



# MIKE DOWNS CENTER FOR INDIANA POLITICS

## NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 2, 2008**

**Contact:** Michael Wolf, Assistant Professor of Political Science, 260-481-6898  
Andrew Downs, Assistant Professor of Political Science, 260-481-6691

### **Changing Fortunes in Indiana Clinton Leads Obama**

#### **Democratic Primary Election Vote Intention for Obama & Clinton**

The intensity of the presidential nomination contests between Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton has mobilized likely Indiana Democratic Primary voters throughout the state. We are cautious to draw too many direct comparisons with our previous poll as both were separate samples and snapshots of the Indiana electorate under different conditions. Nevertheless, Hillary Clinton appears to have improved her electoral fortunes considerably. In our most recent poll taken between April 28 and April 30 of 689 registered voters likely to participate in the May 6 Indiana Democrat Primary, 52% support Clinton and 45% support Obama (+/- 3.8%). Our previous poll between April 14 and April 16 had Obama receiving 50% of likely registered Democratic primary voters to Clinton's 45%. The latest poll fell during the latest Reverend Wright controversy, with Barack Obama publicly separating himself from Wright on the second day of polling. Further, the poll was completed before Democratic superdelegates Congressman Baron Hill and former Democratic National Committee Chair Joe Andrew endorsed Barack Obama. Consequently, the effect of all of these events is unclear. What is clear, however, is that Clinton has expanded her lead among strong Democratic identifiers and dramatically turned the tables on Obama with independent voters and those concerned about the worsening economy.

Obama's ability to attract independents paid off in earlier nomination contests and our mid-April poll found that Obama was well ahead among this group. Clinton has now flipped these voters into her category with nearly the same advantage Obama held two weeks earlier with a lead among pure independents (56% Clinton to 38% Obama) Republican-leaning independents (54% Clinton to 46% Obama), and has drawn even with Democratic-leaning independents at 47%. Obama had been up 59% to 33%, 70% to 30%, and 62% to 33% respectively among these voters in our first poll. In our most recent poll, Clinton has expanded her lead among the strongest Democratic identifiers where she has a 56% to 43% advantage, which is up from the 51% to 45% she had enjoyed two weeks ago.

## **Issue Evaluations**

There are different possible explanations for Clinton's turnaround. The Wright controversy has most likely soaked up news coverage that Obama would have preferred to have been aimed at his plans concerning the economy. Hillary Clinton, in turn, has focused specifically on such issues without controversy clouding her message. This has paid off. Half (49%) of Hoosiers listed the economy as the most important issue for the next president to focus on ahead of all others. Of these registered voters likely to vote in the Democratic Primary on May 6<sup>th</sup>, 56% would vote for Clinton and 42% for Obama. In our earlier April 14-16 poll, Obama led among these voters 50% to 47%. Barack Obama receives the support of 52% of those listing the Iraq War as the most important issue to Clinton's 45%, but this is down from a 57% to 40% Obama lead on this issue in our earlier poll. Further, the Iraq War was mentioned as the most salient issue by only 13% of our sample. Health care ranked as the third most important issue by 11% of the sample and 55% of those mentioning health care as the most important issue support Clinton compared to 42% for Obama. This too was an issue Obama had enjoyed more support relative to Clinton in our mid-April survey (52% Obama to 44% Clinton).

## **Regional Support**

Clinton is also improving her position in key portions of the state. Clinton has expanded her support relative to Obama 63% to 34% in the southern portion of the state, up from her 51% to 43% lead there two weeks ago. Obama still leads in northern Indiana 50% to 47%, but this is down from his 55% to 39% lead there in our first poll. Obama has increased his share of the central Indiana support 53% to 44% from the April 14-16 poll (51% to 46%).

## **Demographic Support**

Obama's support among men remains strong relative to Clinton (52% to 45%) though somewhat lower than our mid-April results found (55% to 42%). Women support Clinton over Obama 57% to 40%, a large jump over the close 48% to 46% advantage she held two weeks ago.

Likely Indiana Democratic primary voters over 50 prefer Clinton to Obama (59% to 39%) while Obama leads among the voters under 50 (51% to 46%). Again both are more positive for Clinton than our earlier poll.

Meanwhile, 58% of white Democratic primary Hoosier voters support Clinton and 40% support Obama. This had been a 48% to 47% difference for Clinton two weeks prior. One positive note for Obama comes when looking at his support from African-Americans. Ninety-four percent of blacks support Obama compared to 5% for Clinton. This is a significant jump from the 78% of Hoosier African-Americans who supported Obama in mid-April to Clinton's 17%. Whether this is in response in any way to the Jeremiah Wright controversy cannot be confirmed by these data.

The effects of income and education follow similar patterns concerning Democratic primary support. Higher educated likely Democratic primary voters support Obama while those Hoosiers

with some college or less levels of education progressively support Clinton with larger majorities. A majority of Hoosier families earning less than \$75,000 support Clinton. Obama does better among those earning \$75,000 or more.

### **General Election Head-to-Head Results in Indiana**

The heavy interest in the Democratic presidential primary has increased the relative size of Democrats relative to Republicans in our sample compared to our first study. While this has demonstrated some effect on Democratic primary results, we cautiously interpret the general election contests because this Democratic swell may dissipate by the fall. Indeed, few who witnessed Indiana's presidential voting patterns would predict that this solidly red state would vote for either Democratic candidate come November. Nevertheless, by 48% to 45%, Hillary Clinton leads John McCain among registered likely voters. Barack Obama leads John McCain 48% to 47% (1,274 sample size with +/- 2.8 margin of error).

One of Senator Clinton's important surrogates in the state is Senator Evan Bayh, who is the top Democrat in the state and is often rumored to be on her short list for vice president. As we found in our earlier study, at this point adding Bayh would not much help deliver the state for Clinton at this point. Only five percent of Hoosiers would switch from McCain to Clinton if Bayh were chosen as her running mate, and some of this gain would be lost by the two percent of Clinton supporters who would support McCain if Bayh were chosen.

### **Evaluation of Candidates and President Bush**

On a scale of one to ten with one meaning the respondent has a completely negative feeling toward the candidate and ten meaning the respondent has a completely positive feeling about the candidate, 1,274 likely November Hoosier voters in the sample (margin of error +/- 2.8) rated John McCain with an average of 4.7 out of 10, which is lower than the 5.2 rating he received in our study two weeks ago. Senator Obama ended up with a rating of 5.0 out of ten and Hoosier voters have warmed to Senator Clinton giving her an average of 4.9 (up from 4.5 in the previous poll).

Registered Indiana likely November voters had a relatively negative view of President Bush's job performance. On a scale that varies between one (Bush is doing a worse job than anyone in office possibly could) and ten (Bush is doing a better job in office than anyone possibly could), the average score for Bush was 3.7. Forty-three percent of Hoosiers rated Bush as a one, which means they believe no one could possibly do worse in the job. Obviously the lion's share of this negative view comes from Democrats (79% of strong Democrats rated Bush at the lowest possible ranking).

### **Conclusion**

Hillary Clinton is ahead of Barack Obama and has improved especially among independents and those concerned about the economy. Clinton appears to be building a coalition roughly similar to those that helped provide her with a higher percentage of the vote in Ohio and Pennsylvania

than that received by Barack Obama. This is not easily done as many of the working class voters she has relied on in those states are often stable Republican voters during presidential elections in Indiana. Many of them were never Reagan Democrats but were instead always solid Republican presidential supporters who were willing to consider Democrats for Governor, Representative, and Senator. So the question then becomes can she keep her momentum going and get her voters to the polls, especially in southern Indiana where she is performing strongly. At this point her numbers appear to demonstrate she is doing so. Conversely, can Obama's economic message attract voters and can he deliver northern and central Indiana? Finally, could either compete in Indiana with John McCain in a state whose quadrennial ritual provides its Electoral College votes to Republicans?

### **What is the Mike Downs Center for Indiana Politics?**

The Mike Downs Center for Indiana Politics is a non-partisan organization that helps the people of Indiana understand the role of politics and government in their daily lives. By doing this, The Mike Downs Center hopes to encourage participation in political and public processes the same way its namesake, Professor Michael C. Downs, did for more than 34 years. The Mike Downs Center is located on the campus of Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne (IPFW).

**Statement of Methodology:** This SurveyUSA poll was conducted by telephone in the voice of a professional announcer. Respondent households were selected at random, using a registration based sample (RBS) provided by Aristotle, of Washington DC. All respondents heard the questions asked identically. The calls were conducted on April 28, 29, and 30. The number of respondents who answered each question and the margin of sampling error for each question are provided. Where necessary, responses were weighted according to the voter registration database. In theory, with the stated sample size, one can say with 95% certainty that the results would not vary by more than the stated margin of sampling error, in one direction or the other, had the entire universe of respondents been interviewed with complete accuracy. There are other possible sources of error in all surveys that may be more serious than theoretical calculations of sampling error. These include refusals to be interviewed, question wording and question order, weighting by demographic control data and the manner in which respondents are filtered (such as, determining who is a likely voter). It is difficult to quantify the errors that may result from these factors. Fieldwork for this survey was done by SurveyUSA of Verona, NJ

#####