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FRANKLIN PIERCE COLLEGE POLL SHOWS CHALLENGERS LEADING PRESIDENT BUSH AND GOVERNOR BENSON; PARTY UNITY, NATIONAL SECURITY CONCERNS, IRAQ NOT HELPING BUSH; INDEPENDENTS, DOMESTIC ISSUES, GENDER GAP HELPING KERRY.

A Franklin Pierce College (FPC) poll of 617 likely New Hampshire voters shows Sen. John Kerry with a significant lead over President George W. Bush in the presidential race (49.1 to 42.3% with a margin of error +/-4%). Ralph Nader, a recent addition to the presidential ballot, is not a factor so far (1.1%). Mr. Bush's presidential approval rating statewide is 44.1% with 49.1% expressing disapproval of his performance. Republicans make up 38.9% of the sample; Democrats 24%; and Independents 37.1%. Based on statewide figures, Republicans are actually over represented and Democrats underrepresented in the FPC sample by about 2%. Such a discrepancy highlights Kerry's lead.

Challenger, John Lynch (D) is leading incumbent Gov. Craig Benson (R), 46.7 to 41.5%, in the race for the New Hampshire gubernatorial race. In other races, incumbent Judd Gregg (R) has a commanding lead (60.6 to 26.1%) over his challenger, "Granny D" Haddock, in his effort to retain his U.S. Senate seat. Reps. Jeb Bradley (R) and Charlie Bass (R), as well, maintain strong leads, respectively (64.1 to 25.9%; 50 to 36.4%), over challengers Justin Nadeau (D) and Paul Hodes (D).

FPC's party breakout in the presidential race has registered Republicans backing Bush over Kerry, 80.4 to 12.1%; Democrats backing Kerry over Bush, 86.5 to 5.4%; and independents backing Kerry over Bush, 63.8 to 26.2%. Republicans are somewhat less unified in support of their candidate than are Democrats. This trend in greater Democratic unity is further illustrated in responses to the question, "Do you approve or disapprove of the job George W. Bush is doing as president?" New Hampshire Republicans express approval at 80% while Democrats express disapproval at a 90.5%. Obviously, the biggest boost to Kerry's FPC poll numbers comes from independents' overwhelming support.

Surprisingly, national security concerns are not helping the president. Likely voters express no preference for Bush over Kerry on matters related to "national security" or "terrorism" but are overwhelmingly, even among Democrats and independents, *against* an effort to "militarily withdraw from Iraq immediately" (Whole sample: 80.2% against, 13.9% for, 5.8% undecided; Democrats: 68.2% against, 16.9% for, 14.9% undecided; independents: 76.9% against, 19.7% for, 3.5% undecided). In response to whom they "think would be better for national security" (Bush to Kerry, 47 to 46.7%) and whom they "think would better deal with terrorism" (Bush to Kerry, 47.3 to 43.9%, within the margin of error) likely voters place Bush and Kerry in a statistical tie.

According to Frank Cohen, FPC's Polling Director, "Those foreign policy numbers suggest certain public-opinion trends, particularly with respect to the first Bush-Kerry debate." FPC did conduct this poll

on Oct. 3 and 4, shortly after the first presidential debate, which focused exclusively on foreign policy and mostly on Iraq. The debate may have altered, at least temporarily, likely-voters' perceptions of foreign-policy leadership in Kerry's favor, while reinforcing a popular preference to stay in Iraq beyond the short term. In other words, likely-voters will entertain the possibility of change in leadership but not the possibility of major change on Iraq. Cohen said, "This is consonant with the Kerry campaign's emphasis on leadership change without drastically changing course on Iraq. The FPC numbers suggest that the Kerry campaign would not benefit from the stridently anti-war campaign demanded by those to the left of that campaign."

While Bush has no lead on FPC's foreign policy questions, Kerry has a commanding lead over the president on the three domestic issues surveyed. Likely voters prefer Kerry to Bush, 50.9 to 41.3%, when asked who they "think would be better for the economy." Kerry outpolls Bush, 56.7 to 29%, when likely voters are asked who "would be better for the health care system," and he outpolls Bush, 53.6 to 29.8, in response to, "Who do you think would be better for Social Security?"

There is a pronounced gender gap in this election favoring Kerry. Likely, men voters approve of the president's performance, 52.1% approving to 42.3% disapproving, for a difference of +9.8 points. Likely, women voters, however, disapprove 57.4 to 36.1% approving, for a difference of -20.3 points. Among women, Kerry outpolls the president by 16.5 and 11.9 percentage points respectively on FPC's foreign policy questions on "national security" and "terrorism." Among women on domestic issues, he outpolls the president by 34.6, 38.3, and 25.5 percentage points respectively on FPC's questions on "Social Security," "health care," and "the economy." Finally, if "the election was held today," likely, women voters would give almost 20% more votes to Kerry (56.8 to 35.5%), while men would give only 7.8% more votes to Bush (49.2 to 41.4%).

The Center for Applied Public Opinion Research (CAPOR) at Franklin Pierce College's Marlin Fitzwater Center for Communication conducted this poll of 617 likely voters on Oct 3 and 4. The respondents were randomly selected from the population of New Hampshire voters that participated in the 2000 presidential and 2002 congressional elections. All interviews consisted of 15 questions and were conducted by telephone. Margin of error is +/-4%.

About Franklin Pierce College & The Marlin Fitzwater Center for Communication

Franklin Pierce is a fully accredited four-year liberal arts college in Rindge, N.H. The college has six Graduate and Professional Studies campuses in six other New Hampshire communities: Concord, Keene, Lebanon, Nashua, Portsmouth, and Manchester.

The Marlin Fitzwater Center for Communication is a 12,000 square foot state-of-the-art communications facility on the campus of Franklin Pierce College. The Fitzwater Center studies the relationship between the presidency and the press and is committed to educating leaders of conscience in public communication.

Franklin Pierce's Center for Applied Public Opinion Research (CAPOR), conducting survey and public opinion research since 1999, is housed in the Marlin Fitzwater Center for Communication.