



behavior research center's

Rocky Mountain Poll

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POLITICAL EXTREMISM GROWING IN ARIZONA
ARIZONA OFFICE HOLDERS SEEN AS LOSING
THEIR ABILITY TO COMPROMISE FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD

Phoenix, Arizona. July 22, 2010. Over the past two decades in Arizona, voters identifying themselves with the political far left grew from a mere four percent to ten percent while those identifying themselves with the political far right grew from ten to 18 percent. Overall, the proportion of voters identifying themselves politically far left or far right doubled to 28 percent compared to only 14 percent in 1988.

Of interest is the finding that the far left, although still smaller than the far right, appears to have grown at a faster rate during this period (+150%) compared to growth in the far right (+80%). The far right, however, is a more potent faction to deal with since nearly one of every five voters now claims that mantle. A clear indication in these figures is that Arizona voters are becoming more extremist in their views.

Most Arizona voters however, remain more closely aligned with the center in that 72 percent of voters classify their political views either as middle of the road or simply as liberal or conservative (not very liberal or very conservative). More specifically, 32 percent think of themselves as moderates, 28 percent simply as conservative and 12 percent simply as liberal. And while the proportion of voters who see themselves as simply liberal or conservative has remained relatively unchanged over the past two decades, those calling themselves middle of the road shrank from 50 percent to 32 percent. So again, the reality seems to be that the ranks of moderates is shrinking while the extremes are growing.

(Continue)

Three in ten Republican voters but only eleven percent of Independents and Democrats rate themselves as very conservative on the ten point scale used in this survey. Twenty three percent of Democrats, seven percent of Independents but only one percent of Republicans call themselves very liberal. Liberal leanings appear to be growing most noticeably among younger adults, Democrats and Latinos. But across all population sub-groups, conservatism is the plurality preference.

In a separate question we asked voters whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of questions about the intensity of partisan politics in Arizona. The results may reflect the dominant preference among voters for politics of a less intense partisan tonality. More specifically:

- Sixty-two percent of Arizonans believe that demands for party loyalty have caused office holders here to lose the ability to compromise even when they think a compromise will serve the public good.
- By a 5 to 3 majority, they believe that political parties in Arizona have become too extreme and inflexible.
- A plurality believe that political moderates are being forced from office by the extreme position taken by political parties as issues.
- Finally, six of ten are not pleased with members of their own political party who always vote a straight party line.

Belief that extremist politics is limiting office holders from seeking public policy compromises that are in the public interest is strong among people who have declined to register to vote or who have elected to register as Independents. Perception that partisan politics caters only to the extremes may in part account for the growth in voters registering as Independents and the steady decline in the ranks of both the Democrat and Republican party.

Concerns about the intensity of partisan politics in Arizona is found within the ranks of all political parties and all along the liberal conservative continuum.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: This Rocky Mountain Poll - Arizona (2010-III-05), is based on interviews with 800 adults across Arizona including 524 interviews with registered voters statewide conducted between June 30 and July 11, 2010 of which 190 were Republicans, 173 Democrats and 161 Independents. Where necessary, figures for age, sex, race and political party were weighted to bring them into line with their actual proportion in the population. In a sample of this size, one can say with a 95 percent certainty that the results have a statistical precision of plus or minus 3.5 percent of what they would have been had the entire population been surveyed and 4.4 had the entire voter population been surveyed. The Rocky Mountain Poll is conducted by the Behavior Research Center of Arizona and is an independent and non-partisan research program sponsored by the Center.

This statement conforms to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

ENCLOSED: Statistical data for reference.

STATISTICAL DATA

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“On a scale of one to ten where one means you consider yourself to be very liberal and ten means you consider yourself to be very conservative, how would you rate yourself politically?”

	STATEWIDE – ARIZONA				
	2010	1991	1990	1989	1988
Very liberal (1-2)	10%	8%	9%	4%	4%
Liberal (3-4)	<u>12</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>11</u>
(Total liberal)	(22%)	(22%)	(22%)	(16%)	(15%)
Middle of the road (5-6)	32	43	41	48	50
Conservative (7-8)	28	23	24	26	25
Very conservative (9-10)	<u>18</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>10</u>
(Total conservative)	(46%)	(35%)	(37%)	(36%)	(35%)
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

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|                      | 2010 - ARIZONA VOTERS |           |             |              |
|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------|-------------|--------------|
|                      | ALL VOTERS            | DEMOCRATS | REPUBLICANS | INDEPENDENTS |
| Very liberal         | 10%                   | 23%       | 1%          | 7%           |
| Liberal              | <u>12</u>             | <u>18</u> | <u>3</u>    | <u>16</u>    |
| (Total liberal)      | (22%)                 | (41%)     | (4%)        | (23%)        |
| Middle of the road   | 32                    | 33        | 25          | 40           |
| Conservative         | 28                    | 15        | 41          | 26           |
| Very conservative    | <u>18</u>             | <u>11</u> | <u>30</u>   | <u>11</u>    |
| (Total conservative) | (46%)                 | (26%)     | (71%)       | (37%)        |

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AGREE   DISAGREE   UNSURE

Political parties in Arizona have become so politically extreme that office holders have lost their ability to compromise even when they think a compromise would serve the public good

|                   |     |     |     |
|-------------------|-----|-----|-----|
| Total public      | 62% | 24% | 14% |
| Registered voters | 61  | 27  | 12  |

Political parties in Arizona have become too extreme and inflexible.

|                   |    |    |    |
|-------------------|----|----|----|
| Total public      | 52 | 31 | 17 |
| Registered voters | 58 | 33 | 9  |

Political parties in Arizona have become so extreme that moderates are being forced out of electoral office

|                   |    |    |    |
|-------------------|----|----|----|
| Total public      | 41 | 39 | 20 |
| Registered voters | 48 | 38 | 14 |

I am glad that electoral officials in my political party always vote the party line

|                   |    |    |    |
|-------------------|----|----|----|
| Total public      | 23 | 58 | 19 |
| Registered voters | 21 | 66 | 13 |
| Republicans       | 15 | 71 | 14 |
| Democrats         | 27 | 58 | 15 |

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