



Californians for Electoral Reform

Promoting Full Representation Since 1993

For immediate release

February 27, 2012

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Newt Gingrich shows resilience in survey of California Republican activists

A survey was taken of delegates and other attendees of the California state Republican Party convention held at the Hyatt San Francisco Airport hotel in Burlingame February 24-26, 2012, by the nonpartisan civic group Californians for Electoral Reform (CfER).

The first round of the CfER poll has Ron Paul in the lead with 60 votes. Newt Gingrich placed second with 45 votes, trailed by Rick Santorum and Mitt Romney virtually tied with 32 and 30 votes respectively. Seven write-ins split 9 first place votes. In an ordinary poll, the story would be about the leading candidate, Ron Paul.

What makes the CfER survey different from other polls is that 176 participants ranked as many candidates as they wanted, putting the number “1” by their first choice, “2” by their second favorite, and so on. Ranked Choice Ballots give each respondent the opportunity to express who they favor most and who else they are willing to accept in a fallback position.

By enumerating their preferences, California Republican activists give insight into their voting patterns. Ron Paul’s support is deep but not as widespread as his campaign might wish. Only 16 of the 116 voters who did not support Ron Paul as a first choice subsequently chose him as a later preference. Another notable aspect of this poll is the last place finish of Mitt Romney among the top four candidates considered by Republican Party activists in California, plus the fact that Romney supporters are fairly evenly divided in their second preference choices.

The most significant news this poll offers is the strength exhibited by Newt Gingrich, especially as the second choice of the overwhelming majority of Rick Santorum supporters. Gingrich shows considerable resilience among activists in the California Republican Party.

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ROUND-BY-ROUND RESULTS OF REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL SURVEY

Conducted at California State Convention, February 24-26, 2012

In this survey, 176 ballots were collected and tallied. 89 votes (the whole number of ballots larger than fifty percent) are required for a majority of the votes cast. Only number "1" choices are counted in the first round. If no majority is achieved, the lowest ranked candidate(s) is/are eliminated in the next round, and each ballot is transferred to the next preference of each individual voter whose earlier choices had been eliminated. Only the highest ranking still active on any ballot is counted in any given round.

ROUND ONE

Ron Paul 60
Newt Gingrich 45
Rick Santorum 32
Mitt Romney 30

write-ins:

Herman Cain 2
Chris Christie 2
Michelle Bachmann 1
Rudy Giuliani 1
Jon Huntsman 1
Sarah Palin 1
Donald Trump 1

There were other write-ins, but not as first choices, so they didn't get any votes. They were: Mitch Daniels, Jim DeMint, Fred Karger, Bobby Jindal, Gary Johnson, M. Woodrow Johnston II, Sheriff Richard Mack, Chuck Norris, Rand Paul, Tim Pawlenty, General David Petraeus, Marco Rubio, Ralph Wiggum (Simpsons character), "Anybody but Obama", and "None of the rest".

ROUND TWO

All write-ins were eliminated simultaneously, and those ballots redistributed to each voter's respective second choices. Ballots that list no further preferences for active candidates are placed in the Exhausted category.

Ron Paul (+3) 63
Newt Gingrich (+4) 49
Rick Santorum (+0) 32
Mitt Romney (+1) 31
Exhausted (+1) 1

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ROUND THREE

Mitt Romney had the fewest votes in round two, so he was eliminated and those ballots redistributed to each voter's respective next choice. Note that Romney supporters divide fairly evenly in their second choices.

Ron Paul (+7) 70

Newt Gingrich (+8) 57

Rick Santorum (+11) 43

Exhausted (+5) 6

ROUND FOUR

Since round three still produced no candidate exhibiting a majority of support, we now eliminate Rick Santorum. Note that Santorum supporters overwhelmingly make Gingrich second choice.

Newt Gingrich (+35) 92

Ron Paul (+6) 76

Exhausted (+2) 8

So Newt Gingrich, with a clear majority of 92 votes, wins the ranked ballot survey.

RANKED CHOICE BALLOTS

Used in several countries, and in many organizations (including by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences to choose the Oscar winner for Best Picture), there are numerous names for Ranked Choice Ballots. They include Alternative Vote, Enumerated Ballots, the Hare System, Instant Runoff Voting, Preference or Preferential Voting, and the Single Transferable Vote.

When only one candidate is to be selected, this vote-counting system requires that the winner achieve at least 50% of the vote from the active ballots. Usually that means a majority among the most popular candidates remaining after elimination of less popular candidates have been made in earlier rounds.

To learn more about Ranked Choice Ballots, see www.cfer.org or www.fairvote.org

Californians for Electoral Reform

CfER is a nonpartisan civic group which promotes only two reforms: use of Ranked Choice Ballots and Proportional Representation.

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