

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

Maryland Poll

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Methodology

Patrick E. Gonzales and Carol A. Arscott 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 Anne Arundel County politics. Arscott is a 1977 graduate of the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service and a former chairman of the Howard County Republican Party.

This survey was conducted by Gonzales Research & Marketing Strategies, Inc. from January 16th through January 20th, 2003. A total of 807 registered voters in Maryland were interviewed by telephone. 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.

Maryland Statewide Poll Sample Demographics

Gender		Race		Region	
Male	394 (49%)	White	627 (78%)	Eastern Shore	79 (10%)
Female	413 (51%)	Black	169 (21%)	Baltimore City	83 (10%)
		Other/Ref	11	Baltimore Suburbs	275 (34%)
Party Registration				Washington Suburbs	280 (35%)
Democrat	453 (56%)			Western Maryland	90 (11%)
Republican	264 (33%)				
Independent	90 (11%)				

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Regional Groupings

Eastern Shore - includes voters in these counties: Caroline, Cecil, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne'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, Prince George's, Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's.

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

Analysis

Most Important State Issue

Forty-six percent of Maryland voters named the budget deficit as the most important issue facing the governor and the legislature, far eclipsing any other issue. When we last asked Maryland voters to name the most important issue, in September, it took half that -- just 23% -- to make the looming budget deficit their Number One concern. Education is a distant second at 12%, followed by the economy at 10%. Lesser concerns were health care/prescription drugs (7%), traffic/transportation (6%), crime/drugs (5%), taxes (3%), environment (3%), slots at racetracks (2%), gun control (1%), and growth/development (1%). The remaining 2% gave no answer.

Slots at Racetracks

There is both good news and bad news for the Ehrlich Administration on the issue of slots. First, the good news: A narrow plurality of Maryland voters continues to support the introduction of slot machines at Maryland racetracks. Favorable sentiment held steady at 46% since our August 2002 survey on this subject.

The bad news for Ehrlich is that the number of those who say they oppose slots inched up three points from 37% to 40% over the last six months, and there have been some dramatic shifts in support in some of the survey's demographic subgroups, even as the top line numbers held pretty steady.

Democrats, for example, favored slots at racetracks 47% to 36% in August, but oppose them now, 49% to 41%. Ehrlich has been more persuasive with his fellow Republicans, who now favor slots 49% to 32% (43% to 40% in August). Independents were among the biggest boosters of slots in August (50% to 33%); they are even more sold on the idea now, with 63% favoring slots at racetracks.

Among the state's regions, the most dramatic shift occurred among Eastern Shore voters. While they still favor slots at racetracks by a narrow margin (37% to 34%), the number of undecided voters has doubled since August (from 14% to 29%), no doubt reacting to news that the owners of Ocean Downs want in on the action despite Ehrlich's declaration that such a notion is a "non-starter."

And a slots gender gap is starting to open up: Support among men increased from 45% to 56% in the six months since our last survey on this subject, while sentiment among women flipped completely, from 47% to 39% in favor back in August to 47% to 37% opposed today.

Slots for Education

A second question repeated from our August survey asked if voters would "favor or oppose allowing slot machines at Maryland racetracks if the revenue raised was dedicated to public education." With this caveat, 56% say they favor slots, while 36% are opposed. But this is slightly down from August,

when 61% jumped on the "slots for tots" option, while 32% opposed the idea. The fact that Ehrlich's budget, released while this survey was in the field, does not dedicate the revenue may have had some impact on the results.

Closing the Gap

Compared to any other remedy for bridging Maryland's yawning budget gap, however, slots look pretty good to Free State voters. A third repeated question – this one from our July survey – asked respondents for their preference among five rotated alternatives for closing the state's budget deficit, and revealed slots at racetracks to be the least distasteful option. Thirty-five percent said that slots at racetracks was the best way to reduce the deficit, followed by increasing the income tax rate for households earning more than \$100,000 (24%), and cutting spending in state programs (23%). Tampering with the sales tax proved to be extremely unpopular, either by raising the tax rate (5%) or by expanding the sales tax to include services (4%). The remaining 9% offered no answer.

The chart below shows a comparison of this survey's results with those from our July 2002 poll. In July 2002, a combined 60% of voters opted to close the budget deficit via slots and spending cuts. In January 2003, that number is 58%.

	Legalize Slots	Cut Spending	Increase Income Tax	Increase Sales Tax Rate	Expand Sales Tax	No Answer
Jan 2003	35%	23%	24%	5%	4%	9%
July 2002	29%	31%	16%	9%	6%	9%

Faith-Based Initiative

Governor Ehrlich's thematic inaugural address wasn't heavy on policy, but he did make a point of mentioning his plans for a Maryland faith-based initiative. Forty-five percent of Marylanders surveyed said they favor a plan allowing religious institutions to deliver services once the exclusive province of government, while 30% said they were opposed. A substantial 25% of voters was undecided.

Bob Ehrlich

Maryland's new governor may have received the support of just 53% of the state's voters, but he enters office with the goodwill of 62% of the electorate. Ehrlich's last favorable rating was 43% in a survey taken three weeks before the November election. Just 13% hold an unfavorable opinion of Governor Ehrlich today, while Candidate Ehrlich was viewed unfavorably by 33% in October. Twenty-one percent are neutral on Ehrlich, and 1% didn't recognize his name.

Michael Steele

Lieutenant Governor Michael Steele's enjoys high ratings and a high profile. Forty-three percent view Steele favorably, just 8% see him unfavorably, and 35% are neutral on Steele. Only 14% failed to recognize his name, pretty darned good for a brand new lieutenant governor, but not all that unusual for Maryland LGs!

Parris Glendening

Ouch! Outgoing Governor Parris Glendening is viewed unfavorably by a whopping 63% of the state's voters and favorably by just 22%. Fifteen percent are neutral on Glendening, and his name ID is universal. Not necessarily a good thing....

George W. Bush

Talk about steady! President George W. Bush's numbers are identical to those he enjoyed when we last questioned voters about him in September 2002. Fifty-four percent have a favorable opinion of Bush, 29% hold an unfavorable opinion, and 17% are neutral.

Most Important National Issue

Foreign policy issues dominate when voters are asked to name the most important issue facing the President and Congress. Invading Iraq (32%) and the threat of terrorism (27%) capture the attention of 59% of Maryland voters, while the economy grabs another 25%.

Lesser concerns are health care/prescription drugs (6%), taxes (3%), the budget deficit (2%), the environment (2%), and crime/drugs (1%). The remaining 2% offered no answer.

QUESTION: Do you favor or oppose allowing slot machines at Maryland racetracks?

	Favor	Oppose	No Answer
Statewide	46%	40%	14%
Eastern Shore	37%	34%	29%
Baltimore City	48%	43%	9%
Baltimore Suburbs	58%	35%	7%
Washington Suburbs	37%	45%	18%
Western Maryland	43%	41%	16%
Men	56%	33%	11%
Women	37%	47%	16%
White	46%	37%	17%
African-American	45%	50%	5%
Democrat	41%	49%	10%
Republican	49%	32%	19%
Independent	63%	19%	18%

QUESTION: Would you favor or oppose allowing slot machines at Maryland racetracks if the revenue raised was dedicated to public education?

	Favor	Oppose	No Answer
Statewide	56%	36%	8%
Those who generally oppose slots	19%	77%	4%

QUESTION: As you may know, Maryland faces a structural budget deficit of \$1.3 billion dollars. Which of the following do you believe is the best way to reduce the projected deficit:

Legalize slot machines at racetracks	35%
Increase the income tax rate for households earning more than \$100,000	24%
Cut spending in state programs	23%
Increase the sales tax rate, currently at five percent	5%
Expand the sales tax to include services, like car repairs and dry cleaning	4%
No answer	9%

QUESTION: In his inaugural address, Governor Ehrlich mentioned his plans for a Maryland faith-based initiative. Do you favor or oppose allowing religious institutions to deliver services to the public that are currently delivered by the government?

Favor	45%
Oppose	30%
No answer	25%

Name Recognition

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.

	Favorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Don't Recognize
Bob Ehrlich	62%	13%	24%	1%
George W. Bush	54%	29%	17%	-
Michael Steele	43%	8%	35%	14%
Parris Glendening	22%	63%	15%	-

QUESTION: What is the most important issue facing the President and Congress?

Invading Iraq	32%
Threat of terrorism	27%
Economy/jobs	25%
Health care/prescription drugs	6%
Taxes	3%
Budget deficit	2%
Environment	2%
Crime/drugs	1%
No answer	2%

QUESTION: Thinking specifically about the State of Maryland, what is the most important issue facing the Governor and the legislature?

Budget deficit	46%
Education	12%
Economy	10%
Health care/prescription drugs	7%
Traffic/transportation	6%
Crime/illegal drugs	5%
Taxes	3%
Environment	3%
Slots at racetracks	2%
Gun control	1%
Growth/development	1%
No answer	3%