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Rocky Mountain Poll

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BUSH-CHENEY TICKET SLIPS TO 48 PERCENT
IN REPUBLICAN MARICOPA COUNTY;
INDEPENDENT VOTERS LOOM LARGE FOR OUTCOME

Phoenix, Arizona, February 24, 2004. In January, 55 percent of voters in Arizona's most populous county (Maricopa) would have voted for a Bush-Cheney ticket over any of three hypothetical rival Democratic tickets. Today, the Bush vote has slipped to 48 percent, while a Kerry-Clark ticket narrows the Bush lead from 23 points in January to 10 points.

Potential Democrat president/vice-president tickets in January (Dean-Clark; Dean-Edwards and Lieberman-Dean) garnered roughly 32 percent of the vote in Maricopa County when matched against a Bush-Cheney ticket. Today, however, three hypothetical Democratic tickets each headed by Kerry (Kerry-Dean, Kerry-Edwards and Kerry-Clark) poll from 38 to 36 percent, with the strongest hypothetical ticket including Kerry for President and Wesley Clark as his vice-presidential running mate. In truth, however, a Kerry-Clark, Kerry-Dean or a Kerry-Edwards ticket all do roughly the same against Bush-Cheney.

In these months prior to when the re-elect Bush campaign is expected to unleash a massive media attack on John Kerry, Arizona appears to be in play and can reasonably be characterized as a state that could go either way. Further, when it is recalled that many regions of Arizona outside of Maricopa County are more heavily Democratic in their leanings, had the entire state been surveyed, the gap would likely have been even narrower, painting Arizona as a bonafide swing state.

Of interest in the survey is what appears to be a growing imperative for the Bush-Cheney campaign to find ways to appeal across party lines, and particularly to the swelling ranks of Independent voters in Arizona. Partisan feelings are running so high that there may be little that the GOP can do to strengthen the percent of votes it will garner from its own rank-and-file. For example, 82 percent of Republicans are committed to support Bush-Cheney for re-election, barely eight percent are planning to vote Democratic and only a handful are fence-sitting. With few new votes to be found among registered Republicans, the party will have to look elsewhere to stay ahead of the Democrats.

The situation may be similar on the Democrat side where seven of ten are voting Democratic and only 17 percent plan to vote for Bush-Cheney, a percent that has been steadily shrinking in Arizona since the Democrat primary election campaigns began.

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The growth in the ranks of Independents in Arizona may help explain the intensification of partisan voting patterns: political moderates from both parties have re-registered as Independents - leaving the lists of both the GOP and the Democratic parties dominated by the most intense partisans. But if party members vote their party line and are near equal in number statewide, the voting power of Independents will grow, and may even be decisive this year.

When we look at candidate preferences of Independents, the conundrum facing the Arizona GOP is clear: The ranks of Independents have swollen to nearly a quarter of all registered voters and they currently lean toward a Kerry-Clark ticket by five to three over Bush-Cheney. Roughly a fifth remain sitting on the fence. And this is true despite the fact that past research has revealed a slightly stronger interest among Arizona Independents in supporting the GOP ticket. Consequently, we feel compelled to take their mantra of "independent" seriously and conclude that their voting is being driven more by reactions to candidate personalities and major national issues than by any lingering partisan predilections.

An obvious question emerges: can either the Democrats or Republicans make appeals to Independents without running afoul of their hard-core partisan supporters? Today, and perhaps only a temporary reflection of the huge media attention focused on the Democratic primaries, it appears that a majority of Independents are gravitating toward the Democrat ticket. Several months ago, Independents were more evenly divided, a sign that they will be hard to please, and perhaps even fickle.

So at the moment, what is it about President George Bush that attracts or repels voters in Arizona? Those with a favorable view principally see him as a decent and honest leader who fights for what he believes in and admire him for his efforts against terrorism and weapons of mass destruction in the world. Few however, mention other issues, domestic or foreign, which attract them to him.

Negative views or concerns about President Bush reveal three principle factors that may be driving voters away from his re-election: disagreement with his taking the U.S. into Iraq; belief that his economic and tax policies have done nothing to help improve the economy; and questioning whether he has been honest with the American people -some even characterize him as "flip-flopping" on issues. A quarter of voters admit that their disaffection with Mr. Bush is so great that they have reached the point where there is "nothing" about him they admire.

Much of the current configuration of opinion toward George Bush may change when the GOP unleashes its 150 million dollar re-election campaign, which is said to plan to focus a very critical spotlight on Senator Kerry's voting record in office. For their part, Democrats have already shown they can be effective in whittling away on President Bush's once stratospheric popularity. Yet, while Republicans and Democrats may relish a brass knuckle battle between their standard bearers, there is a considerable possibility that such a battle will drive Independents and moderates in unforeseen directions.

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The findings outlined in this report are based on a survey of 600 registered voters throughout Maricopa County conducted between February 14 and February 18, 2004, by the Behavior Research Center of Arizona as part of the Center's independent and non-partisan Rocky Mountain Poll series. The public is welcome to visit www.brcpolls.com to read this and other recent polls.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: This Rocky Mountain Poll Arizona (2004-I-08) is based on 600 telephone interviews conducted from February 14 through February 18, 2004, with adult registered voters throughout Maricopa County. In a sample of this size, one may say with 95 percent certainty that the results have a statistical precision of plus or minus 4.1 percent of what they would have been had the entire adult 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.

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

BELOW: Statistical data

For this and other polls, see www.brcpolls.com/results

STATISTICAL DATA

Behavior Research Center
Rocky Mountain Poll - Arizona
RMP 2004-I-08

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"If the election for President of the United States were being held today, how would you vote if the candidates were:"

MARICOPA COUNTY (PHOENIX REGION)

TICKET	All Voters	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Bush-Cheney	48%	82%	17%	26%
Kerry-Clark	38	9	71	51
Uncommitted	<u>14</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>23</u>
(Net to Bush)	(+10)	(+73)	(-54)	(-25)
Bush-Cheney	49%	81%	17%	29%
Kerry-Edwards	37	8	69	50
Uncommitted	<u>14</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>21</u>
(Net to Bush)	(+12)	(+73)	(-52)	(-21)
Bush-Cheney	49%	82%	14%	31%
Kerry-Dean	36	8	69	46
Uncommitted	<u>15</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>23</u>
(Net to Bush)	(+13)	(+74)	(-55)	(-15)

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**STATISTICAL DATA**

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*“What, if anything, do you like about President George W. Bush, either as a person or in terms of what he has accomplished in office?”*

*“And what, if anything, concerns you about President George W. Bush, either as a person or in terms of what he has accomplished in office.”*

Total with favorable comments about President Bush 64%

|                                                                                               |    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| <u>Positive personal effective comments</u> : He is a good man, honest, family man, religious | 35 |
| <u>War on terrorism</u> – Invading Iraq, Afghanistan                                          | 27 |
| <u>Leadership qualities</u> – stands up for his beliefs, is smart and effective               | 11 |
| <u>Tax and economic policies</u>                                                              | 7  |
| <u>Foreign trade policies</u>                                                                 | 4  |
| <u>All other comments</u>                                                                     | 6  |

Total with concern/unfavorable comments about President Bush 60%

|                                                                                                                             |    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| <u>Negative personal effective comments</u> : Not a good man, is dishonest, has misled American people, flip-flop on issues | 15 |
| <u>War on terrorism</u> – Invasion of Iraq/Afghanistan a mistake                                                            | 24 |
| <u>Economic/tax policies</u> favor the rich – create unemployment                                                           | 23 |
| <u>Disagree on domestic policy</u> – Social Security, Medicare, environment, space program, church and state                | 10 |
| <u>Foreign trade</u> – immigration policies                                                                                 | 9  |
| <u>Lacks leadership abilities</u> , not smart                                                                               | 5  |

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