

The Morning Call/

Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion

Election 2012 Preview:

The Pennsylvania Perspective

KEY FINDINGS REPORT

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1. Pennsylvania voters remain very divided on Barack Obama's handling of his job as President of the United States.
2. Voters in the Keystone State indicate mixed views on President Obama's efforts to improve the nation's economy and the impact of his efforts on their personal finances.
3. Despite a plurality of Pennsylvania voters indicating that President Obama does not deserve reelection, he outperforms both an unnamed Republican challenger and three named Republic contenders in head-to-head competitions.
4. President Obama beats former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney by 7 points, former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee by 10 points, and former Alaska Governor Sarah Palin by 28 points in hypothetical match-ups for the 2012 election
5. Registered voters in the Commonwealth have a generally favorable view of current Senator Bob Casey and by a 2 to 1 margin believe that he deserves to be reelected in 2012.
6. In a contest against a generic Republican candidate Casey beats the Republican challenger by 14 percentage points.
7. Pennsylvania's newly elected Governor Tom Corbett and Senator Pat Toomey enjoy generally positive approval ratings, yet large portions of the state's electorate have yet to form an opinion of their work in office.

METHODOLOGY: The following key findings report summarizes data collected in a telephone survey of registered voters of the state of Pennsylvania between February 9 and February 28, 2011. Individual households and cell phones throughout Pennsylvania were selected randomly for inclusion in the study. 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, with 395 surveys completed. This number of completions results in a margin of error of +/- 4.5% at the 95% confidence interval. However the margin of errors for sub groups (i.e. women, income groups, age categories) 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%. The data has been weighted by the following categories: age, gender, educational attainment, race and region. The instrument was designed by Christopher Borick, Ph.D and Katherine Sharga of the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion in consultation with staff members of the *Morning Call*. The analysis was written by Katherine Sharga, Assistant Director of the MCIPO and Dr. Borick.

OVERVIEW:

With the political world quickly turning its attention to the 2012 presidential election the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion and the *Morning Call* take an early look at how the race to secure Pennsylvania's vital electorate votes is shaping up. Despite some very divided opinions on his overall job performance and efforts to revive the nation's economy, Pennsylvania voters give President Barack a slight edge over an array of



Republican challengers in his bid for reelection late next year. The survey results also show incumbent Senator Bob Casey Jr. in a solid position as he faces reelection in 2012. Casey maintains generally favorable job approval ratings and outpaces an unnamed Republican challenger in a hypothetical context.

VIEWS ON PRESIDENT OBAMA

Two years into his presidency Barack Obama has experienced a slightly improved public standing in Pennsylvania. Between 2009 and 2010 the president’s approval ratings dropped by 16 points, and his disapproval rating jumped by 26 points. This year’s findings show Obama’s approval ratings inching up from 45% to 48% and his disapproval ratings declining from 50% to 44%

TABLE ONE

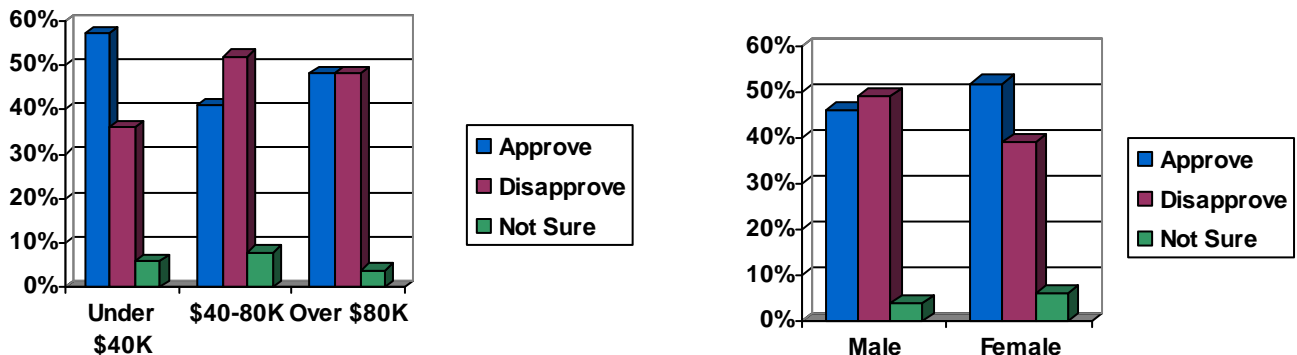
**President Obama’s Job Approval Ratings in Pennsylvania
2009-2011**

	Approve	Disapprove	Not Sure/No Opinion
2009	61%	24%	15%
2010	45%	50%	6%
2011	48%	44%	5%

When examining the sources of support for the president we find that 52% of females approve of the way he has handled his job so far, compared to 46% of males. Obama also gathers high approval ratings (57%) from those making less than \$40,000/year, with higher income individuals (\$80,000/year) equally divided on his work and middle income (\$40,000 to \$80,000/year) workers most likely to view his efforts negatively.

FIGURES ONE and TWO

Presidential Approval (by Income Level and Gender)



Throughout the president’s tenure in office the nation’s economy has played a major role in shaping his public standing. As with his overall job performance, Pennsylvanians are very divided on President Obama’s handling of the economy. In particular, 28% of those surveyed said that President Obama’s policies have helped the national economy, with the same amount saying that his efforts have hurt the national economy. In addition 31% of those surveyed stated that his policies have not made a difference.

TABLE TWO

“Do you think President Obama's policies have helped the economy, hurt the economy, or haven't made a difference?”

Response	Percent
Helped the Economy	28%
Hurt the Economy	28%
Haven’t Made a Difference	31%
Not Sure/Refused	13%

When asked about their personal financial situation, only 18% said that Obama’s policies have helped them. Half of those who answered the question stated that his policies haven’t made a difference in their situation, while the other 23% argue that they were hurt financially by the President’s policies.

TABLE THREE

“Do you think President Obama's policies have helped your personal financial situation, hurt your personal financial situation, or haven't made a difference?”

Response	Percent
Helped My Situation	18%
Hurt My Situation	23%
Haven’t Made a Difference	51%
Not Sure/Refused	7%

Democrats maintain substantially positive views of the effects Obama’s policies have had the national economy, but many Republicans and Independents are negative towards the president’s efforts. In the poll 48% of Democrats said that Obama’s policies have helped the economy, while only 16% of Republicans and Independents held the same position

TABLE FOUR



Effect of Obama's Policies on Economy by Party Affiliation

	Help Economy	Hurt Economy	Haven't Made a Difference	Not Sure/Refused
Democrat	48%	13%	26%	10%
Republican	16%	45%	36%	2%
Independent	24%	28%	37%	12%

The results of the poll also demonstrate a big difference between the percentage of Pennsylvania Democrats (28%) and Republicans (10%) that said Obama's policies have helped their personal financial situation.

TABLE FIVE

Effect of Obama's Policies on Personal Finances by Party Affiliation

	Help My Situation	Hurt My Situation	Haven't Made a Difference	Not Sure/Refused
Democrat	28%	16%	51%	3%
Republican	10%	33%	55%	1%
Independent	12%	29%	58%	2%

THE 2012 ELECTION: A FIRST LOOK

With Pennsylvanians divided on president Obama's work in the White House it is unsurprising that there is a mixed verdict on his reelection in 2012. When asked about Obama's standing in terms of reelection, 45% of Pennsylvania residents said that the president does not deserve to be re-elected, with 40% indicating Obama deserves a second term and 14% unsure as to whether or not he should be re-elected in 2012.

TABLE SIX

Do you feel that Barack Obama deserves to be re-elected?

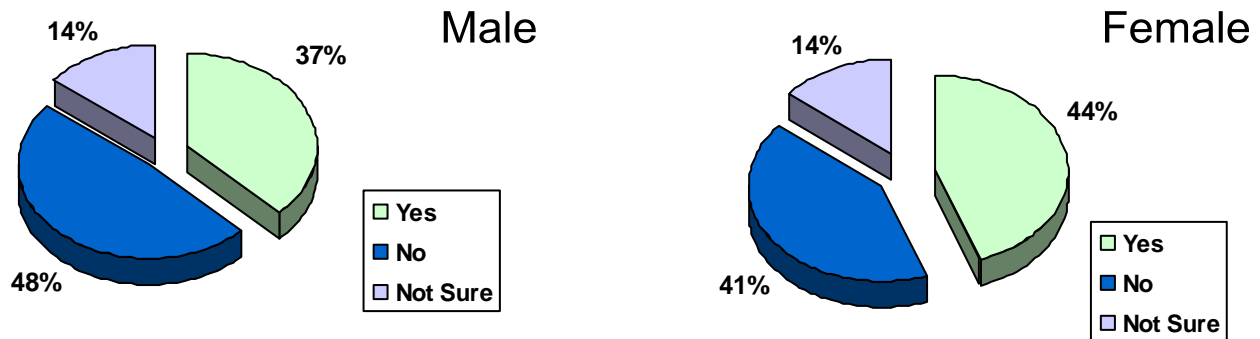
Response	Percent Responding
Yes	40%
No	45%
Not Sure/Refused	14%

The survey results indicate a significant gender gap in terms of President Obama's reelection. When asked 48% of the males surveyed said Obama should not be re-elected, compared to 41% of females.



FIGURES THREE and FOUR

Re-elect President Obama? (By Gender and Income Level)



As with gender, voter income levels play a role in opinions on President Obama’s reelection bid. A majority of Pennsylvania’s middle-income voters indicated that Obama does not deserve a second term. Upper income residents also tended to indicate that Obama does not deserve to be re-elected with 46% holding this position compared to 35% who said the President deserves a return to the White House in 2013. Only lower income residents in the Commonwealth came down on the side of Obama deserving to be reelected with 47% maintaining this view and 35% holding the opposite position.

TABLE SEVEN

Position on Obama Reelection by Income Levels

	Yes	No	Not Sure/Refused
Under \$40K	47%	35%	17%
\$40-80K	35%	54%	11%
Over \$80K	37%	46%	15%

Pennsylvania voters were asked which candidates they would support in hypothetical 2012 Presidential election match-ups. Obama received the largest percentage of the “vote” when looking at specific Republicans and a generic Republican candidate. 22% of those surveyed said their vote would depend on the candidate. If the 2012 Presidential election was between Barack Obama and Sarah Palin, only 1 out of 4 respondents said Palin would get their vote. Over half would support the re-election of President Obama, while 13% said they would not support either of these potential candidates. If the election was between Barack Obama and Mitt Romney or Mike Huckabee, the percentage gap closed. In both cases, about 43% said they would support the current President, while 36% and 34% said they would vote for Romney and Huckabee, respectively.

TABLE EIGHT

“If the 2012 election for President was being held today, do you think you would vote for



Barack Obama the Democratic candidate, or the Republican candidate?"

Candidate	Percent
Obama	37%
Republican	33%
Depends on the Candidate	22%
Not Sure/Refused	8%

TABLE NINE

If the 2012 election for President was being held today and the race was between Barack Obama and Sarah Palin, who would you vote for?

Candidate	Percent
Obama	53%
Palin	25%
Neither	13%
Not Sure/Refused	9%

TABLE TEN

Barack Obama vs. Mitt Romney?

Candidate	Percent
Obama	43%
Romney	36%
Neither	7%
Not Sure/Refused	14%

TABLE ELEVEN

Barack Obama vs. Mike Huckabee?

Candidate	Percent
Obama	44%
Huckabee	34%
Neither	6%
Not Sure/Refused	16%

TABLE TWELVE

Comparison Table of Potential 2012 Presidential Election Match-Ups



Obama	Unnamed Republican	Obama	Palin	Obama	Romney	Obama	Huckabee
37%	33%	53%	25%	43%	36%	44%	34%

Turning attention to elected officials in Pennsylvania the survey finds generally positive views of the state’s newly elected Republican Governor and United States Senator and the Commonwealth’s first term Democratic Senator. With Tom Corbett only about one month into his first term as the state’s governor a large portion of respondents were unsure or had no opinion on how well he is handling the job. Of those that offered an opinion 36% approve of the Governor’s actions thus far and 15% disapproved.

TABLE THIRTEEN

Governor Tom Corbett

Position	Percent
Approve	36%
Disapprove	15%
No Opinion/Not Sure	45%

Senators Pat Toomey and Bob Casey also enjoyed generally favorable public opinion. As with views on Corbett, a large number of Pennsylvanians have yet to form an opinion on Toomey’s work, with 38% of respondents holding no view on his work. Of those expressing a view on Toomey there was a 2 to 1 positive to negative ratio. Casey, in his fourth year in office, held a 48% to 22% approval to disapproval ratio among state residents.

TABLE FOURTEEN

Senator Pat Toomey

Response	Percent
Approve	39%
Disapprove	19%
No Opinion/Not Sure	38%

TABLE FIFTEEN

Senator Bob Casey, Jr.

Response	Percent
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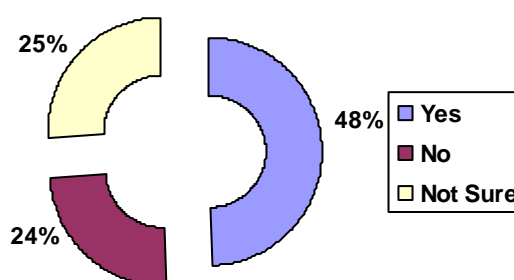


Approve	48%
Disapprove	22%
No Opinion/Not Sure	26%

When looking at potential re-election for Senator Casey, almost half of Pennsylvania voters said that he deserves to be re-elected in 2012. Only one out of four said that he does not deserve re-election, while another 25% were unsure.

FIGURE FIVE

“Do you feel that Pennsylvania Senator Bob Casey, Jr. deserves to be reelected?”



Senator Casey appears to be in a generally strong position in terms of his 2012 reelection bid. In a match-up with a hypothetical Republican candidate, Casey received 41% of the “vote,” with 27% stating they would vote for the Republican, and 18% stated that it depends on the candidate.

TABLE SIXTEEN

If the 2012 election for United States Senator were being held today, do you think you would vote for Bob Casey Jr. the Democratic candidate, or the Republican candidate?

Candidate	Percent
Casey	41%
Republican	27%
Depends on the Candidate	18%
Not Sure/Refused	15%