

TO: Project Right Side
FROM: Alicia Downs & Alex Lundry; TargetPoint Consulting
DATE: November 7, 2012
RE: Right Side Battleground States Election Night Survey Results

TargetPoint Consulting conducted an Election Night survey of 2,000 voters in battleground states (NH, CO, FL, VA, OH, IA, NC, and NV) on behalf of Project Right Side. The margin of sampling error of the survey is +/- 2%.

KEY FINDINGS

- 1) **Among those that say it is a top priority, attitudes towards gay marriage are split down the middle.** Unsurprisingly, in an election year dominated by jobs and the economy, gay marriage was not a top priority among battleground voters. However, a non-trivial 17% of voters in these states said it was a very high priority. Further, reinforcing an emerging opinion trend, it is no longer only a top priority among only opponents of gay marriage; rather, among those that said it was a very high priority, half are same sex marriage supporters: 50% support and 48% oppose.
- 2) **Marriage was a motivating factor in candidate support on Election Day.** Gay marriage was a motivating factor for nearly 3 out of 4 Obama voters in battleground states, with 73% of the president's supporters saying that his support for marriage equality made them more likely to vote for the President. Indeed, almost half of his voters (45%) said it made them MUCH more likely to support him. Another 22% say it made no difference, while 5% begrudgingly supported the president despite his views, saying it made them less likely to support him. For Governor Romney, half of his voters said that his opposition to gay marriage made them more likely to support him, though a sizable 39% of his supporters said it made no difference. Slightly more than 1 out of 10 Romney voters say his opposition to day marriage diminished their support for him.
- 3) **Voters in battleground states overwhelmingly and strongly agree with pro-gay rights messaging.** When it comes to messaging, distinct majorities (60% +) voters in battleground states strongly agree with six different messaging statements with expressions of support for gay rights:
 - 80% strongly agree: "We should all follow the Golden Rule and treat others as we'd like to be treated, including gays and lesbians."
 - 71% strongly agree: "People shouldn't be fired from their jobs based on their sexual orientation."
 - 68% strongly agree: "The government should stay out of the private lives of adults, including gays and lesbians."
 - 62% strongly agree: "We should protect gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people from discrimination in the workplace."
 - 61% strongly agree: "Laws against bullying and harassment of minority groups in schools, including gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students, help keep kids safe."
 - 60% strongly agree: "Freedom means freedom for everybody, including gays and lesbians, who should have the freedom to enter into relationships with each other."

- 4) **Unsurprisingly, Obama voters are strong supporters, but there is also majority support for these same messaging items among Romney voters.** Among Obama voters, there is at least 72% strong agreement with each of these statements. Among Romney voters, *strong* agreement levels vary from a low of 38% for the "freedom means freedom for everybody..." statement to a high of 69% for "we should all follow the golden rule..." That being said, when we look instead at overall agreement (not just strongly agree), we see that among Romney voters there is majority agreement upon all of the statements. Overall we see that among Republicans and right leaning voters in these swing states it is that final statement that consistently draws the lowest levels of support. There is thus broad agreement upon an expansion of many basic legal rights to gays and lesbians. However, support lags further behind for statements of support for broader rights.
- 5) **Similar patterns emerge when we look at specific legal benefits that could be given to gay and lesbian couples that are legally married:** at least 64% of voters in battleground states favor 5 different legal protections, ranging from a high of 87% support for the ability to visit a sick spouse in the hospital, to a low of 64% support for "avoiding tax penalties by filing joint tax returns as a married couple." Even among Romney voters the numbers remain robust: the only benefit for which there is not majority support is the avoidance of tax penalties" for which there is still significant 44% support.
- 6) **Workplace discrimination laws have strong bipartisan support.** When directly asked whether they support or oppose a federal law protecting individuals from being fired from their jobs based on sexual orientation, there is overwhelming support: 74%. 62% of Romney voters support the law, and even among those Romney voters that said his opposition to gay marriage made them MORE likely to support him, more than half (55%) would support this particular law.
- 7) **Indeed, as we have seen on our other surveys, when given an opportunity to take a pro or con stand on various gay rights messages and issues, majorities of voters in battleground states stood on the side of gay rights 15 out of 15 times.** This ranges across a variety of issues, from 88% agreement that "we should all follow the Golden Rule and treat others as we would like to be treated, including gays and lesbians," to 64% favoring social security survivor benefits for legal gay and lesbian partners.
- 8) **As we've seen before, how you ask about marriage rights has a large impact on measures of support.**

A direct question on marriage rights yields a slim majority.

"Do you think marriage between gay and lesbian couples should or should not be recognized by the law as valid with the same rights as traditional marriage?" A clear majority of 56% say Yes, while only 39% say No, for a net support score of +17 points. Obama voters overwhelmingly support marriage rights 81-17. Romney voters are inverted at 30-64.

Stronger majorities favor federal recognition of a state sanctioned same sex marriage.

"And if a state recognizes same sex marriage, should the federal government acknowledge the state's decision and grant same sex couples the same benefits as heterosexual couples?" In this case 62% of battleground voters said, Yes, while 34% said no, for a net support score of +28, a strong improvement from +17. Obama voters are at 86-13 on this, while Romney voters are 38-57.

When given a range of options, 78% of voters support at least some legal recognition.

A 38% plurality of voters in battleground states believe in full rights: "gay and lesbian couples should have the same legal right to marry as do a man and a woman." If we add the 14% of voters that believe they should have the same legal benefits without it being called marriage, that puts support for full legal rights at a 52% majority. Another 26% support some form of domestic partnerships that would give some rights. Only a small minority of 17% of voters believe "there should be no legal recognition of a relationship between gay and lesbian couples." These numbers, unsurprisingly, are strong among Obama supporters, with 61% supporting full marriage equality. Among Romney voters, 14% support full equality, though only 31% remain staunchly opposed to any legal rights. Ultimately, 64% of Romney voters support at least some form of legal recognition.