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Poll: Marriage amendment stance could cost Obama

Voters are more likely to pull the lever for a presidential candidate who supports proposed state constitutional marriage amendments -- a finding that could boost Republican John McCain and spell trouble for Democrat Barack Obama this fall, a new poll says, reports Baptist Press.

The poll of 800 likely voters by Wilson Research Strategies found that 58 percent of voters are more likely and 29 percent of voters less likely to support a presidential candidate who backs such proposals.

Additionally, there is a large gap in the intensity of support for the pro-amendment candidates: 49 percent of voters are "much more likely" to support a pro-amendment candidate, 20 percent "much less likely." The poll was released July 10 and sponsored by the Family Research Council, a conservative Christian organization. A majority of Republicans and independents and a plurality of Democrats say they are more likely to support a pro-amendment candidate.

Arizona, California and Florida will have amendments on the ballot in November that would protect the natural definition of marriage, thus banning "gay marriage." Obama opposes the amendments and calls them "discriminatory." Republican John McCain supports them.

The poll found a split among Democrats on the issue. Among those who consider themselves to be strongly Democrat in their affiliation, only 43 percent say they are more likely to vote for a pro-amendment candidate; 47 percent say they are less likely. However, among those who consider their identity to be a "not-so-strong" Democrat, 56 percent say they are more likely to back a pro-amendment candidate, including 46 percent who say they are "much more" likely; 27 percent say they are less likely.

"This issue, if effectively communicated, has the potential to put Obama in a difficult position vis-à-vis his Independent and soft Democrat supporters," the survey's analysis reads. "... Given [McCain's] perceived difficulties in shoring up his conservative base, as well as the data's obvious strengths among Independents and soft Democrats, this position is one that should resonate with possible McCain voters."

Among the poll's other findings:

-- 54 percent of independents say they are more likely to support a pro-marriage amendment candidate (including 47 percent who say they are "much more" likely). Thirty-two percent say they are less likely.

-- 75 percent of Republicans say they are more likely to vote for a pro-amendment candidate, including 66 percent who say they are "much more" likely.

Democrats made up 38 percent of the survey, Republicans 32 percent and independents 27 percent.

"[T]he poll suggests that the protection of marriage is still an issue that voters not only care about, but it is an issue that will influence how they will vote for elected offices, especially for the office of president," FRC President Tony Perkins said July 10 at a panel discussion about religious liberty and "gay marriage."

"... So what's the message from likely voters? The message is this: Candidates leave voters standing alone at the marriage altar at great political risk."

The survey, conducted June 25-26 and 29, asked voters, "As you may know, several states have measures on the November ballot that would amend their state constitutions to define marriage as the union of one man and one woman. Would you be more likely or less likely to vote for a presidential candidate who supports those amendments?"

Messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in June passed a resolution urging Southern Baptists in California to work and vote for a proposed

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Rev. Sam Rodríguez, advisory board member for AFM

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constitutional marriage amendment which would overturn the state high court's decision that legalized "gay marriage." The resolution also asked all Southern Baptists and other Christians to pray for its passage. The resolution, which passed nearly unanimously, did not comment on the presidential election.

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