



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 15, 2012

CONTACT:

Tom Shields, President, 517.372.4400, ext. 230 (O); 517.449.9810 (M); toms@mrgmi.com

Bill Ballenger, 517.487.6665 (O); 517.410.8987 (M); impbb@comcast.net

Paul King, Director of Research Services, 313.881.3724; paulk@mrgmi.com

Dave Doyle, Vice President, 517.372.4400, ext. 226 (O); 517.449.9812 (M); daved@mrgmi.com

Romney In Trouble "At Home," Santorum Surges Ahead!
Tea Party Supporters Give Santorum the Lead

Lansing, MI – If the Michigan GOP primary election for U.S. President were held today Rick Santorum would defeat Mitt Romney in the state where he was born and raised.

“It is a two person race in Michigan and right now that could spell trouble for Romney,” said Tom Shields, President of Marketing Resource Group. “The conservative wing of the party has coalesced behind Santorum,” said Shields.

In the presidential primary ballot test, Santorum received 43 percent to Romney’s 33 percent, followed by Newt Gingrich at 11 percent, and Ron Paul at 8 percent.

“There is very little good news in this survey for Mitt Romney. Like George W. Bush who hoped the Michigan primary would be his firewall, Michigan could be a fireball for Romney. The problem for Romney is not Democrats crossing over to vote, but Tea Party supporters who back Santorum 51 percent to Romney’s 22 percent,” said Bill Ballenger, publisher of Inside Michigan Politics.

“Given these results it is really no surprise that the Romney Super Pac started an attack ad on Santorum this morning. The results in Michigan will come down to resources and message. Trailing by ten points – Mitt Romney has to win Michigan back,” said Shields. “Does Santorum have the resources to withstand the Romney assault, and will Romney have a message that finally resonates with Tea Party supporters? If you are a Michigan Republican you should be prepared to be bombarded on the air, on the phone, and in the mailbox for the next two weeks.”

Voters also expressed that jobs and the economy (46 percent) should be the top priority for Congress and the President, while 34 percent said the deficit, spending, and taxes should be the top priority, followed by social issues at 7 percent, healthcare at 6 percent, others or undecided at 4 percent, and terrorism and homeland security at 2 percent.

The actual wording of the questions and the results are below...

If the REPUBLICAN primary election for US PRESIDENT were being held today, for whom would you vote?

NEWT GINGRICH	11%
RON PAUL	8%
MITT ROMNEY	31%
RICK SANTORUM	41%
UNDECIDED	9%

IF UNDECIDED, ASK: Are you leaning toward any of the candidates mentioned?

GINGRICH	0.5%
PAUL	0.1%
ROMNEY	2%
SANTORUM	1.5%
UNDECIDED	5%

COMBINED US PRESIDENTIAL BALLOT TEST • CANDIDATE TOTALS

TOTAL GINGRICH	11%
TOTAL PAUL	8%
TOTAL ROMNEY	33%
TOTAL SANTORUM	43%
TOTAL UNDECIDED	5%

In your opinion, what issue should be the first priority for Congress and the President?

JOBS AND THE ECONOMY	46%
DEFICIT, SPENDING & TAXES	34%
HEALTHCARE	6%
SOCIAL ISSUES LIKE SAME-SEX MARRIAGE & ABORTION	7%
TERRORISM & HOMELAND SECURITY	2%
OTHERS, OR UNDECIDED	4%

With which political party do you most closely identify?

REPUBLICAN PARTY	78%
DEMOCRATIC PARTY	8%
OTHER	8%
DON'T IDENTIFY WITH ANY PARTY	6%

The survey sampled 800 definite Republican primary voters, stratified by city and/or township and based on past voting history. The statistical margin of error is +/- 3.5 percent. The survey was conducted February 13-14, 2012.

Actual cross tabs can be accessed at www.mrgmi.com.

What Do the Cross Tabs Show?

The Gender Gap

The poll showed a large difference between men and women as Santorum leads Romney by eighteen percent (43 percent Santorum – 25 percent Romney) among males while the vote among females is virtually tied (38 percent Santorum – 37 percent Romney).

Tea Party Supporters

47 percent of poll respondents considered themselves “strong supporters of the tea party movement, while 34 percent are not strong supporters. Santorum had a twenty-nine point lead (51 percent Santorum – 22 percent Romney) among tea party supporters, while Romney led by thirteen percent (42 percent Romney – 29 percent Santorum) among voters who were not tea party supporters.

Age Groups

Santorum leads among all age groups except for senior citizens, (38 percent Romney – 35 percent Santorum) where the Romney family name appears to carry more weight.

Divided on the Issues

Poll respondents were asked which of the following issues should be the first priority of the President and Congress. The poll showed that the respondents were most concerned about Jobs and the economy (46 percent), deficit spending and taxes (33 percent), social issues (7 percent), Healthcare (6 percent) and terrorism and homeland security (2 percent).

Romney leads Santorum by seven percent (39 percent Romney – 32 percent Santorum) among those most concerned about the economy, but Santorum held a twenty point lead (47 percent Santorum – 27 percent Romney) among those focused on spending issues and a forty-five (64 percent Santorum – 19 percent Romney) percent lead among those focused on social issues.

Geography

Geographically, the poll shows Santorum leading in every media market in the state from the three percent in the Lansing Media Market (37 percent Santorum – 34 percent Romney) to a forty-five percent lead in the sparsely populated Upper Peninsula (60 percent Santorum – 15 percent Romney). Santorum leads Romney by sixteen percent in Grand Rapids/West Michigan area (46 percent Santorum – 30 percent Romney), by eighteen percent in the Traverse City market (43 percent Santorum – 25 percent Romney) and by four percent in the Flint/Saginaw Bay city market (38 percent Santorum – 34 percent Romney) in the state’s largest market, Santorum leads Romney by six percent in the Metro Detroit area (38 percent Santorum – 34 percent Romney). A closer look at the Detroit area shows Romney leading by nine percent in Oakland County where he was born and raised (38 percent Romney – 30 percent Santorum) and tied with Santorum in Macomb County (32 percent for both).

About Marketing Resource Group, Inc.

Lansing, Michigan-based Marketing Resource Group, Inc. (www.mrgmi.com) is an award-winning PR firm representing corporate, association, nonprofit, and private clients with interests in Michigan. MRG offers expertise in public affairs, communications, political campaign management, and public opinion survey research. For more than thirty years, MRG has conducted its bi-annual omnibus Michigan Poll™, tracking the pulse of Michigan voters on key statewide public policy and political issues. MRG is the only Michigan public opinion survey research firm that maintains nearly 30 years of trend analyses of voter attitudes related to state and national leaders, political parties, and the political and economic climate in Michigan. MRG has earned six Public Relations Society of America Silver Anvil awards, the PR profession's highest honor.

Follow MRG on Twitter @mrgmichigan and on Facebook.

About Inside Michigan Politics

Inside Michigan Politics (www.insidemichiganpolitics.com) is the largest circulation, state-based bi-weekly political newsletter in North America.

Follow IMP's editor, Bill Ballenger on Twitter @iMIpolitics and on Facebook.