

# THE FIELD POLL

THE INDEPENDENT AND NON-PARTISAN SURVEY  
OF PUBLIC OPINION ESTABLISHED IN 1947 AS  
THE CALIFORNIA POLL BY MERVIN FIELD

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### **SANTORUM WITHIN STRIKING DISTANCE OF ROMNEY IN CALIFORNIA'S REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY.**

By Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

In each of three prior *Field Polls* measuring California GOP presidential preferences, support for former Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum amounted to just one or two percentage points. However, over the past two weeks the proportion of GOP voters in this state favoring Santorum has been increasing dramatically. Currently, 25% of California Republicans are supporting his candidacy and he now trails former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney by just six points, who is preferred by 31%.

At the same time, support for former House Speaker Newt Gingrich has fallen dramatically. Last November 23% of California Republicans favored Gingrich. Now, his support stands at just 12%. Meanwhile support for Congressman Ron Paul has grown to where he is now in third place with 16% of the preferences. Another 14% of Republicans are undecided.

Republican voter preferences in this state were changing significantly during the approximate two-week period in which the poll was conducted. During the first half of the poll, Romney was comfortably ahead of Santorum 38% to 18%. However, during the poll's second half, which was completed after Santorum's victories over Romney in the GOP primary in Missouri and the Colorado and Minnesota caucuses, Santorum's support in California increased to 25%, while support for Romney fell to 31%.

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**Table 1**  
**Trend of preferences of California Republicans for the**  
**2012 GOP presidential nomination**

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	<b>Mid February 2012*</b>	<b>Early February 2012**</b>	<b>November 2011</b>	<b>September 2011</b>	<b>June 2011</b>
Mitt Romney	<b>31%</b>	38%	26%	30%	30%
Rick Santorum	<b>25</b>	18	2	1	2
Ron Paul	<b>16</b>	9	5	7	8
Newt Gingrich	<b>12</b>	13	23	7	8
Others	<b>2</b>	4	18	39	34
Undecided	<b>14</b>	18	26	16	18

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\* February 11-18, 2012. \*\* February 2-10, 2012.

### **Presidential preferences differ widely across subgroups of the GOP electorate**

Romney is still leading – but not by as much as he was last November – among key subgroups of the California GOP electorate. This includes Republican voters living in the state’s coastal counties, those who are not strong conservatives, voters who do not identify a lot with the Tea Party, are not born-again Christians, are under age fifty, and are men.

Santorum either leads Romney or is close among Republicans who are strongly conservatives in politics, voters living in the state’s inland counties, those identifying a lot with the Tea Party, are born-again Christians, voters age 50 or older and women.

**Table 2**  
**Current preferences of California Republicans for the 2012 GOP presidential nomination by subgroup**

	<b>Romney</b>	<b>Santorum</b>	<b>Paul</b>	<b>Gingrich</b>	<b>Other/ undecided</b>
Total Republicans	<b>31%</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>16</b>
<u>Area</u>					
(.61) Coastal counties	33%	26	19	8	14
(.39) Inland counties*	27%	23	10	18	22
<u>Political ideology</u>					
(.40) Strongly conservative*	27%	35	9	20	9
(.60) All others	34%	18	20	6	22
<u>Tea Party identification</u>					
(.23) A lot*	21%	39	12	15	13
(.77) All others	33%	22	17	11	17
<u>Gender</u>					
(.50) Male	34%	21	18	10	17
(.50) Female	27%	29	13	13	18
<u>Age</u>					
(.50) Under 50	32%	22	19	14	13
(.50) 50 or older	30%	27	12	9	22
<u>Born-Again Christian</u>					
(.42) Yes*	29%	33	10	13	15
(.58) No	32%	18	20	11	19

\* Small sample base.

### **Big changes in GOP voter impressions of Santorum and Gingrich since last November**

While California Republican voters continue to have a largely favorable view of Romney, their views of Santorum have increased markedly since last November. Three months ago slightly more GOP voters in this state held a negative (25%) than positive view (20%) of Santorum. Now, about twice as many hold a favorable impression of him (40%) as have an unfavorable view (22%).

Republican voter perceptions of Gingrich were highly favorable last November. However, impressions of the former House Speaker have declined significantly since then. At present, a 52% majority of California Republicans see him in a negative light, while only 35% view him positively.

In each *Field Poll* conducted since September, pluralities of California GOP voters have held more negative than positive impressions of Paul. This continues in the current poll, with 50% viewing him unfavorably and 24% favorably.

<b>Table 3</b>				
<b>Trend of voter impressions of the Republican presidential candidates (among California registered Republicans)</b>				
		<b>Impression is...</b>		
		<b>Favorable</b>	<b>Unfavorable</b>	<b>No opinion</b>
<b>Romney</b>	<b>February 2012</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>15</b>
	November 2011	59%	21	20
	September 2011	54%	27	19
	June 2011	56%	25	19
<b>Santorum</b>	<b>February 2012</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>38</b>
	November 2011	20%	25	55
	September 2011	17%	19	64
	June 2011	29%	15	56
<b>Gingrich</b>	<b>February 2012</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>13</b>
	November 2011	55%	22	23
	September 2011	34%	45	21
	June 2011	36%	44	20
<b>Paul</b>	<b>February 2012</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>26</b>
	November 2011	29%	46	25
	September 2011	26%	42	32
	June 2011	36%	10	54

**Diminishing satisfaction with the GOP candidate field**

While California Republicans have never been too enthusiastic about this year's GOP presidential candidates, their satisfaction with the candidate field has declined further over the past five months. Last September 19% of Republicans in this state said they were very satisfied with the candidates running for the GOP presidential nomination. Now, just 10% say this. Over this same period, the proportion of California Republicans not satisfied with their party's candidate field has increased from 27% to 39%.

<b>Table 4</b>			
<b>Trend of voter satisfaction with the candidates running for the GOP nomination (among California registered Republicans)</b>			
	<b>February 2012</b>	<b>November 2011</b>	<b>September 2011</b>
Very satisfied	<b>10%</b>	16%	19%
Somewhat satisfied	<b>47</b>	47	47
Not too satisfied	<b>25</b> } <b>39%</b>	22 } <b>33%</b>	15 } <b>27%</b>
Not at all satisfied	<b>14</b> }	11 }	12 }
No opinion	<b>4</b>	4	7

## **Overview of the GOP presidential election race**

Early last year more than ten candidates indicated that they would contest the Republican nomination or were viewed as likely candidates. By November that number had dropped to eight, and now just four remain in active contention.

The delegate selection process began in earnest with the Iowa caucuses on January 3. Since then eight states have held primary elections or caucuses and a total of 194 delegates to the GOP convention have been awarded. Romney, Santorum and Gingrich each have won at least one of these contests. Romney currently leads in the delegate count with 98, Santorum is second with 44, Gingrich third with 30, and Paul with 20.

However, this total represent less than 10% of all GOP delegates to be awarded. A candidate must obtain at least 1,144 delegates out of the 2,286 total attending the national convention, to be held in late August, to become the party's nominee. This year's Republican party delegate allocation system is a mix of proportional representation, non-binding caucuses, winner-take-all primaries, or a hybrid of different allocation methods.

California, with its prize of 172 delegates, will hold its primary on June 5, toward the end of the primary season, with the delegates being awarded primarily on a winner-take-all basis within congressional district. This means that the candidate winning the most votes in each of the state's 53 congressional districts gets all of the delegates from that district.

In most of the recent presidential election years, one of the candidates typically gathered a majority of committed delegates long before the convention, making the actual nominating process a routine exercise. However, given the continuing wide open nature of this year's nomination contest, and the fact that proportionally more states are awarding delegates on a proportionate basis, each of the candidates – including Ron Paul – will likely come to the convention with committed delegate blocs of various sizes.

The unsettled nature of Republican voter preferences may eventually result in an open convention, with the nominee selected only after a number of different rounds of voting have taken place. While it hasn't happened in a long time, there is also a possibility that someone else who has not participated in the primary or caucus contests could be chosen at the convention.

## **Information About The Survey**

### **Methodological Details**

The findings in this report are based on a *Field Poll* survey completed February 2-18, 2012 among a random sample of 1,003 California registered voters, including 400 registered Republicans. Preferences in the GOP presidential primary were subdivided in this release between 180 Republicans interviewed February 2-10 and 220 Republicans interviewed February 11-18.

Interviewing was conducted by telephone in English and Spanish using live interviewers working from Field Research Corporation's central location telephone interviewing facilities. Up to six attempts were made to reach, screen and interview each randomly selected voter on different days and times of day during the interviewing period.

Interviewing was completed on either a voter's landline phone or a cell phone depending on the source of the telephone listing from the voter file. In this survey 784 interviews were derived from landline sample listings and 219 from cell phone listings. After the completion of interviewing, the overall registered voter sample was weighted to *Field Poll* estimates of the characteristics of the registered voter population in California by region, age, gender and party registration.

Sampling error estimates applicable to the results of any probability-based survey depend on sample size as well as the percentage distribution being examined. The maximum sampling error estimates for based on either of the two Republican subsamples have a maximum sampling error of about +/- 7 percentage points. The maximum sampling error is based on results in the middle of the sampling distribution (i.e., percentages at or near 50%). Percentages at either end of the distribution (those closer to 10% or 90%) have a smaller margin of error.

There are other potential sources of error in surveys besides sampling error. However, the overall design and execution of the survey sought to minimize these other possible sources of error.

*The Field Poll* was established in 1947 as *The California Poll* by Mervin Field, who is still an active advisor. The *Poll* has operated continuously since then as an independent, non-partisan survey of California public opinion. The *Poll* receives annual funding from media subscribers of *The Field Poll*, from several California foundations, and the University of California and California State University systems, who receive the data files from each *Field Poll* survey shortly after its completion for teaching and secondary research purposes.

### **Questions Asked**

I am going to read the names of the Republican candidates running for President. As I read each name, please tell me whether your opinion of that person is favorable, unfavorable or whether you don't know enough about that person to have an opinion. (NAMES AND TITLES READ IN RANDOM ORDER) Is your opinion of (LAST NAME) favorable or unfavorable?

If the election for the Republican nomination for President were held today and the candidates were (NAMES OF ALL CANDIDATES READ IN RANDOM ORDER), who would be your first choice?

How satisfied are you with the candidates now running for the Republican presidential nomination? Are you very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, not too satisfied or not at all satisfied?