



Satisfaction with Presidential Primary Process Dropping Among Both Parties, Annenberg Data Show

Role of Democratic superdelegates depends on candidate loyalty

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Fewer than one in three Democrats (30.9%) is satisfied with the presidential primary process this election season. That level has dropped significantly since the beginning of the year. Although satisfaction rates with the primary process are significantly higher among Republicans, those rates also have declined substantially since the first of the year.

The data are being released today by the National Annenberg Election Survey of the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania.

In another finding released today, public opinion on the role that superdelegates should play in deciding the Democratic nominee differs significantly between supporters of Sen. Hillary Clinton of New York and Sen. Barack Obama of Illinois.

A clear majority of Sen. Obama's supporters believe that superdelegates should vote for the candidate who received the most popular votes during the primaries. Sen. Clinton's backers are significantly more divided, and more likely than Obama supporters to say superdelegates should use their "best judgment" in making their decisions. Currently, Sen. Obama has won 49.5 percent of the popular vote to Sen. Clinton's 46.9 percent. The next presidential primary is scheduled for April 22 in Pennsylvania.

"Clearly, the underlying tendency is for Americans to want the popular vote to matter most. However, in such a tight and highly contested race, people's loyalty to a candidate also enters into their feelings about what should govern the superdelegates' decisions," said Diana Mutz, director of innovation for the National Annenberg Election Survey.

Data for this study were gathered continuously between January 1 and March 31. The total sample during this period was just under 20,000 people, including 6,334 self-identified Democrats and 5,433 self-identified Republicans. The margin of error ranges from less than 1 percent in the estimates related to superdelegates, to four percent for the individual week estimates for primary satisfaction among Democrats and Republicans.

Satisfaction with the primary and caucus system among Democratic voters has declined from 33.3 percent at the beginning of the year to 22 percent as of March 24, according to the Annenberg data. (A brief uptick in satisfaction rates just before Super Tuesday disappeared by the following week.) Republicans reported a satisfaction rate of 45 percent as of January 1, dropping to 35 percent as of March 24.

When asked how superdelegates should cast their votes at the Democratic National Convention, more than 40 percent (43.9%) of those who identified themselves as supporters of Sen. Clinton said the delegates should use their best judgment, compared to under 30 percent (28.3%) of the supporters of Sen. Obama. Nearly 60 percent (59.8%) of Sen. Obama's supporters said the superdelegates should vote for the candidate who received the most popular votes, compared to over 40 percent (44.4%) of Sen. Clinton supporters.

For more information, see Appendix below.

Appendix:

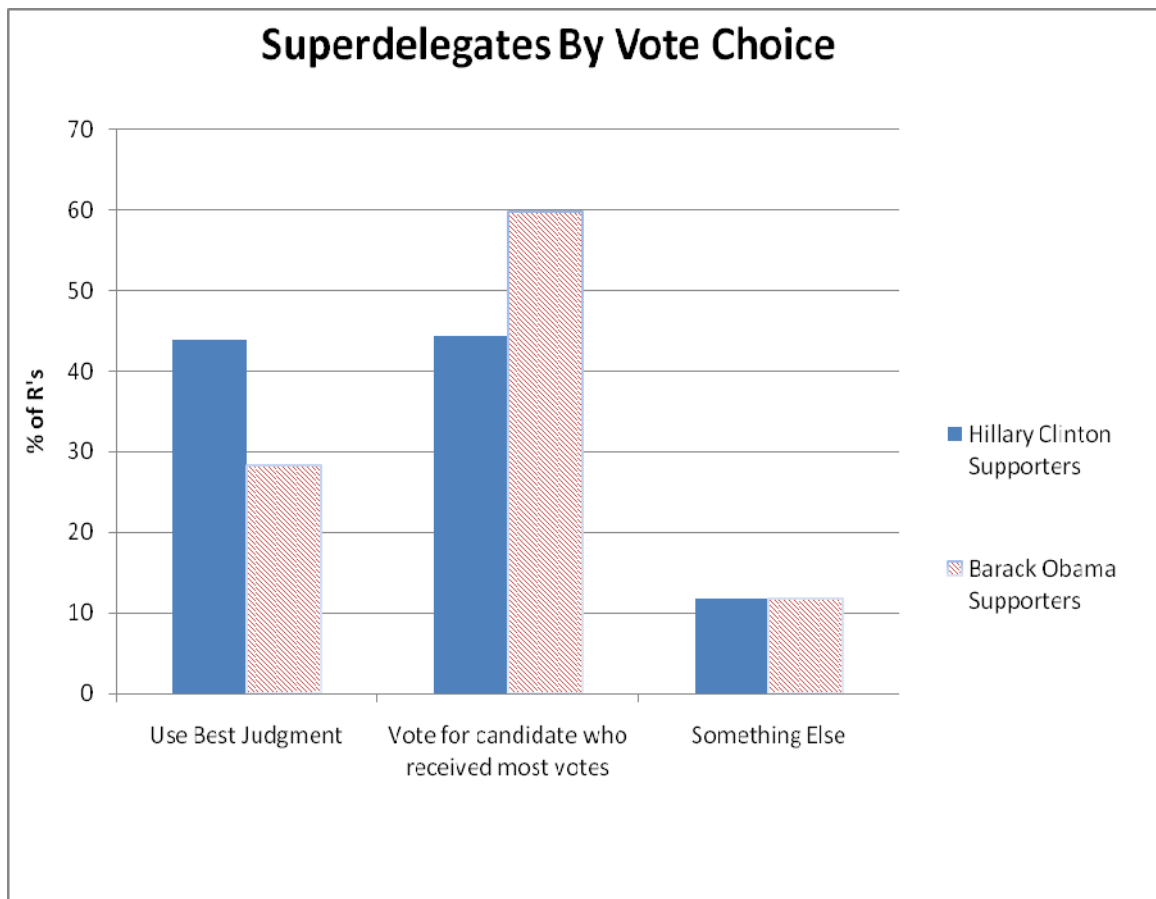
Superdelegates by Vote Choice

Q: In your opinion, how should the superdelegates cast their votes at the party convention? Should they:

Use their own judgment in deciding who to vote for

Vote for the candidate who received the most votes

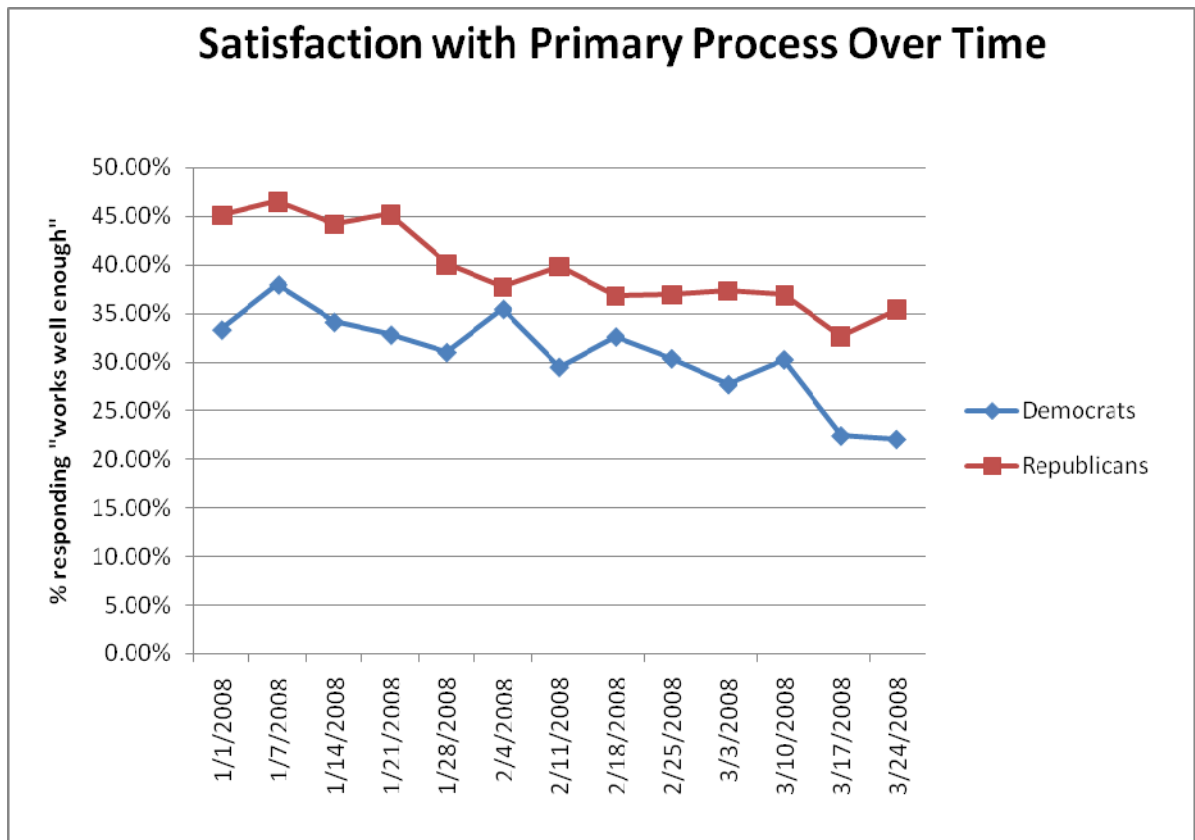
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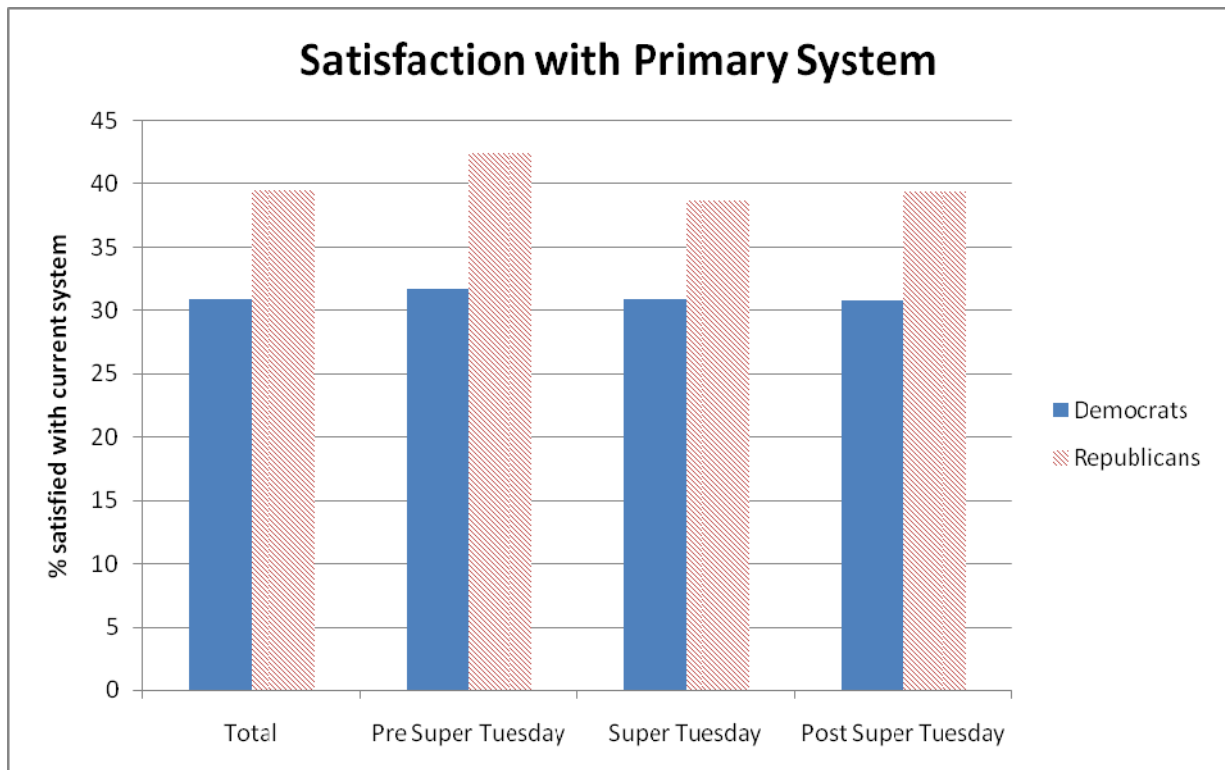
Satisfaction with Current Primary System

Q: The Republicans and Democrats use state primaries or caucuses and nominating conventions to select their presidential candidates. Do you think the system works well enough as it is now, or does it need some changes?

Works well enough as is
Needs changes



Primary Process Satisfaction Data (Sorted by date of primary)



The analysis for this release was conducted by researcher Jason Miller.

About the survey: The **National Annenberg Election Survey** is the largest academic election survey being conducted in the 2008 campaign. It ultimately will include between 45,000 and 50,000 rolling cross-section telephone interviews (one interview per respondent) and almost 100,000 web interviews (including up to five interviews with the same person) as the campaign evolves. The first web wave began in October 2007; the final interviews will be completed following the general election, November 4, 2008.

The data reported here are from the internet component of the survey.

National Annenberg Election Surveys also were conducted in 2000 and 2004.

The 2008 survey, as with past NAES polls, will examine a wide range of political attitudes about candidates, issues and the traits Americans want in a president. It will also place a particular emphasis on the effects of media exposure through campaign commercials and news from radio, television, newspapers and the internet. Additionally,

the survey measures the effects of other kinds of political communication, from conversations at home and on the job to various efforts by campaigns to influence potential voters.