

## NAACP polls Black voters

Written by Joi C. Ridley

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For the civil rights community, Election Day was an undeniable victory. Ballot initiatives promoting equality were passed in several key states and Minnesota's attempt to restrict voting rights was struck down. An NAACP swing state poll conducted in the days leading up to the election showed that African Americans were engaged on these issues, and offered a snapshot of the black electorate at this point in history.

The NAACP's polling found that a majority of African Americans support the Dream Act and marriage equality, both of which passed in Maryland on Election Night. The data revealed majority support for marriage equality measures. Fifty percent of African American voters favor a constitutional right to marry, with 40% opposing it. Ninety-three percent of respondents favor the Dream Act, which allows undocumented youth to seek U.S. citizenship (71% strongly, 21% somewhat).

The poll, which interviewed 1,600 African American voters in Ohio, Virginia, Florida and Georgia also suggested that, despite their very high support for the Democratic Party with President Obama at the helm, African Americans could be convinced to vote for a Republican candidate. Only 47% of respondents were "very enthusiastic" for the next Democrat candidate following President Obama and 15% are unsure of how enthusiastic they will be in 2016. *Moreover*, 14% percent of African Americans said they are more likely to vote for a Republican in the future if the candidate has civil rights issues on his or her agenda.

"This data reveals opportunities for the GOP to improve its relationship with our community. It suggests that the Democratic Party should not assume it will see the 2008 and 2012 levels of Black turnout in 2016," said Benjamin Todd Jealous, President and CEO of the NAACP.

Jobs and the economy topped the list of most important issues to African American voters, earning the vote of 60% of respondents. Ninety-five percent of respondents believe the federal government should engage in job creation opportunities for all Americans. Respondents also believe that the federal government has a role to play in education (95%), health care (96%), and job creation (96%).

However, support for the federal government is not support for government dependency. Eighty-one percent of respondents believe that success depends on self-reliance and determination, while only 14% disagree.

"This poll paints a picture of how African American interests fit into our new political calculus," said Marvin Randolph, NAACP's Sr. Vice President for Campaigns.

This calculus includes an African American voting bloc that made up more than 13% of the voting electorate for the last two presidential elections, according to national exit polls. The NAACP helped encourage this high turnout by registering more than 432,000 new voters and educating and activating 1.2 million voters – both historic highs for the Association.

"This data underscores the decisive role our community played in key battleground states," said Jealous.

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"People have said traditional America has died. In actuality, the real America, full of diverse opinions and values, has now risen. That *real* America is what our nation was built upon."

Complete polling results are found online at <http://www.naacp.org/blog/entry/naacp-battleground-poll-results>