



Public Policy Institute JACKSONVILLE UNIVERSITY

Trump leads, Fiorina and Rubio rise, Bush steady in major Florida shakeup, Jacksonville University poll finds

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (Sept. 24, 2015) – Donald Trump remains the frontrunner among Republican presidential candidates in Florida, with former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush maintaining strong support, former Hewlett-Packard CEO Carly Fiorina surging, neurosurgeon Ben Carson losing some ground and U.S. Senator Marco Rubio on the rise, according to a Jacksonville University Public Policy Institute poll of registered Republican likely voters released today.

The Jacksonville University PPI Poll, conducted from Sept. 17-22, shows a major shakeup in Florida, with five candidates polling in double digits in a tightening race: Trump at 24.4 percent, Bush at 16.9 percent, Fiorina at 15.6 percent, Carson at 15 percent and Rubio at 14.9 percent.

While Trump leads, the poll also shows he has a favorability rating of 50.1 percent and the highest unfavorability rating of any candidate in the field, at 40.3 percent. The favorable/unfavorable percentage ratings for the other four top candidates are: Bush 68/25, Fiorina 72.6/10.5, Carson 77.6/11.8 and Rubio 79.7/12.3.

In good news for Trump, Fiorina and Carson, respondents preferred candidates with business over government experience by a 44.6 percent to 18 percent margin, did not believe it was necessary to hold elected office to become President by 66.7 percent to 28.7 percent, and disagreed by 82.7 percent to 17.3 percent that the more experience in politics candidates have, the better President they will be.

Florida's 99 GOP delegates are considered crucial to gaining the party's presidential nomination. All primaries prior to the state's March 15 primary are proportional, while Florida's primary is a "winner-take-all." Florida is also viewed as a must-win in the general election because its 29 electoral votes are the most among key swing states. It was the only state decided by less than 1 percent in 2012, with Barack Obama besting Mitt Romney 50.0 percent to 49.1 percent.

"The conventional wisdom was that former Gov. Bush or Sen. Rubio were a lock to win the Florida primary," said Rick Mullaney, director of the JU Public Policy Institute. "This poll, however, shows a much more competitive race in Florida with five candidates polling in double figures. It also reflects the strong debate performances by Mrs. Fiorina and Sen. Rubio in the last debate, with both moving up substantially."

The poll, which asked respondents their opinions of the GOP candidates in personal phone interviews, was conducted with a sampling technique designed to increase accuracy by surveying Republican voters most likely to vote in the Florida primary.

"While Trump remains in the lead, his high unfavorable rating and the 30 percent of respondents in the poll who said they would not vote for him suggests there is a ceiling of support for him in Florida," said JU Political Science Assistant Professor Paulina S. Rippere. "As candidates drop out and the field narrows, the poll results indicate that these votes will go to other candidates, and not to Trump."

This Jacksonville University Public Policy Institute Poll includes landline and cell phone interviews, conducted by interviewers, in English and Spanish, among a random sample of 585 registered Florida Republican likely voters from September 17-22, 2015. The margin of error for results based on the total sample is plus or minus 4.1 percentage points. For the full results of the poll, please visit <http://www.ju.edu/ppi>.



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About the Jacksonville University Public Policy Institute

The Jacksonville University Public Policy Institute offers four graduate degree programs in public policy, including the only Master in Public Policy (MPP) degree in Florida, and prepares its students for diverse career opportunities in the public, private and non-profit sectors. The Institute seeks to shape the future through preparing a new generation of leaders, public policy expertise and providing a neutral gathering place for public policy discussion, education and debate. More information is at <http://www.ju.edu/ppi>.

About Jacksonville University

Jacksonville University works to prepare each of its more than 4,000 students for lifelong success in learning, achieving, leading and serving. Its 250-acre riverfront campus is just minutes from downtown Jacksonville and the Atlantic Ocean. The private university has been named one of “America’s Best Colleges” for 12 straight years, ranks in the top 13% of all U.S. colleges in average alumni salaries, and is in the top 1% among all Florida colleges for Return on Investment for its graduates. With a 12 to 1 student-faculty ratio and full-time faculty percentage of 80 percent, it offers small class sizes, inviting campus grounds and engaged faculty and staff in a setting that promotes community, ambition and responsibility. JU has nearly 200 full-time faculty and offers more than 70 majors, programs and concentrations. Additionally, it offers graduate degrees in business, choreography, education leadership, marine science, mathematics, nursing, orthodontics, public policy, speech-language pathology, reading education, and visual arts. JU is accredited by, among others, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), Aviation Accreditation Board International (AABI) and Council of Academic Programs in Communication Sciences and Disorders (CAPCSD) and the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE).