



CLEMSON UNIVERSITY PALMETTO POLL

POLL RESULTS February 26, 2020

The Clemson “Palmetto Poll” finds new candidates keeping pace with more familiar names as the South Carolina primary election vote draws to a close on February 29. Seven Democratic candidates are available for presidential primary voters to choose a favorite in the spring contest. Voters, all of whom said they planned to vote, made the following choices:

Q1. If the election were held today, for whom would you vote?

- Joe Biden	35%
- Tom Steyer	17%
- Bernie Sanders	13%
- Elizabeth Warren	8%
- Pete Buttigieg	8%
- Amy Klobuchar	4%
- Tulsi Gabbard	2%
- Unsure	12%

Voters were asked a follow-up question about their choice, asking which characteristics of the candidate they picked appealed to them the most. Regardless of their familiarity with voters, the choices showed both policy and personality appeal. Respondents were allowed to give multiple reasons for their support.

Q2. What do you like most about your choice for president?

- Strong Leader	55%
- Cares about people like me	51%
- Shares my position on issues	45%
- She/he is the most electable	32%
- Other	2%
- No answer	3%



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Joe Biden has called South Carolina the “firewall” for his presidential campaign, meaning that regardless of what happened before the Palmetto State vote, the outcome there would ensure his survival as a candidate. With its “First in the South” label still intact, South Carolina offered a large African American constituency (57%) an opportunity to express their opinion about the Democratic candidates. Joe Biden’s previous association with former senators Strom Thurmond and Fritz Hollings, and his frequent visits to the state, gave him an advantage with voters. He leads all contenders with more than one-third of the vote.

Our polling shows that Biden has wide name recognition and stood in favor with older Democratic primary voters. Nearly half of those polled (40%) said they made up their minds “before the primaries began” in 2020. Despite his victories in Iowa, New Hampshire and Nevada, Bernie Sanders could not overcome Biden’s strength in this southern state, but the Vermont senator still is popular with a projected third place finish. The surprise showing is by Tom Steyer – who has played a small role in other primary elections, but appears as a prominent force in the Palmetto State electorate. Such a finding comes as no surprise to those familiar with South Carolina. Candidate Steyer waged an aggressive media campaign weeks before the election and made personal appearances across the state in anticipation of the February 29 vote. One telephone respondent may have summed up the sentiment of others when he said, “Things are getting worse, we need someone new, Tom Steyer.”

Michael Bloomberg does not appear on the SC primary ballot. However, his national spending habits and poll popularity allowed him to have a place at the SC primary discussion. Almost everyone, 92% of those called, said they had heard of Bloomberg. Even though most voters said they knew who he was, their opinions of the former NYC mayor, were divided.



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In the Palmetto Poll: 31% had a positive view, 34% a neutral view and 25% said they were negative on his candidacy and 10% had no position on him.

Early questions in the poll asked respondents about their familiarity with each candidate. The results show that Steyer was popular before the South Carolina vote, even though he had little national visibility.

Q3. Please tell me if you have heard of the candidate, and if you have a positive or negative opinion of them.

	<u>Heard of</u>	<u>Positive opinion</u>
Joe Biden	98%	63%
Bernie Sanders	98%	54%
Tom Steyer	93%	62%
Elizabeth Warren	93%	55%
Pete Buttigieg	82%	50%
Amy Klobuchar	76%	51%
Tulsi Gabbard	66%	22%

The Democratic primary voters in South Carolina have some distinct opinions about their choice for the nation’s highest office. First, the poll asked voters to pick from a list of the most important issues facing the nation in anticipation of their primary decision. “Poor leadership in government” was the choice of 32% of the respondents, ahead of the second reason, health care, at 22%. Second, primary voters were asked about the role the economy played in their election decision: 42% said that the economy was “getting worse,” and a similar percentage (44%) said it was “staying about the same.” Finally, respondents were asked about the role the impeachment proceedings in December (2019) and January (2020) played in their decision to vote. A majority of the respondents said the hearings had “no effect” (53%) on their decision to participate, but nearly as many (40%) said they made it “more likely” that they would vote.



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The Democratic primary electorate in the state has the following characteristics: The Palmetto Survey was of 650 respondents, with a mixed survey methodology of telephone respondents, online and online panel voters. It was conducted by a professional polling firm of voters statewide from February 17-25. The survey has a margin of error of +/- 3.8%, and a 95% confidence level for the results. The demographic profile is as follows:

Age:

18 – 25.....	3%
26 – 40.....	14%
41 – 54.....	20%
55 – 64.....	21%
65 plus.....	43%
N/A.....	1%

Sex:

Female.....	65%
Male.....	35%

Ethnicity:

Asian/Pacific Islander.....	–
Black/African American.....	57%
Hispanic/Latino.....	1%
Other/Multi-racial.....	2%
White/Caucasian.....	37%
American Indian.....	–
N/A.....	3%