, whom would you support if the candidates are:

	John McCain/ Sarah Palin the Republicans	Barack Obama/ Joe Biden the Democrats	Other	Undecided
<b>Registered voters</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>Likely voters w/ leaners</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>&lt;1%</b>	<b>2%</b>
Democrats	6%	93%	<1%	1%
Republicans	87%	11%	<1%	2%
Independents	54%	42%	1%	3%

- Virginia Voters Unwavering in Level of Support:** 85% of Virginia’s registered voters are strongly committed to their choice for president. Just 2% report they might alter their decision between now and Tuesday. More voters behind Barack Obama say they will stand strong in their support of the Democrat compared with those backing John McCain. 88% of voters favoring Obama say they strongly support him. 82% of McCain’s supporters are firmly committed to him.

**Question Wording:** Would you say that you strongly support [ticket], somewhat support them, or do you think you might vote differently on Election Day?

Registered voters	Strongly Support	Somewhat Support	Might Vote Differently	Unsure
October 2008	85%	12%	2%	1%
McCain/Palin supporters	82%	16%	1%	1%
Obama/Biden supporters	88%	9%	3%	<1%

- Values Trump Issues in Virginia:** When asked to choose, 48% of registered voters in Virginia report they’d prefer a candidate who shares their values rather than one who has similar views on the issues. There is a fundamental difference between John McCain’s and Barack Obama’s supporters on this question. 62% of McCain’s backers say values matter more to them than a candidate’s positions on the issues. Half of voters who support Barack Obama think it’s better to have a president who feels the same way about the issues rather than one who shares their values.

**Question Wording:** If you had to choose, would you prefer a candidate who shares your positions on the issues but does not share your values, or a candidate who shares your values but not your positions on the issues?

Registered voters	Shared Issues	Shared Values	Unsure
October 2008	39%	48%	13%
McCain/Palin supporters	28%	62%	10%
Obama/Biden supporters	50%	37%	13%

- Positive Perceptions of Both Candidates...Obama Seen Favorably By More:** Although John McCain and Barack Obama are viewed well by a majority of Virginia’s registered voters, more members of the state’s electorate have formed a positive opinion of Barack Obama. 54% think well of McCain while 61% see Barack Obama in a positive light. When

it comes to their *unfavorable* ratings, the candidates are on fairly equal footing. 39% view McCain negatively while 35% feel that way about Obama.

**Question Wording:** Overall, do you have a favorable or an unfavorable impression of:

Registered voters	Favorable	Unfavorable	Unsure
John McCain	54%	39%	7%
Barack Obama	61%	35%	4%

- Praise for Biden...Virginia Electorate Divides Over Palin:** Although Senator Joe Biden has a majority of voters -- 53% -- who view him positively, they are mixed over his Republican counterpart, Governor Sarah Palin. 47% of registered voters give her a favorable rating while 46% say they view her unfavorably. 52% of Independent voters, however, think well of Palin compared with 48% who have a positive perception of Joe Biden.

**Question Wording:** Overall, do you have a favorable or an unfavorable impression of:

Registered voters	Favorable	Unfavorable	Unsure
<b>Sarah Palin</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>7%</b>
Democrats	13%	80%	7%
Republicans	81%	15%	4%
Independents	52%	42%	6%
<b>Joe Biden</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>10%</b>
Democrats	89%	7%	4%
Republicans	20%	69%	11%
Independents	48%	40%	12%

**Nature of the Sample: 752 Virginia Registered Voters**

This survey of 752 registered voters in Virginia was conducted on October 26<sup>th</sup> and October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2008. Registered voters were interviewed by telephone in proportion to the voter registration in each county in Virginia and adjusted for turnout in statewide elections. Results are statistically significant at  $\pm 3.5\%$ . There are 671 likely voters. The results for this sub-sample are statistically significant at  $\pm 4\%$ . The error margin increases for cross-tabulations.