

## SENATORS CLINTON, OBAMA WELL AHEAD OF THE PACK

Washington, DC (BlackNews.com) - Just weeks ahead of the first presidential primaries and caucuses, Hillary Clinton is the candidate viewed most favorably by likely African American voters -- with Barack Obama running a close second -- according to national survey results released today by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies.

With a full year remaining to the general election, the survey found a high level of engagement in the political process among African Americans. Eighty percent of respondents said they are closely following news coverage of their party's candidates, while 87 percent said they planned to participate in the nominating process of the Democratic Party.

In the survey of 750 African Americans, sponsored by the AARP and conducted from October 5 to Nov. 2, Sen. Clinton was rated favorably by 83 percent of respondents, with 9.7 percent viewing her negatively. Sen. Obama received favorable ratings from 74.4 percent, with 10.1 percent viewing him negatively.

Of the eight candidates -- four

Democrats and four Republicans -- whose names were presented to survey participants, only Clinton, Obama and former senator John Edwards were rated more favorably than not by likely black voters. Edwards was rated favorably by 45.1 percent, while 19.1 percent rated him unfavorably.

Former New York City mayor Rudolph Giuliani was the best known of the Republican candidates to black voters, but was viewed unfavorably by 42.7 percent of respondents, compared to 27.1 percent who viewed him favorably.

When asked to name the single most important problem facing the country, the No. 1 answer was the war in Iraq, which was cited by 28 percent of respondents, followed by health care (20 percent), jobs and the economy (15 percent) and education (10 percent). None of the black voters polled identified taxes as the most important national problem; less than one percent named immigration and two percent said terrorism.

"What might be called signa-

— taxes, terrorism, immigration and moral values — are just not resonating with African American voters," said David Bositis, senior research associate at the Joint Center. "Not only are African Americans not raising these issues when given the chance, but when pressed on which party has the better approach to them, they are clearly favoring the Democrats." Bositis noted that the poll results offer further insight into how African Americans view their two favorite candidates, senators Clinton and Obama. By a two-to-one margin, respondents said that "commitment to change" was a more important feature in a candidate than "experience in public office" -- a view that could be seen as helpful to Sen. Obama's candidacy. But more respondents named Clinton over Obama as having the best position of the Democratic candidates on three key issues of concern -- affordable health care (47.3 percent to 18.7 percent), strengthening Social Security (41 percent to 18.6 percent) and, by an narrower margin, on dealing with Iraq (35.4 percent to 22.1 percent).

The survey also showed a sig-

nificant gender gap in Sen. Clinton's support among African Americans, with 86 percent of women giving her a favorable rating and seven percent unfavorable, compared to a 78 percent favorable and 15 percent unfavorable rating by men. With regard to Sen. Obama, there was no significant gender difference in his favorable/unfavorable ratings.

Only 11 percent of African Americans surveyed believe that President Bush is doing a good or excellent job, while a clear majority (57.9 percent) gave him the lowest rating of "poor." Likely primary voters were also negative on the job Congress is doing, although the group giving Congress the lowest rating was only half the size of those giving that rating to President Bush.

"From the Joint Center's perspective, these poll results tell us that, even at this early date, African Americans are paying close attention to the presidential campaigns and the positions of the candidates," said Ralph B. Everett, the Joint Center's President and CEO. Two-thirds of respondents saying they are extremely likely to participate in the upcoming primaries and caucuses...



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