

The Morning Call/
Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion

SURVEY OF PENNSYLVANIANS ON
THE 2004 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

KEY FINDINGS REPORT

October 22, 2004

KEY FINDINGS:

1. The race for Pennsylvania's crucial electoral votes for president remains extremely close with John Kerry leading George Bush by 2 percentage points. This lead is well within the poll's margin of error
2. Pennsylvanians remain extremely divided in their views of President Bush, with almost identical percentages of commonwealth voters viewing him favorably in relation to those viewing him unfavorably.
3. Pennsylvanians rate president Bush as the candidate who would better handle the issue of terrorism, while Senator Kerry is rated higher on his ability to handle the issues of the economy and health care.
4. While a majority of Pennsylvania voters feel that the war in Iraq was not worth the costs paid by the United States, the state's electorate is split on which candidate would better handle the situation in Iraq.
5. The war in Iraq and the economy are identified as the two most important issues upon which Pennsylvania voters will make their decision in the presidential race, with terrorism a close third.
6. For individuals that identified terrorism as the main issue that will decide their presidential vote, Bush is preferred by an overwhelming 4 to 1 margin.
7. Pennsylvanians demonstrate significant pessimism about the direction of the state's economy, with John Kerry the overwhelming choice of voters who see the state's economy as worse than last year.

METHODOLOGY: The following key findings report summarizes data collected in a telephone survey of 787 registered voters in the state of Pennsylvania between October 17 and 21, 2004. The sample of phone numbers used in the survey was generated by Genesys Sampling Systems of Ft. Washington, PA. Interviewing was conducted by the staff of the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion and Precision Marketing Inc of Easton Pennsylvania. This number of completions results in a margin of error of +/- 3.5% at the 95% confidence interval. However the margin of errors for sub groups such as registered Democrats and Republicans is larger due to smaller sample size. Percentages throughout the survey have been rounded upward at the .5 mark, thus many totals in the results will not equal 100%. Due to a higher number of completions from women the data was weighted to more accurately represent the distribution of voters throughout the commonwealth. The survey questionnaire was designed by Christopher Borick, Ph.D. of the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion in consultation with staff members of the *Morning Call*. Analysis and report writing were completed by the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion under the direction of Dr. Borick.

SECTION ONE: THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE

With just under two weeks left before the 2004 presidential election, Pennsylvanians remain highly divided in their preferences for president, with the race remaining within the margin of error. The results of the most recent *Morning Call*/Muhlenberg College Poll indicate Senator Kerry maintains a slight lead over President Bush in the campaign for the White House, but the race continues to be very tight in the Keystone State. Among a sample of 787 registered voters in the state, Kerry was supported by 48% of registered voters, with 46% supporting the President and 5% unsure at this time. When Ralph Nader, who is currently not on the ballot, is added to the list of choices given to voters, the race tightens moderately, with Kerry receiving 47% support, the president garnering 46% of votes, and Nader taking 2% of the electorate. Overall, the race remains extremely tight.

The state electorate provides varied marks to the presidential candidates in terms of their ability to handle varied issues facing the nation. More specifically President Bush maintains a 52% to 39% lead over Senator Kerry in terms of the ability to deal with terrorism. Conversely, Kerry is preferred over Bush in his ability to deal with the economy (54% to 44%), and health care (55% to 39%). The one issue where there appears to be no clear favorite among Commonwealth voters is the war in Iraq. Among the survey respondents 48% indicated President Bush would better handle the War in Iraq, while Kerry is seen as stronger on this issue by 45% of state voters.

While the race remains very close among key demographic categories such as gender and age, there are noticeable differences in voting preference by religious affiliation. Most notably, despite some well publicized actions by Catholic clergy, Kerry maintains a 53% to 43% lead among Pennsylvania Catholics. Conversely, President Bush has a 55% to 38% lead over Kerry among protestant voters in the state. Among non-Christians (including atheists), Kerry is preferred over Bush by over a 2 to 1 margin.

Finally, both candidates continue to do very well among voters of their party. The junior Senator from Massachusetts is the preference of 79% of Pennsylvania Democrats, while the incumbent chief executive is the choice of 82% of commonwealth Republicans.

SECTION TWO: ISSUES AND THE ELECTION

Positions on key issues appear to be dividing Pennsylvanians and playing a substantial role in terms of support for the candidates for the presidency. When asked to identify the most important issue in determining their vote for president, Pennsylvania voters focused on 4 key topics. The economy and the war in Iraq appear to be the most dominant issues among state voters, with terrorism and health care also garnering significant consideration in the survey. While all four topics appear to be important in this year's race, the issue of terrorism appears to be posing the greatest advantage for a candidate. In particular, among the 17% of Pennsylvanians who identified terrorism as the single most important issue in deciding who to vote for, 78% indicated that they plan to vote for President Bush, compared to only 19% who plan to vote for Senator Kerry.

While the issue of terrorism appears to be buoying the Presidents hopes in the Keystone state, nagging pessimism about the condition of the commonwealth's economy is strengthening Senator Kerry's efforts to win this swing state's electoral votes. According to the survey results, more Pennsylvanians (46% to 29%) feel that the state's economy is getting worse compared to last year. Most importantly among those 46% of registered voters giving negative ratings to the direction of Pennsylvania's economy, Kerry holds an overwhelming 79% to 14% lead over the president. Conversely, for the 29% of state residents optimistic about the direction of Pennsylvania's economy, Bush leads Kerry by an 82% to 14% margin.

Finally, while the president seems to be the voter's preferred candidate in terms of fighting terrorism, the central plank of his war on terrorism is viewed quite negatively in the Keystone State. More specifically, a majority of Pennsylvania residents feel that the war in Iraq has not made America safer from terrorism (56%) and that considering the costs to the nation versus the benefits, the war in Iraq was not worth fighting (52%).

THE PENNSYLVANIA SENATE RACE

In the race for the United States Senate in Pennsylvania, multiple-term incumbent Arlen Specter is maintaining a strong lead over his Democratic challenger Representative Joe Hoeffel. Among commonwealth voters Specter holds a significant 53% to 31% lead over Hoeffel, placing the Republican in a strong position to maintain his seat.

The Senior Senator from the Commonwealth is maintaining a fairly positive favorability rating among state voters, rebounding from the difficult primary fight in the spring that had pushed his ratings in Pennsylvania downward. While maintaining a fairly even favorable to unfavorable ratio among PA voters, Hoeffel continues to fight against a significant name recognition gap. In the state 11% of registered voters have not heard of him, with another 40% either neutral or unsure how to rate him.

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MORNING CALL/MUHLENBERG COLLEGE

2004 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION SURVEY

Fielded October 17 –21, 2004

Statewide Sample of Registered Voters –

N = 787 +/- 3.5% at .95 level of confidence.

For each candidates name that I read please tell me if your impression of them is favorable or unfavorable.

George W. Bush

	November 03	March 04	May 04	October 04
Favorable	54%	51%	47%	49%
Unfavorable	37%	44%	49%	47%
Neutral/Not Sure	9%	5%	4%	4%

John Kerry

	November 03	March 04	May 04	October 04
Favorable	31%	45%	42%	49%
Unfavorable	28%	39%	45%	42%
Haven't heard of	24%	2%	<1%	0%
Neutral/Not Sure	17%	14%	13%	8%

If the Presidential election was held today and the race was between George Bush and John Kerry, whom would you vote for?

	November 03	March 04	May 04	October 04
George Bush	47%	45%	43%	46%
John Kerry	40%	45%	48%	48%
Other/neither	2%	5%	3%	1%
Not sure/refused	12%	6%	6%	5%

Morning Call/Muhlenberg College
 2004 Pennsylvania Presidential Election Survey
 Frequency Questionnaire
 (Not including Screener or Demographic Questions)

Q4

Now I have some questions regarding the candidates for the Pennsylvania Senate race. For each candidate I mention, please tell me if your view of him is favorable or unfavorable. First, Arlen Specter?

Favorable	49%
Unfavorable	23%
Never heard of him (VOLUNTEERED)	<1%
Neutral (VOLUNTEERED)	19%
Not sure	5%

Q5

Next, Joe Hoeffel?

Favorable	27%
Unfavorable	23%
Never heard of him (Volunteered)	11%
Neutral (Volunteered)	22%
Not sure	18%

Q6

If the race for the Pennsylvania Senate seat was held today and the race was between Arlen Specter and Joe Hoeffel, whom would you vote for?

1. Arlen Specter (Skip to Q 8)	53%
2. Joe Hoeffel (Skip to Q 8)	31%
3. Other (Skip to Q 8)	0%
4. Neither (Skip to Q 8)	3%
5. Not sure (Go To Q 7)	13%
6. Refused (Skip to Q 8)	1%

Q7

Are you leaning more toward voting for Arlen Specter or Joe Hoeffel?

Arlen Specter	24%
Joe Hoeffel	17%
Not Sure	60%

Q: Q8

Next I have a number of questions on the upcoming presidential election. Regardless of which presidential candidate you support, please tell me if you think John Kerry or George W. Bush would better handle each of the following issues. How about --

Terrorism

John Kerry	39%
George Bush	52%
Neither (Volunteered)	1%
Not Sure	7%

Q9

The War in Iraq

John Kerry	45%
George Bush	48%
Neither (Volunteered)	3%
Not Sure	4%

Q10

The Economy

John Kerry	54%
George Bush	40%
Neither (Volunteered)	2%
Not Sure	5%

Q11

and Health Care

John Kerry	55%
George Bush	39%
Neither (Volunteered)	2%
Not Sure	4%

Q12

Now I have some questions regarding the upcoming presidential election. For each candidate I mention, please tell me if your view of him is favorable or unfavorable. First, George W. Bush?

Favorable	49%
Unfavorable	47%
Never heard of him (VOLUNTEERED)	0%
Neutral (VOLUNTEERED)	3%
Not sure	1%

Q13

Next, John Kerry?

Favorable	49%
Unfavorable	42%
Never heard of him (VOLUNTEERED)	0%
Neutral (VOLUNTEERED)	5%
Not sure	3%

Q14

If the presidential election was held today and the race was between George W. Bush and John Kerry, whom would you vote for?

George W. Bush	46%
John Kerry	48%
not sure	5%

Q15

How certain are you that you will be voting for George W. Bush? Are you very certain, somewhat certain, not too certain, or not certain at all?

Very certain	92%
Somewhat certain	8%
Not too certain	<1%
Not certain at all	0%
Not sure	0%

Q16

How certain are you that you will be voting for John Kerry? Are you very certain, somewhat certain, not too certain, or not certain at all?

Very certain	90%
Somewhat certain	7%
Not too certain	3%
Not certain at all	<1%
Not sure	0%

Q17

Are you leaning more toward voting for George W. Bush or John Kerry?

George W. Bush	36%
John Kerry	29%
Not sure	36%

Q18

If the race were between George W. Bush, John Kerry, and Ralph Nader, whom would you vote for?

George W. Bush	46%
John Kerry	47%
Ralph Nader	3%
Not sure	3%

Q19

What issue do you consider to be the most important issue in deciding who you will vote for in the upcoming presidential election?

The Economy	24%
Iraq War	23%
Terrorism	17%
Health Care	12%
Senior Issues	2%
Taxes	2%
Other	20%

Q20

Next, I have just a few questions about terrorism and the war in Iraq. How concerned are you that you or your family will become the victim of terrorism in the future? Are you very concerned, somewhat concerned, not very concerned, or not concerned at all?

Very concerned	22%
Somewhat concerned	41%
Not very concerned	25%
Not concerned at all	11%
Not sure	1%

Q21

Compared to before September 11, 2001, do you think the country is safer from terrorism or less safe from terrorism?

Safer	55%
Not safer	39%
No difference (VOLUNTEERED)	6%

Q22

In general, do you think going to war with Iraq has made America safer from terrorism, or not?

Safer	37%
Not safer	56%
Not sure	7%

Q23

Is it your impression that the U.S. has or has not found clear evidence in Iraq that Saddam Hussein was working closely with the al-Qaeda terrorist organization?

Has	37%
Has Not	53%
Not sure	11%
Refused	<1%

Q24

All in all, considering the costs to the United States versus the benefits to the United States, do you think the war with Iraq was worth fighting or not?

Yes	42%
No	52%
Not sure	6%
Refused	<1%

Q25

Compared to last year, do you think the economy in Pennsylvania is...

Getting better	29%
or Getting worse	46%
Staying the same (VOLUNTEERED)	20%
Not sure	6%

