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EMERSON POLL: WISCONSIN FEELS THE BERN; CRUZ HAS MOMENTUM GOING INTO PRIMARY; GOP VOTERS SPLIT 50-50 ON A BROKERED CONVENTION; ECPS IS "ON THE GROUND" IN THE BADGER STATE

MADISON, WI – With Tuesday's Wisconsin primary being closely scrutinized on both sides of the ballot, Bernie Sanders has surged into an 8-point lead over Hillary Clinton in the Democratic nominating contest while Texas Senator Ted Cruz has added some daylight between himself and Donald Trump in the GOP race.

In an Emerson College poll completed Sunday evening and released today, Sanders is now ahead of Clinton 51% to 43% in the Badger State, where 12 days ago he was six points down (50% to 44%) to the former Secretary of State. In the GOP race, Cruz is now five points ahead of Trump (40% to 35%) with John Kasich at 21%. Cruz had a 1-point lead over Trump (36%-35%) in an ECPS poll published March 23.

If Cruz is the primary winner, he will add 15 statewide delegates to his current count of 463; he is also ahead in five of Wisconsin's eight congressional districts, where three delegates will be awarded to the winner of each district. Trump is ahead only in the Third District, where his margin is 49% to 24%. The Second and Fourth districts appear to be a toss-up among the three GOP candidates.

With a favorable/unfavorable rating of 43% to 53%, Trump continues to struggle with likely GOP primary voters. Cruz, with a 58% to 38% rating, and Kasich (69% to 24%) are viewed much more favorably. Cruz enjoys a 7-point lead over Trump among men, 43% to 36%, with Kasich at 16%. Cruz holds a 3-point edge among women, 35% to 32%, with Kasich at 28%.

The poll suggests that among those voting in the GOP primary, 57% will be Republicans and 37% Independents. Cruz leads Trump 46% to 31% among GOP voters, with 17% going for Kasich. Independents break for Trump over Cruz, 37% to 34%, with Kasich at 28%.

Both Sanders and Clinton hold very high favorable ratings among likely Democratic voters, with Sanders at 83% and Clinton at 70%. The poll suggests that the open primary will consist of 68% registered Democrats and 28% Independents. Clinton leads Sanders 50% to 45% with Democrats but trails him by 30 points (62% to 32%) among Independents. Early voters also favor Sanders 52% to 38%.

Since the March 23 ECPS poll, Sanders has gained ground with all age groups except those 75 and older. His lead among voters ages 18-34 is now 68% to 22%. He is ahead of Clinton 57% to 38% among those 35-54, and outpolls her 54% to 43% in the 55-74 age group, which leaned heavily her way in the last ECPS poll. Clinton maintains her strongest edge with those over 75, 72% to 21%.

Sanders has also extended his lead among men, improving from a 51% to 43% advantage in the March poll to a commanding 59% to 36% edge today. He has also closed the gender gap among women and only trails Clinton by three points, 48% to 45%. Furthermore, he has solidified his support across the state, trailing only in the Fourth Congressional District. As of March 23, the districts were evenly split between the candidates, 4 to 4.

With the national delegate counts becoming clearer, ECPS gauged attitudes among the state's GOP electorate towards the idea of a brokered convention. One view is that the nomination should go to the leader in the delegate count come convention time, while others endorse the standard GOP delegate selection process of a brokered convention if no candidate reaches the required majority of 1,237 delegates during the primaries.

In Wisconsin, Republican respondents appear to be split exactly down the middle, with 50% supporting the leading candidate being given the nomination and 50% supporting the brokered convention system. Ninety-four percent (94%) of Trump supporters favor the nomination being given to the delegate leader. In contrast, 71% of Cruz supporters and 80% of Kasich partisans support a brokered convention if no candidate wins a majority of delegates before the convention. Only 6% of Trump voters favor a brokered convention.

In hypothetical general election match ups, Clinton leads Trump 47% to 37%, and she edges out Cruz 46% to 43%. Sanders runs ahead of Trump 51% to 37% and is beating Cruz 50% to 41%. Kasich leads Clinton 52% to 38%. In a hypothetical matchup of the Wisconsin US Senate race, Democrat Russ Feingold—who lost the seat in 2010 to Republican Ron Johnson—holds a 48% to 44% lead over the incumbent.

A group of ECPS members and ECPS advisor Spencer Kimball are part of an Emerson College contingent that has been “on the ground” in Wisconsin since Sunday attending campaign events and talking to voters. The group plans to visit polling sites, follow the voting results and attend post-election watch parties on Tuesday night.

Caller ID

The Emerson College Polling Society poll was conducted from March 30- April 3, 2016. The GOP primary consisted of 549 likely primary voters, with a margin of error of +/-4.1%, and the Democratic primary consisted of 542 likely primary voters, with a margin of error of +/-4.2%. The General Election sample consisted of 1,198 likely general election voters, with a margin of error of +/-2.8%. Data was collected using an Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system of landlines only. The general election was weighted by 2012 federal general election returns, the Democrat primary was weighted by age, and the GOP primary was not weighted. The full methodology and results can be found at www.theecps.com.