



# NEWS

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## **2007 Arkansas Poll: From Presidential Preferences to Global Warming**

FAYETTEVILLE, Ark. – In the lead-up to the 2008 elections, the 2007 Arkansas Poll reveals Arkansans’ presidential preferences and sense of candidate electability. The poll also offers researchers and policymakers a snapshot of major concerns and attitudes toward social issues and global warming.

### **Politics**

“While this year’s Arkansas Poll shows approval ratings for state politicians remaining stable, President Bush’s approval rating has declined to 30 percent, in line with national ratings but noteworthy for a state that cast its electoral votes for Bush in 2004,” said Janine Parry, a University of Arkansas political scientist and director of the Arkansas Poll.

As primaries approach, the poll asked Arkansans this pre-election question: “If the presidential election were held today, who would you vote for for president?” In answer to this open-ended question, 35 percent of respondents named Hillary Clinton. The next most frequently named candidates were Rudy Giuliani and Mike Huckabee at 8 percent each. More than one quarter of respondents hadn’t yet decided who would get their vote.

The poll also asked respondents what they thought the chances were that certain candidates would be nominated or elected. Democratic voters were asked about Clinton, Barak Obama, John Edwards and Bill Richardson. When it comes to gaining the party’s nomination, 93 percent agreed or strongly agreed that Clinton could be nominated, well above the 49 percent who agreed or strongly agreed that Obama could win the nomination. At the same time, 79 percent of Democratic Arkansans agreed or strongly agreed that Clinton could actually win the election, again well above Obama’s 41 percent. Edwards’ electability came in at 37 percent and Richardson’s at 13 percent.

Republicans were asked the same questions about Giuliani, Huckabee, Fred Thompson, John McCain and Mitt Romney. Here the chances were much more closely grouped, with 56 percent agreeing or strongly agreeing that Giuliani could be elected, followed by Thompson at 45 percent, Huckabee at 44 percent, McCain at 32 percent and Romney at 28 percent.

“We’ve heard reports for months now that Republican voters aren’t wildly enthusiastic about a particular candidate,” Parry said. “It appears to be the case in Arkansas, too, that – for the first time in recent memory – the Republican base is fractured and uncertain, while Democrats have a clear favorite.”

### **Social Issues**

Poll results showed stability in attitudes toward the hot button social issue of abortion. Questions about gay and lesbian relationships focused on policy issues related to adoption and foster parenting rather than on personal preferences. This year’s results revealed a small majority – 53 percent – in support of prohibiting adoption and foster parenting by gays and lesbians, up only slightly from 2006, though the question was restructured for greater clarity.

Previous research on controversial social issues suggests that personal feelings about an issue are sometimes different from policy preferences. Although other polls most often ask questions about social issues in terms of personal feelings, Parry said that the Arkansas Poll’s focus on policy preferences offers a clearer picture to lawmakers.

“In other words,” Parry explained, “just because we don’t like something doesn’t mean we want to outlaw it. My sense, having tinkered with these questions for a few years now, is that while most people may not desire this for their own families, many Arkansans – both liberals and conservatives – are still uncomfortable dictating the family arrangements of others.”

### **Global Warming**

On the question of whether global warming is happening, 57 percent of Arkansans are mostly or completely convinced that we are experiencing global warming. In answer to another question, 44 percent judge it an urgent problem requiring immediate attention, and 44 percent see it as a longer term problem.

This year, pollsters also asked what the state’s global warming policies should be relative to other states. While 47 percent stated that Arkansas should adopt policies that have proved effective in other states, 27 percent of respondents thought that Arkansas “should be on the leading edge of creating policies to combat global warming.”

Cindy Sagers, an associate professor of biological sciences at the University of Arkansas and member of the state Global Warming Commission, was impressed by the level of understanding reflected in the poll results.

“Nearly 90 percent of the respondents thought global warming is a problem, and that is really impressive. The 44 percent who believe global warming is a long-term problem may be really savvy readers,” Sagers said. “Scientists have a sense that global warming won’t be linear, and the poll results suggest that people recognize we need to do something now for the longer term.”

### **Most Important Problem**

In response to an open-ended question – “What do you think is the most important problem or issue facing people in Arkansas today?” -- Arkansans named the economy. In odd-numbered years, this question is open-ended; in even-numbered years the poll asks respondents to choose from the most frequently mentioned issues in the previous year.

“The economy, a broad category which includes jobs, wages and economic development, is very important – 29 percent named it the most important problem facing Arkansas,” Parry said. “It’s always among the top issues mentioned, along with education and health care. When we offer respondents options to choose from, health care often comes up first, as it did in the 2006 poll.”

### **Methods**

The Arkansas Poll was conducted in October by the Survey Research Center at the University of Arkansas and yielded 754 completed surveys from a random sample of adult Arkansans. The margin of error in the poll is plus or minus 3.5 percentage points. The Arkansas Poll has been conducted annually since 1999, with a total of nearly 7,000 Arkansans having participated.

“Over the past 9 years, these thousands of interviewees have helped us accumulate information that guides researchers and policymakers to better serve the people of Arkansas,” Parry said.

The 2007 Arkansas Poll is sponsored by the Diane D. Blair Center of Southern Politics and Society in the J. William Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences. The poll was designed and analyzed by political scientists Janine Parry and Bill Schreckhise. Results of previous polls from the years 1999 through 2006 can be accessed online at <http://www3.uark.edu/arkpoll/>.

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