CHRISTOPHER NEWPORT UNIVERSITY'S
JUDY FORD WASON
CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY

In battleground Virginia, Clinton beating all Republicans in 2016 presidential matchups; GOP voters divided, with Bush up, Christie down

Summary of Key Findings

1. Virginia voters like Hillary Clinton: In head-to-head matchups with a list of potential Republican challengers, Clinton beats them all.

2. Virginia Republican voters are very divided among many potential candidates, but Jeb Bush and Scott Walker get the most support in a hypothetical 2016 Republican primary.

3. New Jersey Governor Chris Christie's favorable rating in Virginia has dropped from 46% to 30% since a year ago.

4. Virginia Democrats strongly prefer Clinton over Joe Biden, Elizabeth Warren and other potential Democratic contenders.

5. President Obama's approval is underwater in Virginia at 43% to 53%, but only 13% of voters approve of the job Congress is doing.

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Analysis

The State of Things: Virginians are not happy with the direction of the country, with 53% saying things in the United States are mostly going in the wrong direction. President Barack Obama's job approval among registered Virginia voters stands at 43%, with 53% disapproving and 4% not sure. Obama's approval has hovered in the mid-40% range among Virginia voters for several years, jumping above 50% in January 2013 as he took the oath of office for his second term. Mirroring views nationally, only 13% of Virginia voters approve of the job Congress is doing, while 80% say they disapprove and 7% aren't sure.

Overall, would you say things in the United States are heading more in the _____ direction?	Right	35
	Mixed (vol)	10
	Wrong	53
	Dk/ref (vol)	2

Trends:	Jan. 2015	Jan. 2014	Jan. 2013	Feb. 2012
Right	34	30	35	23
Mixed (vol)	11	10	11	12
Wrong	54	57	52	62
Dk/ref (vol)	2	2	1	3

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as President?	Approve	43
	Disapprove	53
	Dk/ref (vol)	4

Trends:	Jan. 2015	Feb. 2014	Jan. 2013	Feb. 2012
Approve	44	46	51	43
Disapprove	50	48	43	53
Dk/ref (vol)	6	6	5	4

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Congress is doing its job?	Approve	13
	Disapprove	80
	Dk/ref (vol)	7

Trends:	Feb. 2014
Approve	10
Disapprove	80
Dk/ref (vol)	10

Clinton, Webb and Bush viewed most favorably: Among the early contenders for President in 2016, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has the highest favorability rating among Virginia voters at 46%, but slightly more (49%) view her unfavorably. Former Virginia Senator Jim Webb, who has announced that he is considering a run for the White House in 2016, has a 35% favorability rating here in his home state. Jeb Bush has the highest favorability rating among Republicans, at 32%. New Jersey Governor Chris Christie's favorability stands at 30%, a significant drop from the 46% favorability

he had the last time the Wason Center gauged it, in February 2014. Vice President Joe Biden, Senator Marco Rubio, Senator Rand Paul, and former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee are favored by between one-third and one-fourth of registered Virginia voters. Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker, Senator Elizabeth Warren, and Senator Ted Cruz are favored by less than one-fourth of Virginia voters. Every candidate except Webb has a higher unfavorable rating than favorable rating, with Biden (62%) and Paul leading (50%) the unfavorables.

Virginia voters are strongly in favor of the next president focusing more attention on domestic policy than foreign policy, with 59% saying domestic policy and only 19% saying foreign policy. One-fifth say both.

	Favorable	Unfavorable	Don't know	Refused (vol)
Hillary Clinton	46	49	4	1
Jim Webb	35	34	30	1
Jeb Bush	32	47	20	1
Joe Biden	30	62	8	
Chris Christie	30	46	23	1
Marco Rubio	27	35	38	
Rand Paul	26	50	23	1
Mike Huckabee	26	47	26	1
Scott Walker	23	27	50	
Ted Cruz	20	44	35	1
Elizabeth Warren	20	34	45	1

Will it be more important for the next president to focus more on domestic policy or foreign policy?	Domestic	59
	Foreign	19
	Neither (vol)	1
	Both (vol)	20
	Dk/ref (vol)	1

Priorities for the next president: The economy, jobs, and terrorism figure highly in what Virginia voters think the top priority of the next president should be. Almost eight in ten (78%) say "strengthening the nation's economy" should be a top priority, with the same percentage saying "defending the country from future terrorist attacks" should be a top priority. Other top priority areas for Virginia voters include: "improving the job situation" (67%), "reducing the budget deficit" (62%), "reducing health care costs" (59%), "improving the education system" (56%), "taking steps to make the Social Security system financially sound" (54%), and "taking steps to make the Medicare system financially sound" (51%).

"As far as Virginia voters are concerned, 2016 is going to be an election about domestic policy," said Dr. Quentin Kidd, director of the Wason Center for Public Policy. "Voters are concerned about protecting the country from terrorist attacks, yes, but by and large their list of top priorities is focused on the economy, jobs, and the health of domestic programs and policies."

Will this be a....priority?	Top	Important but lower	Not too important	Should not be done	Dk/ref (vol)
Strengthening the nation's economy	78	20	2		
Defending the country from future terrorist attacks	78	17	4	1	
Improving the job situation	67	28	4	1	
Reducing the budget deficit	62	30	7	1	
Reducing health care costs	59	31	6	4	
Improving the education system	56	37	6	1	
Taking steps to make the Social Security system financially sound	54	35	8	2	1
Taking steps to make the Medicare system financially sound	51	37	10	1	1
Reducing the influence of lobbyists and special interest groups in Washington	49	27	17	6	1
Reforming the nation's tax system	46	39	12	3	
Strengthening the U.S. military	46	34	14	6	
Dealing with the issue of immigration	42	45	10	3	
Reducing crime	39	39	18	4	
Protecting the environment	39	39	16	6	
Dealing with the role of money in politics	39	35	18	7	1
Dealing with the problem of poor and needy people	37	48	12	3	
Dealing with the moral breakdown of the country	36	28	20	16	
Dealing with the nation's energy problems	35	47	16	2	
Addressing race relations	34	38	18	9	1
Improving the country's roads, bridges, and public transportation system	32	47	20	1	
Supporting scientific research	32	47	16	5	
Dealing with global climate change	29	34	22	14	1
Dealing with global warming	24	32	25	18	1
Dealing with global trade issues	23	54	20	3	

No clear front-runner in Republican field: Republican voters in Virginia are far more interested in choosing a candidate who can win over a candidate who satisfies any given ideological litmus test, but there is no clear leader in a hypothetical 2016 Republican primary election. Jeb Bush leads the pack, with 21% of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents saying they would vote for him, followed by Scott Walker at 16%. Mike Huckabee and Chris Christie each garner 10% support, followed closely by Ben Carson at 9%. All other candidates, including 2012 Vice Presidential candidate Paul Ryan, poll in the single digits.

"The Republican field is still very fluid in Virginia," said Kidd. "Last year this time, Chris Christie was leading the pack, but now finds himself in fourth place. Republican voters are still assessing their choices."

If you had to choose, would you rather see the Republican party nominate a presidential candidate who agrees with you on every issue that matters to you but may not be able to beat the Democratic candidate, or a presidential candidate who can beat the Democratic candidate but does not agree with you on every issue that matters to you?	Agree on issues	22
	Can beat Democrat	73
	Dk/ref (vol)	5

If the 2016 Republican Presidential Primary in Virginia were held today and the candidates were [**Names rotated**]...for whom would you vote?	
Jeb Bush	21
Scott Walker	16
Mike Huckabee	10
Chris Christie	10
Ben Carson	9
Rand Paul	6
Marco Rubio	6
Paul Ryan	5
Ted Cruz	3
John Kasich	3
Bobby Jindal	2
Rich Perry	1
Mike Pence	1
Rob Portman	1
Rick Santorum	1
Someone else (vol)	1
Undecided/Dk/ref (vol)	4

Clinton has a strong lead among Democrats: Like Republican voters, Virginia Democrats are also far more interested in choosing a candidate who can win over a candidate who satisfies any given ideological litmus test. But unlike Republicans, Democrats are clear about who they like: Hillary Clinton. If the 2016 Democratic presidential primary were held today, Clinton would cruise to a commanding victory with 65% of Democrats and Democrat-leaning independents saying they would vote for her rather than Joe Biden, Elizabeth Warren, or any of the other potential challengers.

"While the Republican field is still very fluid in Virginia, the Democratic field is already solidified," said Kidd. "Hillary Clinton's position among Virginia Democrats has not changed much, if any, since last year, suggesting that her support among Democratic voters is stable and mature."

If you had to choose, would you rather see the Democratic party nominate a presidential candidate who agrees with you on every issue that matters to you but may not be able to beat the Republican candidate, or a presidential candidate who can beat the Republican candidate but does not agree with you on every issue that matters to you?	Agree on issues	25
	Can beat Democrat	71
	Dk/ref (vol)	4

If the 2016 Democratic Presidential Primary in Virginia were held today and the candidates were [**Names rotated**]…for whom would you vote?	
Hillary Clinton	65
Jim Webb	10
Joe Biden	8
Elizabeth Warren	8
Deval Patrick	2
Bernie Sanders	2
Andrew Cuomo	1
Martin O'Malley	1
Someone else (vol)	1
Undecided/Dk/ref (vol)	2

Hillary Clinton beats all comers if 2016 election were held today: Virginia voters like Hillary Clinton. In hypothetical 2016 head-to-head matchups with a list of potential Republican challengers, Clinton beats them all. Only two Republicans hold Clinton below 50%, former Florida Governor Jeb Bush and New Jersey Governor Chris Christie. The closest matchup pits Clinton against Bush, where Clinton wins by 5 points, 48% to 43%. Clinton beats Christie by 7 points, 49% to 42%. No Republican candidate is able to keep Clinton's vote among women below 50%. Likewise, no Republican is able to hold Clinton's vote among Millennial voters (those between the ages of 18-34) below 58%. Most notably, Jeb Bush loses Millennial voters by 34% (65% to 31%) against the former Secretary of State and First Lady. Christie and Bush perform best among Independents, both holding Clinton's vote below 50% among that segment of voters.

"While Hillary Clinton has yet to officially declare her candidacy, voters in the battleground state of Virginia seem clear that they want her to run, giving her a commanding lead," said Kidd. " Clinton has critical strengths among women voters and younger voters, two blocs of the electorate that Republicans have struggled with in recent presidential elections."

If the 2016 presidential elections were being held today and the candidates were [**Rotate**: Hillary Clinton, the Democrat or Chris Christie, the Republican], for whom would you vote?

	All	Male	Female	White	Black	18-34	35 <	Rep	Ind	Dem
Clinton	**49**	40	58	41	80	60	46	10	49	89
Christie	**42**	50	35	50	14	34	44	82	32	6
Undecided (vol.)	**9**	10	7	9	5	6	10	8	19	5

If the 2016 presidential elections were being held today and the candidates were [**Rotate**: Hillary Clinton, the Democrat or Mike Huckabee, the Republican], for whom would you vote?

	All	Male	Female	White	Black	18-34	35 <	Rep	Ind	Dem
Clinton	**52**	44	58	45	79	62	49	8	55	95
Huckabee	**42**	48	36	50	11	32	44	87	26	2
Undecided (vol.)	**6**	8	6	4	10	6	7	5	10	3

If the 2016 presidential elections were being held today and the candidates were [**Rotate**: Hillary Clinton, the Democrat or Rand Paul, the Republican], for whom would you vote?

	All	Male	Female	White	Black	18-34	35 <	Rep	Ind	Dem
Clinton	**52**	44	59	46	81	58	50	11	51	94
Paul	**42**	51	34	50	11	38	43	84	33	3
Undecided (vol.)	**6**	5	7	4	8	4	7	5	16	3

If the 2016 presidential elections were being held today and the candidates were [**Rotate**: Hillary Clinton, the Democrat or Jeb Bush, the Republican], for whom would you vote?

	All	Male	Female	White	Black	18-34	35 <	Rep	Ind	Dem
Clinton	**48**	38	58	41	77	65	44	8	44	91
Bush	**43**	51	36	52	11	31	46	86	34	4
Undecided (vol.)	**9**	11	6	7	12	4	10	6	22	5

If the 2016 presidential elections were being held today and the candidates were [**Rotate**: Hillary Clinton, the Democrat or Marco Rubio, the Republican], for whom would you vote?

	All	Male	Female	White	Black	18-34	35 <	Rep	Ind	Dem
Clinton	**51**	42	59	44	80	61	48	10	52	93
Rubio	**42**	48	36	50	12	30	45	82	32	5
Undecided (vol.)	**7**	10	5	6	8	9	7	8	16	2

If the 2016 presidential elections were being held today and the candidates were [**Rotate**: Hillary Clinton, the Democrat or Paul Ryan, the Republican], for whom would you vote?

	All	Male	Female	White	Black	18-34	35 <	Rep	Ind	Dem
Clinton	**52**	43	60	45	83	58	50	10	51	96
Ryan	**42**	49	35	50	11	35	43	83	33	3
Undecided (vol.)	**6**	8	5	5	6	7	7	7	16	1

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EDUC:

High school or less	12
Some college	24
Vocational or technical training	2
College graduate	30
Graduate study or more	31
Dk/ref (vol)	1

HISPANIC:

Yes	4
No	95
Dk/ref (vol)	1

RACE:

Black or African American	19
White	72
Other	9

RELIG:

Protestant	31
Christian (non-specific) (vol)	18
Catholic	14
Jewish	3
Other	18
None	14
Dk/ref (vol)	3

IDEOL:

Strong liberal	6
Liberal	14
Moderate, leaning liberal	20
Moderate, leaning conservative	22
Conservative	19
Strong Conservative	12
Dk/ref (vol)	7

PARTYID:

Republican	21
Independent lean Republican	20
Independent	16
Independent lean Democrat	15
Democrat	25
No preference/other party (vol)	2
Dk/ref (vol)	1

TEAPARTY:

Support	23
Oppose	44
No view either way	32
Dk/ref (vol)	1

AGE:

18-24	8
25-34	12
35-44	14
45-54	29
55 & older	43

REGION:

Northern Virginia	33
Richmond/Central	21
Hampton Roads	24
South/Southwest	22

SEX:

Male	49
Female	51

How the survey was conducted:

The results of this poll are based on 794 interviews of registered Virginia voters, including 430 on landline and 364 on cell phone, conducted January 30 - February 10, 2015. Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding. The margin of error for the whole survey is +/- 3.6% at the 95% level of confidence. Questions 6a-l and 6m-x were asked of randomized half samples (n=397), and the margin of error for these questions is +/- 5.2 at the 95% level of confidence. All error margins have been adjusted to account for the survey's design effect, which is 1.09 in this survey. The design effect is a factor representing the survey's deviation from a simple random sample, and takes into account decreases in precision due to sample design and weighting procedures. In addition to sampling error, the other potential sources of error include non-response, question wording, and interviewer error. The response rate (AAPOR RRI Standard Definition) for the survey was 21%. Five callbacks were employed in the fielding process. Live calling was conducted by trained interviewers at the Wason Center for Public Policy Survey Research Lab at Christopher Newport University. The data reported here are weighted using an iterative weighting process on sex, age, race and region of residence to reflect as closely as possible the demographic composition of registered voters in Virginia. The survey was designed by Dr. Quentin Kidd of the Wason Center for Public Policy at Christopher Newport University.