

# SOONER SURVEY



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## 2012 to Be Banner Republican Year

*Popular Governor and Presidential Contest Increases Importance of GOP Primaries*

by Pat McFerron, President

Cole Hargrave Snodgrass & Associates

Heading into the summer, our survey data shows that 2012 could be a better year for Republican candidates than any we have seen. While many look at 1994, 2004 or 2010 as banner Republican years, these will likely all pale in comparison to the situation in 2012. The only thing keeping 2012 from being even a more robust Republican year is the relative lack of statewide contests. We are really seeing a perfect storm in Oklahoma: We have a very popular Republican Governor in the middle of her first term, a presidential contest which is motivating conservatives while simultaneously demoralizing and splitting traditional Democrats as well as a strong Congressional delegation that will be largely unchallenged.

Mary Fallin holds popularity that has only once been held by a Republican at this stage of a term.

After coming off his handling of the Murrah building bombing, Frank Keating had tremendous numbers in 1996 that helped Republicans capture all of the state's congressional seats for the first time in history. Fallin could well oversee that recurrence in 2012.

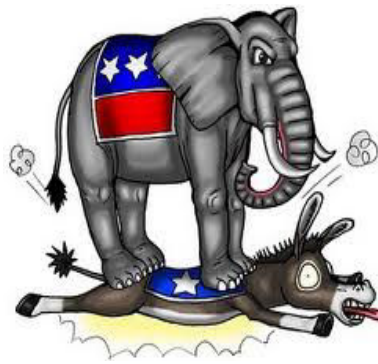
Fallin has very solid numbers – especially among Republicans and the more conservative elements of the state. Overall she is a 64% favorable and only a 21% unfavorable. More important is her 83% favorable vs. 7% unfavorable ratio among registered Republicans.

When expanding to those Republicans who have participated in primary elections, her numbers get even stronger (86% favorable vs. 7% unfavorable). Granted the sample sizes get smaller, but among those who consider themselves to be either Tea Party members (89% favorable) or Tea Party supporters (84% favorable), Fallin has tremendous numbers. Among the 44% of Oklahomans who describe themselves as “very

conservative” a group comprised of both Republicans and Democrats, 82% have a favorable impression of the first term Governor. The simple fact is Mary Fallin, if she decides to do so, can be a major player in the 2012 Republican primaries.

In addition to appealing to Republican groups, Fallin has a 50% favorable rating

among members of the opposition party. Among those Democrats with an unfavorable impression of President Obama, her numbers (76% favorable vs. 13% unfavorable) are almost as good as they are among Republicans. If these numbers hold, in the 2012 general election, Democrats will not be able to effectively challenge Fallin's leadership or focus energies against her as a way to mobilize their base. There is no doubt Democratic leaders had hoped for a failure in the governor's office to create a backfire to the unpopularity of the incumbent President in the state. This has not occurred.



### Key Facts

- Governor Fallin is viewed favorably by 64% of voters, 86% of Republican primary voters and 76% of Democrats with an unfavorable impression of Obama.
- Romney leads Obama by 25 points and we expect that lead to expand.
- A generic Republican candidate for state legislature starts the race at 48% -- 21 points ahead of a generic Democrat. This is the widest lead for either party we have seen in more than 20 years of research.
- Because of the dominance of Republicans in the 2012 Oklahoma general election, Republican primaries will decide many contests as Democrats will not be able to compete.
- Republican primary voters are disproportionately interested in economic issues like taxes, jobs and the budget.

(story continued on page 2)

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The President’s numbers in Oklahoma likely cannot get worse – though I do expect Romney’s lead to expand even further than it already is. Currently, only 28% of Oklahomans have a favorable impression of President Obama, while almost two-thirds (64%) hold a negative opinion of the Commander in Chief.

More remarkable are the polarities: Only 18% have a strongly favorable impression of Obama, while 56% have a strongly unfavorable impression. Registered Democrats are almost evenly split with only 48% having a positive view and 45% being negative. Obama is negative throughout the state – most important in 2012 is the fact that he is only a 29% favorable in the Second Congressional District where 62% hold an unfavorable opinion and Democrats are trying to cling to their only congressional seat in the state.

Against Romney, Obama is behind by 25 points (55% Romney vs. 30% Obama). As written earlier, I expect Romney to expand this lead. Whereas 45% of Democrats have a negative view of the President, Romney is only getting 35% of that vote now. In addition, there are just as many undecided Republicans as there are undecided Democrats – and those undecided Republicans will break toward Romney by a 12-to-1 ratio. In addition, this survey was conducted prior to Obama’s endorsement of gay marriage. That will certainly increase Romney’s current 58% to 30% lead among “Born Again” Oklahomans.

The confluence of a popular Republican Governor and an unpopular Democrat President with Oklahoma’s historical conservative nature and budding Republicanism has set the stage for a further Republican landslide in the legislature.

From 1996 to 2008, the widest Republican advantage we had recorded on our statewide legislative generic ballot was four points heading into the 2002 elections. Today, it stands at a record 21 points (48% Republican vs. 27% Democrat). This gap is both wider – and earlier in the election cycle – than what we witnessed in 2010 when Republicans captured numerous legislative seats in once Democrat bastions of Durant, Spiro, McCurtain County and other places across the state. In 2012, only the most partisan Democrat districts are immune. This is not to say that a great Democrat candidate cannot win, but those wins will be anomalies in this cycle. Right now, less than half of registered Democrats will commit to vote for their own nominee, while 79% of Republicans are committed to supporting their unnamed candidate. Among the 45% of Democrats with an unfavorable impression of Obama, the generic Republican has a 27-point advantage (46% Republican vs. 19% Democrat.)

With such a positive set-up for Republicans in the 2012 general election, it means that the real battles are going to be in the Republican primaries. Even in the bloodiest of primaries, in most every part of the state, the victorious Republican will be heavily favored in the general election. Republican primary voters are focused on economic issues like cutting taxes, creating jobs and controlling the budget (45%) much more than they are on moral issues (22%), government accountability (11%), education and health care (8%) or public safety (5%). Clearly, the Republican candidate that can take the lead on economic issues and be cast as a tax-cutter and budget hawk will have the upper-hand in any primary election.

1. If the election for State Legislator were held today would you be voting for:
- The Republican candidate .....48%
  - The Democrat candidate .....27%
  - Undecided (vol.) .....24%

4. If the election for President were held today, who would you be voting for if the candidates were: (Rotate)
- Barack Obama, the Democrat .....30%
  - Mitt Romney, the Republican .....55%
  - Undecided (vol.) .....14%

I want to read you a list of names, and I want you to tell me first if you have heard of the person. Then, if so, please tell me whether you have a favorable or an unfavorable impression of that person. (Rotate names)

	2. Mary Fallin	3. Barack Obama
Strongly Favorable	35%	18%
Somewhat Favorable	29%	10%
Somewhat Unfavorable	8%	8%
Strongly unfavorable	13%	56%
Heard of / No Opinon	11%	7%
Never heard of	4%	0%

5. Which of the following most interest you when voting on candidates for state office? (Rotate)
- Economic issues like taxes, jobs and the economy ....39%
  - Moral issues like prayer in school, abortion and the break-up of the family .....17%
  - Public Safety issues like cracking down on crime and stopping illegal drugs .....6%
  - Government accountability issues like ethics and campaign reform .....10%
  - Societal issues like health care and education .....17%
  - Undecided .....11%

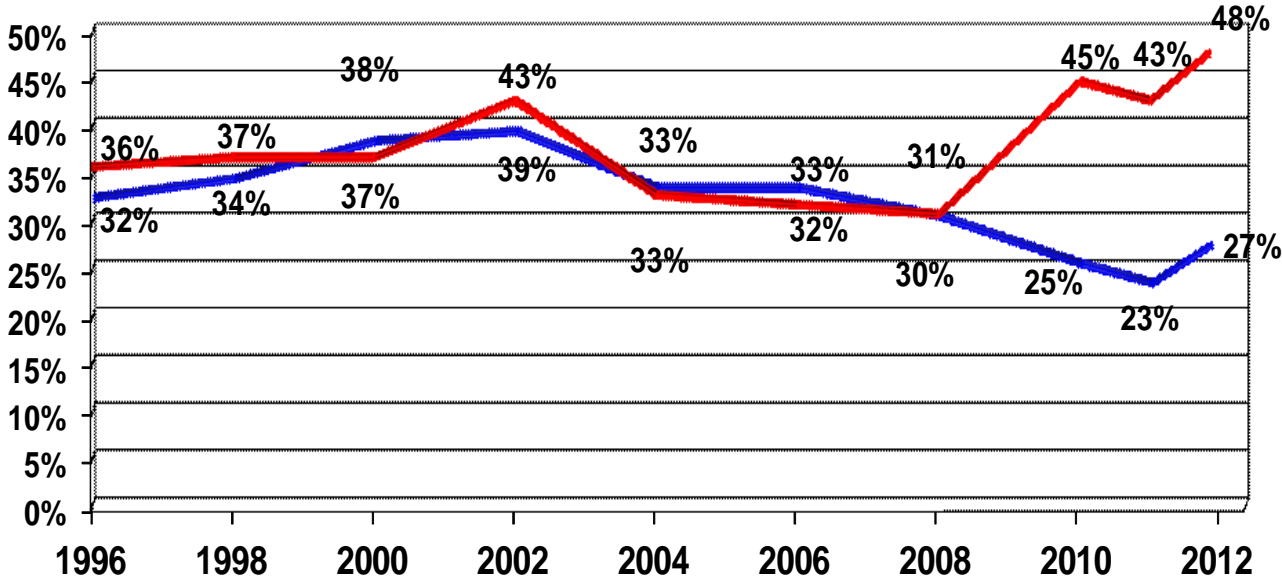
# Generic Legislative Ballot

■ Republican ■ Democrat



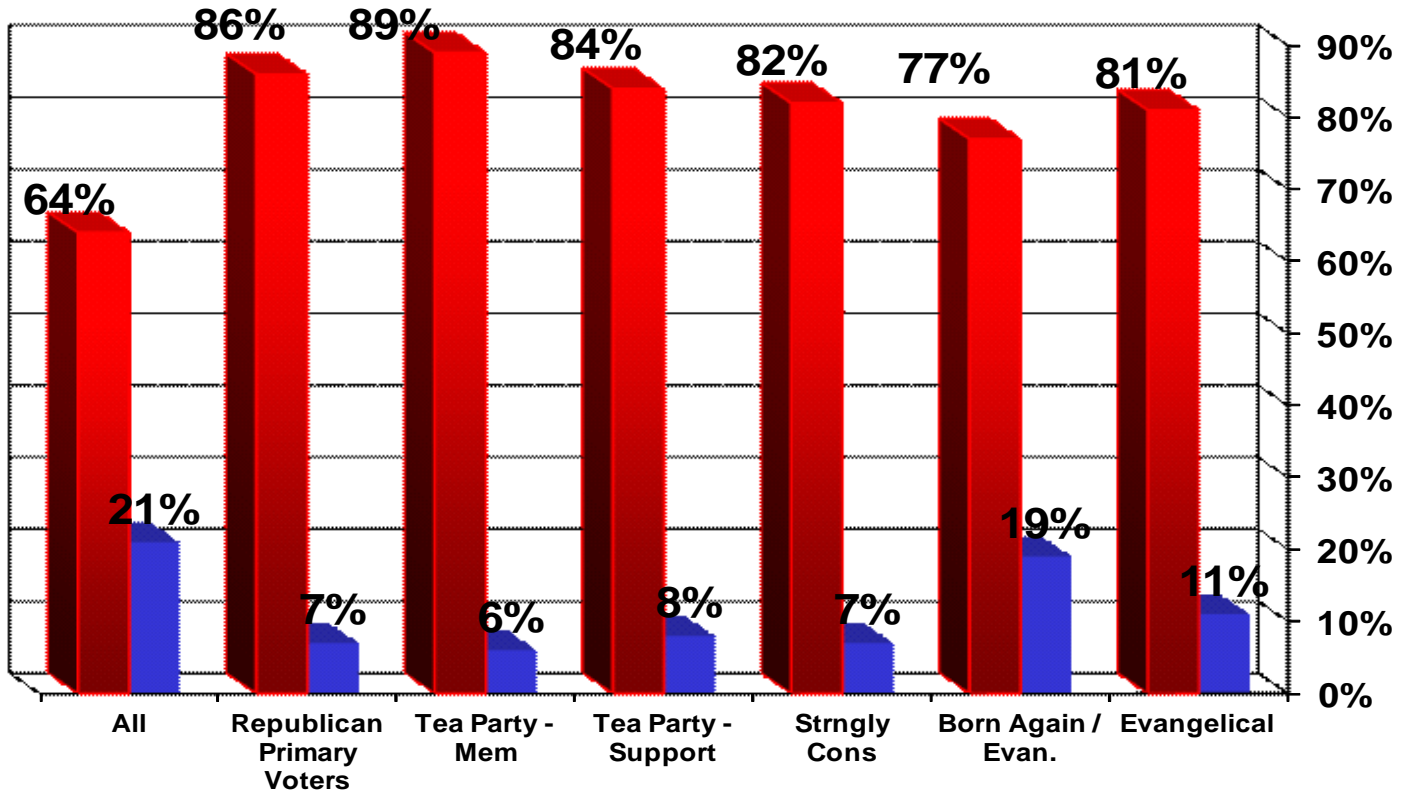
Pat McFerron is a nationally recognized pollster. McFerron has supervised polling for numerous successful gubernatorial, U.S. Senate, Congressional and legislative clients throughout the nation.

In addition, McFerron conducted polling for Oklahoma City's MAPS for Kids the effort to secure an NBA team, MAPS III, as well as Tulsa's Vision 2025 election and Oklahoma's historic right to work campaign. McFerron also oversees marketing research projects for CHS clients that range from Fortune 500 companies to innovative start-ups.



## Fallin Favorable

■ Favor ■ Unfavorable

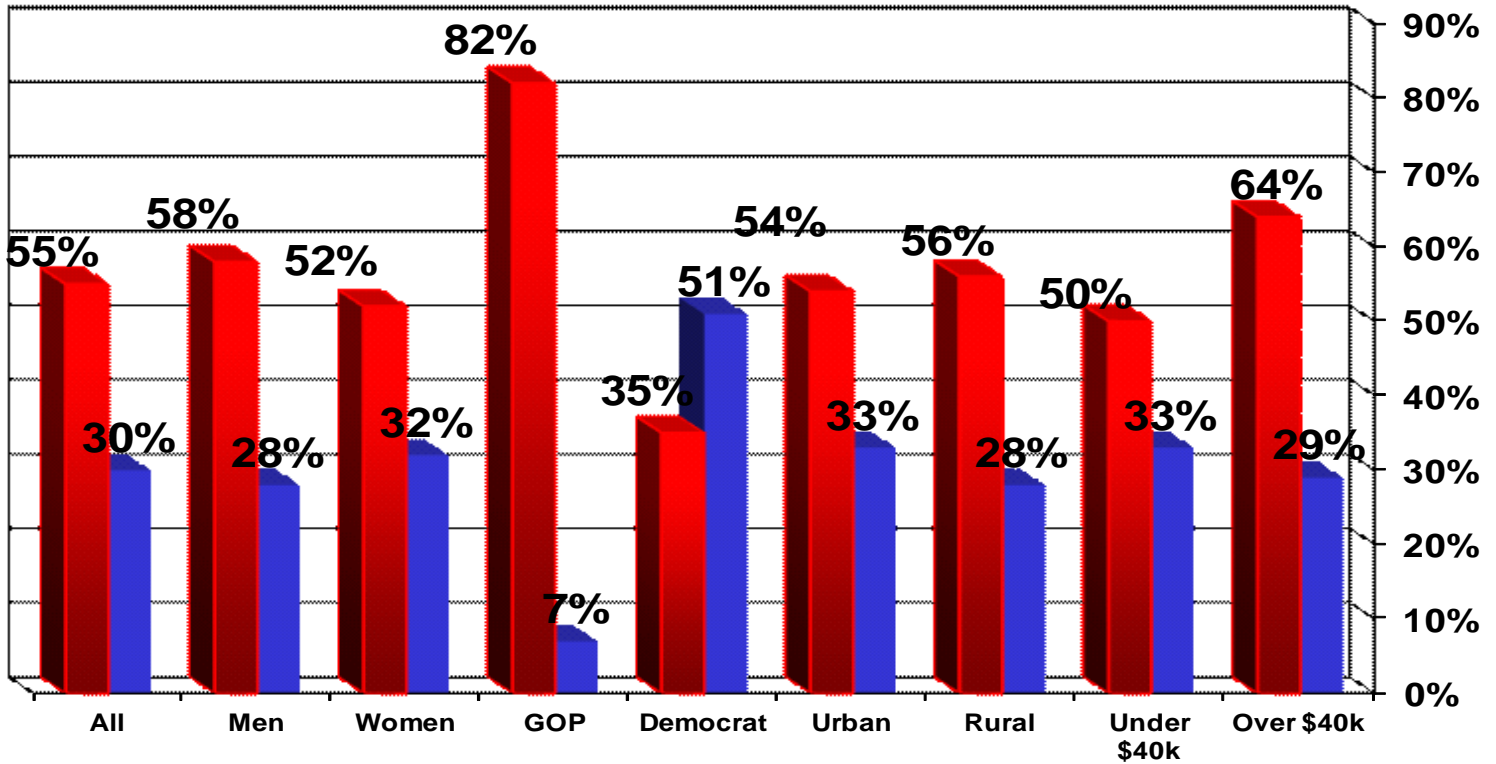


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# Presidential Ballot

30% Barack Obama; 55% Mitt Romney; 14% Undecided

■ Romney ■ Obama



*This edition of the Sooner Survey was conducted between April 3 - 5, 2012. It was a telephone survey of 500 registered voters in the State of Oklahoma. The sample accurately reflects the electorate of the state. The confidence interval associated with samples of this type is such that 95% of the time, the results are within +/- 4.3% of the "true values," where "true values" refer to the results obtained if it were possible to interview every voter in the state.*

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