



Poll: West Virginia supports Bush, war in Iraq

CHARLESTON, WV (AP) -- President Bush holds a slight lead over Democrat John Kerry in West Virginia by a margin of 47 percent to 43 percent with independent Ralph Nader at 2 percent, according to a poll released Friday. Another 8 percent were undecided.

The West Virginia Poll was taken by Ipsos Public Affairs for The Associated Press, the Charleston Daily Mail and WSAZ-TV Channel 3. Between April 26-29, 2004, Ipsos Public Affairs interviewed 984 registered voters, 452 Likely Democratic primary voters, and 302 Likely Republican primary voters. The margin of error is +/- 3.1 for registered voters, +/- 4.6 for Democratic primary voters, and +/- 5.6 for Republican primary voters. Margin of error for subgroups may be higher.

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CHARLESTON, WV (AP) -- President Bush holds a slight lead over Democrat John Kerry in West Virginia by a margin of 47 percent to 43 percent with independent Ralph Nader at 2 percent, according to a poll released Friday. Another 8 percent were undecided.

Although West Virginia's voter registration is 2-1 Democrat, Bush won West Virginia in 2000 by 6 percentage points.

In the poll, Bush was tied with Kerry in two regions in the state -- in the Charleston/Huntington area and the Monongahela River Valley and led in two regions -- the Appalachian Highlands and the Ohio River Valley.

Kerry led Bush in the southwest coalfields.

Bush is attracting more independent voters, 42 percent compared to 35 percent for Kerry and 9 percent for Nader.

The poll of 984 registered voters was conducted April 26-29 by Ipsos Public Affairs for The Associated Press, the Charleston Daily Mail and WSAZ-TV. The poll has a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

The poll also indicated that a majority of West Virginians support the war in Iraq.

Half the respondents were asked if the United States had made the right decision in going to war and half were asked if the Bush administration had made the right decision.

Of those asked about the United States, 57 percent said it was the right decision, 39 percent said it was a mistake and 4 percent were undecided. Of those asked about the Bush administration, 54 percent supported the decision, 42 percent thought it was a mistake and 4 percent were undecided.

The poll results indicate the race is extremely tight, which is not surprising, said Jennifer Duffy, a political analyst with the Cook Political Report in Washington, D.C.

"If you had been able to go a little bit deeper you would find voters have some doubts about Kerry ... about some of the issues they do care about like jobs, where is he, really? There are some concerns about what he has said about Iraq, where does he really stand?"

Kevin Leyden, an associate professor of political science at West Virginia University, said Democrats should be concerned about the results. Given the state's overwhelmingly Democratic voter registration, "... we would expect Bush to be doing perhaps a little bit worse given the economic conditions in the state," he said.

However, since the poll questioned registered voters as opposed to likely voters it may not be as telling, because many people who are registered do not vote. And those who are upset with Bush may have an added incentive to vote, Leyden said.

Debbie Jarrell, 36, of Ottawa in Boone County, said she's voting for Kerry because she doesn't like Bush or the way he has conducted the war in Iraq. "We've done our job over there. We got Saddam. Now it's time to pull out," she said.

Sharon McFadden, 51, of Wellsburg said she plans to vote for Bush because he has done a good job with the war on terrorism and the economy. The Republican said she especially liked Bush's tax cuts. "I think he's saved us money," McFadden said. "He put money in our pocket."

The poll indicates Bush is doing better than Kerry at attracting crossover voters.

Nicholas Hall, 42, of South Charleston said although he is a Democrat, he voted for Bush in 2000 and plans to do so this year.

He supports Bush because they are both anti-abortion. Hall also likes the way Bush has conducted the war in Iraq.

"So far he hasn't done anything I'm against," Hall said.

Overall, Bush also led among both genders and age groups, except those over 65, where Kerry had an edge.

Gary Straughan, 67, of Philippi said he planned to vote for Kerry but changed his mind after watching a Bush ad that alleged Kerry voted against several military funding bills. Still, he doesn't like Bush.

"I don't have a good handle on everything he should have. It seems like now his people are starting to fall apart, just over this little thing there in Iraq, the Iraqi prisoners, which really didn't seem to be any kind of big deal as far as I'm concerned.

"You can put me down as undecided."

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