



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

February 18, 2016

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Michelle C. Whittaker, FairVote Communications Director

301-270-4616 mwhittaker@fairvote.org

National Poll Highlights What Republican Voters Really Think

WASHINGTON, DC -- The College of William of Mary and the nonpartisan electoral reform organization FairVote have released a report on a national survey offering new insights into voter preferences and views on electoral reform. In partnership with YouGov and scholars Alan Abramowitz (Emory University) and Walter Strone (UC-Davis), they conducted a national online survey of a representative sample of 1,000 Republican and independent voters, with half of the sample from January 21-25 (before the Iowa caucuses) and half from February 4-8 (before the New Hampshire primary).

The new survey's innovative methodology incorporated presidential candidate rankings (with more than nine in ten respondents ranking all 11 candidates who were surveyed), issue analyses, and opinions on electoral reforms. "Our survey provides journalists, pollsters, and campaigns with valuable insights into voter preferences that have been largely overlooked in national polling," said FairVote executive director Rob Richie. The full report, with analyses and appendices with all responses and crosstab information for questions involving electoral reform, is available at FairVote.org. The ranking data is also presented at <http://www.GOP2016poll.com> with an interactive data tool that allows users to see how candidates fare against each one-on-one, who is the second choice of backers of different candidates and which candidate would win under a ranked choice voting, "instant runoff" election system.

A panel discussion will be held today at 1 pm at the Zenger Room at the National Press Club. Featured panelists are:

- Ronald Rapoport, John Marshall Professor at the College of William and Mary,
- Rob Richie, Executive Director at FairVote – The Center for Voting and Democracy,
- Emily Ekins, Research Fellow, Cato Institute, and
- John Fortier, Democracy Project Director of the Bipartisan Policy Center

Key Findings

- **Presidential Race - Trump's high floor comes with relatively low ceiling as underscored by loss to Ted Cruz in instant runoff:** The College of William and Mary/FairVote survey echoes most other national polls indicating that Donald Trump is far ahead in voter intentions, with 38.5%, compared to 17.8% for Ted Cruz, and 12.3% for Marco Rubio. However, when a ranked choice voting tally is run that results in a one-on-one "instant runoff" between Trump and Cruz, Trump trails 51% to 49% and loses ground to other candidates in every single round of the tally. Although Trump does defeat all other candidates one-on-one, including a 54% to 46% over Marco Rubio and 66% to 34% over Jeb Bush, he is the last choice of more than one in five respondents.
- **Republican and independent voters are ready for electoral rule changes:** Voters are generally ready to embrace changes in the nature of congressional elections and the composition of Congress, albeit some hesitation and uncertainty exists. As consistent with past surveys of right-of-center voters more than four in five respondents on an absolute scale support voter identification requirements (86.5%) and term limits for Congress (82.6%). Support was also high for a voter registration system that registers all eligible voters while blocking ineligible voters (78.6%), easier ballot access for third parties and independents (73.2%), limits of

political donations, (72.7%) impartial redistricting (66%), and a national popular vote for president (66.4%). Ranked choice voting was backed most strongly for primary elections (51.8%) and local elections (49.3%), and had more support than opposition for its use at every level of election. When it comes to imagining changes by 2030, large majorities of those with an opinion support a Congress with more third parties, women, people of color and major party representatives from the opposition party's strongholds – with no more than 18.9% opposing any of these changes.

- **Voters ready for presidential nomination rules changes:** Although respondents are not passionate about any single change to the nomination process, they have little support for the rules as they are. Strong majorities are ready to support ranked choice ballots in the nomination process ((57.1%), a national primary among the top candidates (57%), changing the schedule so Iowa and New Hampshire don't always come first (55.8%), and delegates in all states being awarded proportionally rather than by winner take all (51.7%).
- **Millennials most ready for electoral changes:** Millennial voters (under 30) had the highest intensity of support for electoral changes when compared to other age groups. For example, 23% of millennials in the survey strongly favor having more third party and independents in Congress, as opposed to 13% of respondents over 60. Substantial, if slightly smaller gaps exist between those age groups for having more women and people of color in Congress. When it comes to reform, ranked choice voting had the backing of 61% of all respondents with an opinion about it, but a whopping 79% of millennials.
- **The Tea Party remains influential:** A majority of Republicans identify as Tea Party supporters (53%) to some extent, and in 2014, Tea Party supporters accounted for more than two-thirds of active Republicans (those Republicans who campaigned, donated to, advocated for, or voted for a Republican candidate). An overwhelming majority of Ted Cruz supporters are Tea Party supporters (84%), however, Donald Trump receives high support from both Tea Party and non-Tea Party supporters.
- **A three-party race in November:** Only about one-in-four Republicans are willing to support the Republican ticket both with Donald Trump as the nominee and with Marco Rubio as the Republican nominee against Democratic frontrunner Hillary Clinton and an independent candidate.

The data-rich report, with detailed questions about a wide range of issues and more information about how voters see the election, is available in full on-line. The interactive feature allowing users to see the impact of voter rankings of candidates is at <http://www.GOP2016poll.com>

For more information, contact FairVote communications director Michelle Whittaker at mwhittaker@fairvote.org or call its offices at (301) 270-4616.

FairVote is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that seeks to make elections fair, functional, and fully representative.

The College of William and Mary is the second-oldest college in the nation, known for cutting-edge research.

#####