

Gonzales RM&S Research & Communications, Inc.

Maryland Poll

March 2003

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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 March 14th through March 17th, 2003. A total of 838 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	411 (49%)	White	644 (77%)	Eastern Shore	87 (10%)
Female	427 (51%)	Black	177 (21%)	Baltimore City	85 (10%)
		Other/Ref	17	Baltimore Suburbs	281 (34%)
Party Registration				Washington Suburbs	290 (35%)
Democrat	461 (55%)			Western Maryland	95 (11%)
Republican	277 (33%)				
Independent	100 (12%)				

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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

Bob Ehrlich

Maryland Governor Bob Ehrlich has taken some lumps in his freshman legislative session as chief executive, and it shows in his name identification numbers. Fifty-six percent of Marylanders hold a favorable opinion of Ehrlich, down from 62% in our January survey. His unfavorables are up to 23%, a ten-point jump since inauguration time. Eighteen percent are neutral on Ehrlich (down from 24%). The remaining 3% didn't recognize his name.

When asked if they approve or disapprove of the job Ehrlich is doing as governor, an identical 56% said that they did, with 29% saying they disapprove of Ehrlich's handling of the job. The remaining 15% gave no answer. There is a huge gulf between the political parties: Seventy-nine percent of Republicans approve of Ehrlich's performance in office, compared with just 44% of Democrats – a 35-point gap. Still, Ehrlich wins the approval of a plurality of Democrats, and of independents as well (46% approve).

Busch and Miller

Maryland's two Mikes, House Speaker Busch and Senate President Miller, are powerful fellows, but neither has anything near the name recognition of Bob Ehrlich, or even Lieutenant Governor Michael Steele. Rookie Speaker Busch's name is recognized favorably by 21% of Maryland voters statewide, unfavorably by 9%, and neutrally by 23%. The remaining 47% did not recognize his name.

Statehouse veteran Miller has similar numbers: Twenty percent have a favorable impression of the Senate President, 13% have an unfavorable impression, and 25% have a neutral view. The remaining 42% had not heard of Miller.

Most Important Issue

It looms larger and larger in every survey. Maryland's burgeoning budget deficit is deemed to be the most important issue facing the State today by 51% of voters surveyed, up from 46% in January, and way up from 24% in October. Education continues to hold a distant second place with 12%, with slots at racetracks at 8% (up from 2% in January). All other issues are in the low single digits.

Slots at Racetracks

While the level of support for slots at racetracks continues to hold steady, the level of opposition is growing persistently, from 37% in August, to 40% in January, and to 45% today. Forty-seven percent say they favor allowing slot machines at racetracks, with 8% offering no answer. The plurality

favoring slots holds, but by a scant two points.

Slots at Racetracks	Favor	Oppose	Not sure/No ans
March 2003	47%	45%	8%
January 2003	46%	40%	14%
August 2002	46%	37%	17%

Opposition to slots has crept up across the board –from 37% to 46% with whites, from 49% to 56% with Democrats, from 34% to 47% on the Eastern Shore, from 45% to 59% in the DC suburbs. The only factor buoying the overall support for slots is party loyalty: Republican support for slots at racetracks jumped from 49% to 62% since January.

Slots for Education

The proposal to dedicate slots revenue to education boosts the percentage favoring gambling expansion to 59%, up three points from the January survey, garnering the support of 24% of voters who said they opposed slots at racetracks in the previous straight-up question.

Slots for Education	Favor	Oppose	Not sure/No ans
March 2003	59%	31%	10%
January 2003	56%	36%	8%
August 2002	61%	32%	7%

Closing the Gap

When asked, for the third time since July 2002, to choose the best way to reduce Maryland's budget deficit, legalizing slots at racetracks (36%) remains the top choice, but

barely edges an income tax hike for households earning over \$100,000. An income tax increase for high wage earners has seen its support double from 16% to 32% since last July, when we first asked this question of Maryland voters. Meanwhile, spending cuts have lost the support of nearly half of their original backers, down to 17% from a high of 31% last summer. Tampering with the sales tax, either by increasing the rate (6%) or by expansion (4%), continues to be a non-starter with Maryland voters.

	Legalize Slots	Cut Spending	Increase Income Tax	Increase Sales Tax Rate	Expand Sales Tax	No Answer
Mar 2003	36%	17%	32%	6%	4%	5%
Jan 2003	35%	23%	24%	5%	4%	9%
July 2002	29%	31%	16%	9%	6%	9%

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	56%	23%	18%	3%
Michael Steele	40%	11%	30%	19%
Mike Busch	21%	9%	23%	47%
Mike Miller	20%	13%	25%	42%

QUESTION: What is the most important issue facing the State of Maryland today?

Budget deficit	51%
Education	12%
Slots at racetracks	8%
Economy	5%
Traffic/transportation	5%
Crime/illegal drugs	4%
Taxes	4%
Gun control	3%
Health care/prescription drugs	3%
Environment	2%
Growth/development	1%
No answer	2%

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

	Favor	Oppose	No Answer
Statewide	47%	45%	8%
Eastern Shore	42%	47%	11%
Baltimore City	35%	59%	6%
Baltimore Suburbs	65%	27%	8%
Washington Suburbs	33%	59%	8%
Western Maryland	47%	43%	10%
Men	53%	40%	7%
Women	41%	50%	9%
White	48%	46%	6%
African-American	44%	43%	13%
Democrat	38%	56%	6%
Republican	62%	27%	11%
Independent	47%	44%	9%

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

	Favor	Oppose	No Answer
Statewide	59%	31%	10%
Those who generally oppose slots	24%	65%	11%

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	36%
Increase the income tax rate for households earning more than \$100,000	32%
Cut spending in state programs	17%
Increase the sales tax rate, currently at five percent	6%
Expand the sales tax to include services, like car repairs and dry cleaning	4%
No answer	5%

QUESTION: Do you approve or disapprove of the job Bob Ehrlich is doing as governor?

	Approve	Disapprove	No Answer
Statewide	56%	29%	15%
Democrat	44%	41%	15%
Republican	79%	9%	12%
Independent	46%	30%	24%