

Seven weeks before US election

Polls show Obama edging ahead of Romney

Patrick Martin
17 September 2012

Opinion polls released over the past week indicate that President Obama has taken a small but significant lead over Republican challenger Mitt Romney in the US presidential election.

Several major polls showed similar results, including a *New York Times*/CBS News poll released September 14, an NBC News/*Wall Street Journal*/Marist poll released September 13, an ABC News/*Washington Post* poll September 11, and several statewide polls in key battleground states like Florida and Ohio.

The *New York Times*/CBS News polls found Obama with a 49 percent to 46 percent lead over Romney among “likely voters” and a 51 to 43 percent lead among registered voters. Obama’s approval rating also stood at 51 percent, the first time Obama had topped the 50 percent mark in more than a year.

The NBC News/*Wall Street Journal*/Marist poll found that Obama had significant leads, above the margin of error, in Ohio, Virginia and Florida, three of the nine states identified by both Democratic and Republican strategists as the “battlegrounds” in the Electoral College.

The *Wall Street Journal*—whose editorial line is adamantly pro-Romney—noted in its analysis of the poll results, “Mr. Obama’s support as a candidate is at or near 50 percent in all three states, suggesting that Mr. Romney must peel off voters who now support the president to win.”

The ABC News/*Washington Post* poll found Obama with a 50 percent to 44 percent lead among registered voters, although his margin was only 49 percent to 48 percent among likely voters. Similar figures were reported over the weekend of September 8-9 by Gallup, Reuters/Ipsos and the Republican-leaning Rasmussen Reports, all suggesting that favorable press coverage of the Democratic National Convention had boosted

Obama’s poll numbers.

Under the US Electoral College system, a presidential candidate must win at least 270 out of 538 electoral votes, apportioned on a state-by-state basis. The consensus of the state-by-state polling is that Obama is well ahead in 18 states and the District of Columbia, with 237 electoral votes, while Romney leads in 23 states with 191 electoral votes. Obama leads in the Northeast, the industrial Midwest, and the Pacific coast, while Romney leads in most of the South and Southwest and the sparsely populated Great Plains and Rocky Mountain states.

Nine states with 110 electoral votes are considered competitive—Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio, Virginia and Wisconsin, although Obama leads in eight of them and the two candidates are effectively tied in North Carolina. The Democratic candidate carried all nine of these states in 2008.

According to an analysis by ABC News of its polling results, voter sentiment in eight of the battleground states—all of those listed above except Wisconsin—shifted significantly during the two weeks of the Republican and Democratic conventions, from 42-48 for Romney to 54-40 for Obama.

The Associated Press reported last week that pro-Romney super-PACs had pulled out of Michigan and Pennsylvania, where the Romney campaign is still officially active, after statewide polls showed Obama with a 10-point lead in Michigan and an 11-point lead in Pennsylvania.

The poll numbers suggest two things: First, the Romney campaign has been unable to gain a significant hearing among the poorest sections of the working class, despite its demagogic professions of concern over mass unemployment and poverty. Despite the dismal

record of the Obama administration on job-creation, there is little desire to return to the policies of Bush and the Republicans, which triggered the 2008 financial crash.

Secondly, significant and perhaps decisive sections of the ruling elite have decided that a second Obama administration is more likely to be successful than the Republicans in carrying out its requirements, particularly in making further attacks on Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security and social services such as education.

Obama has given repeated assurances that he will adopt deficit reduction as the number one priority of a second term, as well as reiterating his desire for closer collaboration with congressional Republicans, presuming that they retain control of the House of Representatives or win control of the Senate, or both.

The latest polling numbers have to be viewed with caution because of the enormous degree of media manipulation involved—as evidenced by the coverage of the conventions—and the huge sums of money being expended to promote or tear down the rival right-wing candidates.

In Ohio, for example, the state which decided the outcome of the 2004 presidential campaign, the two campaigns have spent more than \$40 million each on television ads through the end of August—a sum that would have financed a nationwide presidential election two decades ago.

Seven weeks out from the election, the outcome is still uncertain and could be affected by an array of international and domestic events, some of them quite unforeseen by the parties involved, as demonstrated by last week's events.

The Romney campaign took a pounding from the corporate-controlled media over his statements late Tuesday and early Wednesday criticizing the Obama administration's actions during the attacks on US embassies in Egypt and Libya, in which the US ambassador to Libya was killed inside the consulate at Benghazi.

Romney was criticized for falsely claiming that a US statement in Cairo, criticizing the anti-Moslem video posted on the Internet last week, was issued after a mob attack on the embassy when it was actually issued hours beforehand in an effort to stave off such action. He was also denounced by both liberal and right-wing

commentators for failing to rally behind the US government during a foreign policy crisis.

Several editorials compared Romney's actions to the decision by the 2008 Republican nominee, John McCain, to "suspend" his campaign during the financial crisis sparked by the collapse of Lehman Brothers, an action that was widely criticized at the time and coincided with a shift in ruling class support towards the Democratic candidate Obama.

The Obama re-election campaign also announced that it had regained the fundraising lead by collecting more cash in August than Romney, its first fundraising edge since the spring. One analysis of campaign contributions noted that large donations from wealthy patrons accounted for half of Obama's fundraising.

The Democrats also stand to benefit from a series of favorable court decisions handed down over the past two weeks concerning Republican attempts to restrict voting by minorities and the poor and elderly, using techniques like requiring a photo ID to vote or limiting the hours of early voting.

Court battles that could affect who votes, and hence the outcome November 6, are ongoing in nearly all of the most contested states, including Iowa, Wisconsin, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Florida. (See "Right-wing groups prepare national campaign to disenfranchise voters".)



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact