

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

**Maryland Poll
National Issues**

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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 May 9th through May 13th, 2001. A total of 836 registered voters in Maryland who indicated they were likely to vote in next year's general election 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, party registration or race.

Maryland Statewide Poll Sample Demographics

Gender		Race		Region	
Male	419 (46%)	White	628 (75%)	EastShore/So MD	100 (12%)
Female	417 (54%)	Black	199 (24%)	Baltimore City	85 (10%)
		Other	9	Baltimore Suburbs	291 (35%)
Party Registration				WashingtonSuburbs	267 (32%)
Democrat	481 (58%)			Western Maryland	93 (11%)
Republican	271 (32%)				
Independent	84 (10%)				

General Summary & Analysis

Most Important Issue

Marylanders have completely reordered their priorities for the nation over the course of a couple of months, when asked to name “the most important issue facing our country today.” Nearly one-fifth (19%) named education in response to this open-ended question, followed closely by the economy (17%). These numbers differ little from those in our February survey (education at 22%, economy at 17%), but the former Number One issue – saving Social Security – has dropped to a distant third, from 24% in February to 12% today.

Moral and character issues make a surprising appearance in fourth place (11%), while a brand new issue – rising gas prices – ranks fifth, named by 10% of Marylanders surveyed. Health care (8%, up from 6%), taxes (7%, down from 10%), foreign policy and defense issues (3%, down from 5%), and campaign reform (2%, up from 1%) round out the list of concerns. The remaining 10% offered no answer.

Bush Job Performance

Top line job performance ratings for President George W. Bush remain virtually unchanged from our February poll, with 48% saying they approve of Bush’s performance in office, 34% saying they disapprove, and 18% offering no answer. In February, 47% approved, 34% disapproved, and 19% gave no answer.

There are subtle differences, however, in the poll’s internal numbers. Men approve of Bush’s performance in office 57% to 29% (54% to 29% in February), while women are evenly split, 39% to 39%, very close to the February figures (41% to 40%). Democrats (33% to 49%) are slightly more likely to disapprove of Bush now than they were then (33% to 46% in February). Republicans (78% to 8%), on the other hand, are even giddier about Bush than they were before (75% to 12%). The biggest difference is among Independents (50% to 34%), where there is some evidence that Bush is beginning to win them over (38% to 34% in February).

Social Security Reform

During the Presidential campaign, we asked Maryland voters for their opinion on “a proposal being discussed that would allow younger wage earners direct a small percentage of their Social Security tax payments into some type of private investment account, while protecting the current system for retirees and older wage earners.” Back in August, 49% of Marylanders said they favored such a proposal, while 30% opposed it, and 21% were unsure. The numbers among Democrats were

particularly striking – 37% backed the proposal while 34% opposed it.

In our current survey, we repeated the essence of the question we first asked last summer, but this time identified it as President Bush's proposal, saying that he had recently "appointed a bi-partisan commission to make recommendations on how to implement this plan." The result is quite stunning: The same plan, this time tied to President Bush, is opposed by 48% and favored by just 42%, with 10% offering no answer. Key to this change in sentiment is desertion by Democrats and Independents who said they favored the proposal in August. Democrats now oppose the plan 65% to 27%, and Independents favor it 41% to 37%, whereas they said they approved of the plan 61% to 26% last summer. Republicans, on the other hand, hung tough, supporting Bush's initiative 68% to 22% (compared to 66% to 24% in August).

Energy Issues

With the recommendation of Vice President Cheney's energy task force due this week, Bush can take some comfort that Marylanders, most of whom live in relatively close proximity to at least one nuclear power plant, are supportive of the construction of additional nuclear power plants to generate electricity. Fifty-seven percent of Marylanders said they would favor a policy that recommended the construction of nuclear power plants, 32% would oppose such a policy, and 11% offered no answer. Nuclear power plants were favored by at least a plurality in every demographic subgroup in the survey, with Republicans (80%), men (67%), and independents (52%) the most enthusiastic.

When it comes to drilling for oil and natural gas in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, however, the President has some explaining to do in order to sell his plan to the public. Overall, 43% of Maryland voters said they would favor "opening a portion of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and natural gas exploration," while a majority – 51% -- said they were opposed. The remaining 6% offered no answer. A yawning gender gap opens up on this question, with 51% of men favoring exploration in ANWR and 58% of women opposed. Republicans and Democrats, similarly, give nearly opposite responses: Sixty percent of Democrats opposed drilling in ANWR, while 63% of Republicans favor it. A key constituency on environmental issues – Independents – are opposed, 55% to 38%.

Most Important Issue

QUESTION: *In your opinion, what is the most important issue facing our country today?*

Education	19%
The economy	18%
Saving Social Security	12%
Moral/Character issues	11%
Rising gas prices	10%
Health care/ Medicare	8%
High taxes	7%
Foreign Policy/National defense	3%
Campaign reform	2%
No answer	10%

Bush Job Performance

QUESTION: *Do you approve or disapprove of the job George W. Bush is doing as president?*

	Approve	Disapprove	No answer
Statewide	48%	34%	18%
Men	57%	29%	14%
Women	39%	39%	22%
Democrat	32%	49%	19%
Republican	78%	8%	14%
Independent	50%	34%	16%

QUESTION: *President George W. Bush proposed during the fall campaign that younger wage earners be allowed to direct a small percentage of their Social Security tax payments into some type of private investment account, while protecting the current system for retirees and older wage workers. Earlier this month, Bush appointed a bipartisan commission to make recommendations on how to implement this plan. Do you favor Bush's proposal to partially privatize Social Security, or do you oppose it?*

	Favor	Oppose	No answer
Statewide	42%	48%	10%
Men	49%	44%	7%
Women	35%	52%	13%
Democrat	27%	65%	7%
Republican	68%	22%	10%
Independent	44%	37%	19%

QUESTION: *As you may know, Vice President Cheney is chairing a task force that will soon be making recommendation on a national energy policy. There is some speculation that Cheney's task force may recommend the construction of nuclear power plants to generate electricity, as opposed to plants powered by coal or natural gas. Would you favor or oppose a policy that recommended the construction of nuclear power plants?*

	Favor	Oppose	No answer
Statewide	57%	32%	11%
Men	67%	26%	7%
Women	47%	38%	15%
Democrat	46%	39%	15%
Republican	80%	16%	4%
Independent	52%	38%	10%

QUESTION: *Cheney's energy task force is likely to recommend that oil and natural gas exploration be permitted in a small portion of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in northern Alaska? Would you favor or oppose opening a portion of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and natural gas exploration?*

	Favor	Oppose	No answer
Statewide	43%	51%	6%
Men	51%	44%	5%
Women	35%	58%	7%
Democrat	33%	60%	7%
Republican	63%	32%	5%

Independent	38%	55%	7%
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