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ALL EYES ON TEXAS: CRUZ BY A NOSE OVER TRUMP, RUBIO IN THE HUNT; CLINTON HOLDS 16-POINT LEAD OVER SANDERS

Boston, MA – With less than a week until the Texas GOP presidential primary, Senator Ted Cruz is edging out his two chief rivals, with Cruz having 29% of the vote followed by Donald Trump at 28% and Marco Rubio at 25%, according to an Emerson College tracking poll released today. Ohio's John Kasich is at 9%, and retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson comes in fifth, with 4%.

In the Democratic primary, Hillary Clinton holds a solid lead, 56% to 40%, over Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders. It appears the former Secretary of State is well positioned to notch a decisive win in the delegate-rich Lone Star State, which ranks third—behind California and New York—in the number of delegates up for grabs (252).

Clinton does well with women, who prefer her 62% to 36% over Sanders, and she holds her own with men, who favor her 48% to 46%. Although Sanders has a massive lead, 81% to 18%, among voters ages 18-34, Clinton dominates in the other age categories, holding a 73-point advantage among voters 55-74 and a 76-point edge with those 75 and over.

Of the three GOP leaders, Rubio is seen most positively, with 64% of likely GOP primary voters rating him favorably compared to 29% who view him unfavorably. Cruz's rating is 56% favorable to 41% unfavorable. Of all the GOP candidates, Trump is the only one under water with a 45% favorable to 50% unfavorable opinion. Clinton (79% favorable to 20% unfavorable) and Sanders (68% to 27%) are both well regarded by likely Democratic primary voters.

Trump has the strongest loyalty among his fan base, with 56% of those who have a favorable opinion of him saying they will also vote for him. For Cruz, that figure is 50% and for Rubio 36%. Cruz holds a slight lead of 30% to 29% over Trump with male voters while Cruz and Rubio are tied at 28% among female voters. Trump received 26% of the female vote.

As the GOP candidates continue to argue over each other's honesty, 37% of survey respondents said Cruz is the candidate who has been least honest about his own record and that of his Republican rivals. Trump is a close second for "least honest," chosen by 35%.

Texas Democrats and Republicans, who might not agree on much, agree that dissatisfaction with government is the most important issue in this election cycle, cited by 45% of GOP voters and 42% of Democrats. The next most pressing issues for Republicans are defeating ISIS and terrorism, and the economy, both chosen by 13%. For Democrats, the focus is on the economy (25%) and race relations (15%).

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The Emerson College Polling Society poll was conducted from February 21-23, 2016. The GOP primary consisted of 446 likely primary voters, with a margin of error of +/-4.6%, and the Democratic primary consisted of 328 likely primary voters, with a margin of error of +/-5.4%. Data was collected using an Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system of landlines only and weighted by 2012 presidential election results. The full methodology and results can be found at theecps.com