

**Gonzales RM&S
Research & Communications, Inc**

**Maryland Poll
February 2000**

Presidential Contest

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Methodology

Patrick E. Gonzales and Carol A. Arscott, the former president and vice president of Mason-Dixon Campaign Polling & Strategy, Inc., formed Gonzales Research & Marketing Strategies, Inc. at the beginning of 1999.

Gonzales is a 1981 graduate of the University of Baltimore with deep roots in the Anne Arundel County Democratic Party who served as a principal advisor to Janet Owens' 1998 campaign for County Executive. Arscott is a 1977 graduate of the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service and a former chairman of the Howard County Republican Party.

Gonzales and Arscott together have over 30 years of professional experience in politics. They have served as pollsters and consultants to dozens of political clients in Maryland since the mid-1980s, including County Executives Janet Owens, Doug Duncan, Jim Harkins, Chuck Ecker, Eileen Rehrmann, and Robert Neall; and State Senators Tom Bromwell, Marty Madden, John Astle, Chris McCabe, and Jean Roesser.

This survey was conducted by Gonzales Research & Marketing Strategies, Inc. from February 23rd through February 27th, 2000. A total of 807 registered voters in Maryland were interviewed by telephone. All stated they vote regularly in statewide general elections. A cross-section of calls was made into each jurisdiction within the state to reflect general election voting patterns.

The margin for error, according to customary statistical standards, is no more than plus or minus 3.5 percentage points. This means that there is a 95 percent probability that the "true" figures would fall within this range if the entire survey universe were sampled. The margin for error is higher for any demographic subgroup, such as gender, or race.

This survey also includes an over sampling of 393 likely March 7th Democratic presidential primary voters and 346 likely March 7th Republican presidential primary voters. The margin for error is $\pm 5\%$ for the Democratic primary sub-sample and $\pm 5.5\%$ for the Republican primary sub-sample. The respondents comprising these over samplings were only asked the questions pertaining to their party primary.

Ó This survey is provided free of charge. However, we ask that Gonzales Research & Marketing Strategies, Inc. of Annapolis be credited if the survey is cited in a news story or column.

Maryland Statewide Poll Sample Demographics

<u>Gender</u>		<u>Party</u>	
Male	401 (50%)	Democrat	465 (58%)
Female	406 (50%)	Republican	264 (33%)
		Independent	78 (10%)
<u>Race</u>		<u>Region</u>	
White	613 (76%)	Eastern Shore/So. MD	97 (12%)
Black	186 (23%)	Baltimore City	84 (10%)
Other	8	Baltimore Suburbs	270 (33%)
		Washington Suburbs	264 (33%)
		Western MD	92 (11%)

Regional Groupings

Eastern Shore/Southern Maryland - includes voters in these counties: Calvert, Caroline, Cecil, Charles, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, St. Mary's, Somerset, Talbot, Wicomico, and Worcester.

Baltimore City - includes voters in the City of Baltimore.

Baltimore Suburbs - includes voters in these counties: Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Harford, and Howard.

Washington Suburbs - includes voters in these counties: Montgomery, and Prince George's.

Western Maryland - includes voters in these counties: Allegany, Carroll, Frederick, Garrett, and Washington.

General Summary & Analysis

Democratic Primary

Vice President Al Gore has opened up a huge lead over former New Jersey Senator Bill Bradley in the upcoming Maryland primary election, with Gore trouncing Bradley 63% to 24%, and the remaining 13% undecided.

Gore tops Bradley in every demographic subgroup in our survey, erasing the early lead Bradley held among men and whites in our January Maryland poll and, at the same time, boosting his numbers with women and African-Americans. Gore gets 58% of men to Bradley's 46% (37% to 46% in our January survey), and earns a 68% share of the women's vote compared to 21% (52% to 30% in January) for the former basketball star.

Michael Jordan's endorsement notwithstanding, the insurmountable lead that Gore held over Bradley among black voters in Maryland has widened even further, with a whopping 81% of African-Americans in the Vice President's camp, and just 11% expressing a preference for Bradley (70% to 21% in January). Among white voters, Bradley's early advantage has evaporated. Where he once led Gore 45% to 33%, he now trails the Vice President 54% to 31%.

Bradley's difficulties have nothing to do with the particulars of his campaign in Maryland per se, but everything to do with the whole premise his campaign nationwide. Bradley never made a credible or coherent argument for denying the party's nomination to its sitting Vice President. This – along with the fact that any notion that his campaign was “insurgent” has been eclipsed by John McCain – will make it extremely difficult for Bradley to get out of the doldrums. Voters are unwilling to process more than one insurgent campaign at a time

Republican Primary

Arizona Senator John McCain has closed the 29-point gap that separated him from George W. Bush in our January survey, but still trails the Texas Governor by 10 in our latest poll, 47% to 37%. Only former diplomat Alan Keyes remains standing among the also-rans, with 4% of the vote. Twelve percent are undecided a week before primary election day.

McCain has improved his standing among both men and women in the Republican primary electorate, up 10 points among men since January (from 29% to 39%) and more than doubling his share of the vote among women (from 16% to 35%). Women were three times as likely to have been undecided in our January survey (20% women, 7% men), but the percentage of undecided voters in the Republican primary is equal with men and women now, at 12%.

Judging by what we have seen in other states with open primaries, we are not surprised by the divergent attitudes between registered Republicans and independents in Maryland's GOP primary. Bush handily wins the Republican vote 54% to 30%, while McCain swamps Bush among independents, 77% to 8%.

However, the independent vote in Maryland is quite a different matter from the independent vote in New Hampshire or South Carolina or Michigan. This party-building initiative, enacted last spring at the Republican Party's state convention, is a first time trial.

There is no tradition of independents voting in party primaries in Maryland. It is not a part of the political culture like it is in traditional open primary states. Maryland independents technically “decline to affiliate” with a party, and have done so knowing that they are opting out of participating in the primary process. This is quite a different situation from a state where registering as an independent allows a voter to choose which ballot to take on election day, or from one where there is no registration by party at all.

Maryland is none of these things, and efforts to get the word out to independents here that they are eligible to vote in the Republican primary has been slow. Less than half (48%) of independents we surveyed said they were aware of their new privilege. All of this works against the likelihood that John McCain will benefit from the independent vote in Maryland to the extent that he has in other states.

More About Independent Voters

Not surprisingly, independents (96%) overwhelmingly approve of the Maryland Republican Party's decision to open up its primary to them

this year. Republicans, however, were more circumspect: Forty-nine percent of registered Republicans approved of their party leadership's decision to open the primary to independents, while 46% disapproved.

While Democratic Party leaders dismissed the Republicans' expansion effort as an "act of desperation" when it was announced last spring, Democratic primary voters are enthusiastic about the idea. Sixty-nine percent thought that the Democratic primary should be opened to independents, while 23% did not.

General Election Match-ups

Al Gore has opened up a double-digit lead over George W. Bush in a general election contest, besting Bush 54% to 37%, with 9% undecided. This is a considerable change from our January survey, where Gore and Bush were in a statistical dead heat, with Gore at 44% to Bush's 42%. Gore significantly improved his position with male voters in the six weeks since our last survey, from 36% to 49%, while Bush slipped from 53% of men to 44% in February. Gore is also holding more of the Democratic vote in the general election, up to 77% from 64% in January. Moreover, Gore gained eight points (from 31% to 39%) of the independent vote while Bush lost nine points (50% to 41%) among independent voters.

Our January survey showed Gore and McCain in a statistical tie (41% to 40%), and our February survey is much the same, with Gore leading McCain by just two points, 47% to 45%. Gore leads with women (53%) and Democrats (68%), while McCain takes the majority of men (52%), Republicans (77%), and independents (56%).

While Bill Bradley continues to hold a lead over George W. Bush in heavily-Democratic Maryland (45% to 40%), McCain now holds a 12-point lead over the former Rhodes scholar, beating him 47% to 35%. In our January survey, Bradley led McCain by 10, 45% to 35%. Most significant in this contest are the independents, who were with Bradley 37% to 32% with 31% undecided in January, but cast their lot with McCain in February, 59% to 26%, with just 15% undecided.

A quick look at the name identification numbers on these candidates begins to explain these results. McCain has the highest favorable rating at 53%, as well as the lowest unfavorable rating, at 23%. Gore is rated favorably by 48% of respondents, and unfavorably by 34%. Bush's favorables outnumber his unfavorables by just nine points (42% to 33%), but he is in better shape with Maryland general election voters than Bradley, whose favorable rating is 31%, with unfavorables uncomfortably close at 29%.

Most Important Issue

Saving Social Security/Medicare was, far and away, the most important issue to Maryland general election voters in the presidential election, cited by 33% of those surveyed in response to an open-ended question. Moreover, saving Social Security was named the Number One issue for the supporters of each of the four major presidential candidates, regardless of party. Certainly, Gore voters (49%) and Bradley voters (43%) led the way, but McCain voters (25%) place saving Social Security over character (22%), and Bush voters favor saving Social Security (23%) over cutting taxes (19%).

Education was the Number Two issue at 14%, and the Number Two issue with Gore (16%) and Bradley (18%) voters. Education didn't place in the top three national concerns of Bush and McCain voters.

The character of the candidate ranked third overall at 10%, spiking to 22% with McCain voters, and placing third with Bush voters (18%). Character doesn't seem to count as much with voters for the two Democratic candidates.

Paying down the national debt tied for fourth place with cutting taxes, at 8%. Each of these concerns placed high with voters for the Republicans candidates, with cutting taxes the second most important issue for Bush voters (19%) and paying down the debt the third most important issue for McCain voters (13%).

Maintaining the current economic condition was a priority for just 6% of voters overall, but the issue placed third with both Gore (10%) and Bradley (9%) voters.

Conclusion

The conventional wisdom that John McCain is the stronger Republican candidate against Al Gore in November certainly holds true in

Maryland, with the Arizona senator holding an even larger share of the Republican vote against Gore than does Bush. McCain makes it a real contest here, while Bush loses badly to the Democratic front-runner.

A Democratic candidate, however, will always start with a natural advantage in Maryland, with Democrats outnumbering Republicans by nearly two-to-one. That is certainly born out in the issues that the voters cite as most important, with the top two issues garnering nearly a majority of voters, and those issues favoring the Democratic candidate.

The Free State is not a bellwether of the national vote in presidential elections, but if the Republicans nominate someone who can compete here come November, watch out!

Can McCain win the Maryland primary? Can he win the nomination? Both are tough uphill battles, but it's clear that the voters are relishing the competition.

**** 393 Likely March 7th Democratic Primary Voters ****

QUESTION: *If the March 7th Democratic presidential primary election were held today, for whom would you vote: Bill Bradley or Al Gore?*

	Gore	Bradley	Undecided
Statewide	63%	24%	13%
Men	58%	27%	15%
Women	68%	21%	11%
White	54%	31%	15%
Black	81%	11%	8%

QUESTION: *As you may know, the Republican primary in Maryland is open to registered independents for the first time this year. Do you think that the Maryland Democratic Party should open its primary elections to allow independents to vote in them, or not?*

Yes, Allow 69%
No, don't Allow 23%
No Answer 8%

**** 346 Likely March 7th GOP Primary Voters ****
 294 Registered Republicans
 52 Registered Independents

QUESTION: *If the March 7th Republican presidential primary election were held today, for whom would you vote: George W. Bush, Alan Keyes, or John McCain?*

	Bush	McCain	Keyes	Und.
Statewide	47%	37%	4%	12%
Men	45%	39%	4%	12%
Women	49%	35%	4%	12%
Registered Republicans	54%	30%	4%	12%
Registered Independents	8%	77%	2%	13%

QUESTION: *As you may know, the Republican primary in Maryland is open to registered independents for the first time this year. Do you approve or disapprove of the party's decision to open the Republican primary to independents?*

	<u>All</u>	<u>Registered GOP</u>	<u>Registered IND</u>
Approve	56%	49%	96%
Disapprove	39%	46%	-
No Answer	5%	5%	4%

QUESTION: *Before you received this phone call, were you aware that registered independents were eligible to vote in the Republican primary this year, or not?*

	<u>All</u>	<u>Registered GOP</u>	<u>Registered IND</u>
Yes, Aware	42%	41%	48%
No, Not aware	58%	59%	52%

General Election Match-ups

QUESTION: *If the presidential general election were held today, for whom would you vote if the candidates were Al Gore, the Democrat, and George W. Bush, the Republican?*

	Gore	Bush	Undecided
Statewide	54%	37%	9%
Men	49%	44%	7%
Women	59%	30%	11%
Democrat	77%	17%	6%
Republican	17%	72%	11%
Independent	39%	41%	20%

QUESTION: *If the presidential general election were held today, for whom would you vote if the candidates were Al Gore, the Democrat, and John McCain, the Republican?*

	Gore	McCain	Undecided
Statewide	47%	45%	8%
Men	41%	52%	7%
Women	53%	38%	9%
Democrat	68%	25%	7%
Republican	12%	77%	11%
Independent	32%	56%	12%

General Election Match-ups

QUESTION: *If the presidential general election were held today, for whom would you vote if the candidates were Bill Bradley, the Democrat, and George W. Bush, the Republican?*

	Bradley	Bush	Undecided
Statewide	45%	40%	15%
Men	41%	47%	12%
Women	49%	33%	18%
Democrat	62%	24%	14%
Republican	17%	71%	12%
Independent	32%	36%	32%

QUESTION: *If the presidential general election were held today, for whom would you vote if the candidates were Bill Bradley, the Democrat, and John McCain, the Republican?*

	Bradley	McCain	Undecided
Statewide	35%	47%	18%
Men	28%	54%	18%
Women	42%	40%	18%
Democrat	52%	31%	17%
Republican	8%	72%	20%
Independent	26%	59%	15%

Name ID

I am going to read you the names of several individuals. After I mention each name, I would like you to tell me if you recognize that person. If you do, I would then like you to tell me whether you have a favorable, unfavorable, or neutral opinion of that individual.

The first (next) name is _____. Do you recognize this name?

(IF RECOGNIZED) Do you have a favorable, unfavorable, or neutral opinion of this person?

	<u>Favorable</u>	<u>Unfavorable</u>	<u>Neutral</u>	<u>Don't Recognize</u>
John McCain	53%	23%	22%	2%

Al Gore	48%	34%	18%	-
George W. Bush	42%	33%	24%	1%
Bill Bradley	31%	29%	37%	3%

Most Important Issue

QUESTION: *What for you is going to be the single most important issue in the November presidential election?*

Saving Social Security/Medicare	33%
Education issues	14%
Character of the candidates	10%
Paying down the national debt	8%
Cutting taxes/holding down gov't spending	8%
Maintaining the current economic condition	6%
Foreign policy or defense issues	4%
Crime/drugs	4%
Reform issues/campaign finance reform	3%
Abortion/moral issues	3%
Environmental issues	2%
No Answer	3%

Vote Preference by Most Important Issue

	Most Important Issue	2 nd Most Important Issue	3 rd Most Important Issue
Gore Voters	Saving Social Security 49%	Education 16%	Maintaining economy 10%
Bush Voters	Saving Social Security 23%	Cutting taxes 19%	Character 18%
McCain Voters	Saving Social Security 25%	Character 22%	Paying down debt 13%
Bradley Voters	Saving Social Security 43%	Education 18%	Maintaining economy 9%