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SIENA COLLEGE, LOUDONVILLE, NY

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## Siena College Poll:

### Romney Leads Santorum by 15 Points Among NY Reps

Obama Maintains Roughly Two-to-One Leads Over All Republicans

*Almost Two-Thirds of NYers Think America's Best Days Are Still to Come*

Gillibrand, Gaining Momentum with Voters, Looking Stronger for Re-Election

Loudonville, NY. With less than two months to go until the New York State presidential primary, Mitt Romney has opened up a large lead over his three opponents. Rick Santorum is closest, 15 points behind, while Newt Gingrich trails Romney by 25 points and Ron Paul is 27 points back, according to a new Siena College Research Institute poll of registered voters released today. President Obama continues to hold big leads – between 26 and 39 points – over all the Republican candidates.

While by a small majority voters think the country is headed in the wrong direction, an overwhelming majority believes that America's best days are still to come and not behind us. In the race for United States Senate, Democratic incumbent Kirsten Gillibrand remains in a strong position for re-election eight months out.

<b>Favorability Ratings of Republican Presidential Candidates</b> (Numbers in parenthesis are from February 6, 2012 Siena College Poll)						
<b>Candidate</b>	<b>All Registered Voters</b>			<b>Registered Republicans</b>		
	<b>Favorable</b>	<b>Unfavorable</b>	<b>Don't Know/ No Opinion</b>	<b>Favorable</b>	<b>Unfavorable</b>	<b>Don't Know/ No Opinion</b>
Mitt Romney	32% (35%)	57% (55%)	10% (10%)	57% (52%)	34% (40%)	9% (9%)
Ron Paul	29% (32%)	52% (49%)	19% (19%)	39% (46%)	41% (36%)	20% (18%)
Rick Santorum	26% (28%)	56% (46%)	17% (26%)	47% (43%)	31% (31%)	22% (25%)
Newt Gingrich	21% (24%)	70% (67%)	8% (9%)	43% (44%)	45% (47%)	12% (9%)

Source: Siena College Poll, March 7, 2012

“Each of the four Republican presidential contenders is viewed unfavorably by a majority of all New York voters. Even among just Republican voters, only Romney has a majority viewing him favorably, while Paul and Gingrich have more Republicans viewing them unfavorably than favorably,” said Siena pollster Steven Greenberg.

“Given their favorability ratings among Republicans, it's not surprising that Romney has opened a wide lead in New York's Republican presidential primary. He is supported by 38 percent of Republicans, with Santorum being supported by 23 percent, Gingrich 13 percent and Paul 11 percent. The race has changed dramatically since early February when Romney led narrowly over Gingrich, and Santorum was in fourth place,” Greenberg said.

**Loved by Democrats, Hated by Republicans, Overall Obama Maintains Strong Ratings with NY Voters**

President Obama’s favorability rating is 61-36 percent, down slightly from 64-34 percent last month. His job performance rating is 50 percent positive, 49 percent negative, little changed from 49-51 percent last month. Currently, 56 percent of voters say they are prepared to re-elect the President and 38 percent prefer ‘someone else,’ down slightly from 58-36 last month. Among Democrats, Obama has an 82-15 percent favorability rating, with Republicans it is a negative 26-71 percent, and independents view him favorably 54-43 percent.

“The President enjoys solid support among New York voters, largely because there are twice as many Democrats in New York as there are Republicans. Obama continues to be viewed very differently by Democrats – who give the President an even stronger favorability rating than they give Governor Cuomo – and Republicans, who view him unfavorably by a nearly three-to-one margin,” Greenberg said.

**Obama Maintains Huge Leads Over All Potential Republican Opponents**

“While there are still eight months until election day and the race will certainly crystalize once the Republicans select their nominee, at this point it does not appear that the Democrats’ run of six consecutive presidential victories in New York is in danger of being snapped,” Greenberg said. “Obama has leads of between 26 points – against Romney – and 39 points – against Gingrich – garnering at least 60 percent of the vote against each of the Republicans.”

<b>Potential 2012 Presidential Horseraces</b> (Numbers in parenthesis are from February 6, 2012 Siena College Poll)			
<b>Barack Obama vs.</b>	<b>Obama</b>	<b>Republican</b>	<b>Don't Know/ No Opinion</b>
Mitt Romney	60% (63%)	34% (31%)	6% (6%)
Rick Santorum	64% (65%)	30% (28%)	6% (6%)
Ron Paul	62% (65%)	29% (29%)	9% (6%)
Newt Gingrich	66% (68%)	27% (26%)	8% (6%)
<b>Source: Siena College Poll, March 7, 2012</b>			

**‘Blue’ New York Voters Say Democrats Have the Better Plan to Address Many Issues**

“When it comes to protecting Social Security, improving education and creating jobs, the majority of New York voters – including a majority or plurality of independents – say the Democrats have better plans than the

<b>Which Party Has the Better Plan?</b>		
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Democrats</b>	<b>Republicans</b>
Protecting Social Security for seniors	59%	25%
Improving public education	57%	25%
Creating jobs	54%	33%
Dealing with Iran	46%	35%
Keeping America safe from another terrorist attack	44%	37%
Reducing the federal budget deficit	43%	41%
<b>Source: Siena College Poll, March 7, 2012</b>		

Republicans to address those issues. On the issues of Iran and keeping the country safe from terrorists, a plurality of voters say Democrats have better plan, with independents virtually evenly divided. New Yorkers

are nearly evenly divided on which party has the better plan for reducing the federal budget deficit, as independents side with Republicans on this issue,” Greenberg said. “Not surprisingly voters of each party overwhelmingly think their party has the better plan on each of the issues.”

**Candidates' Positions on Key Economic Issues Are More Important to Voters than Social Issue Stances**

Candidates' positions on tax policy, energy policy and health care reform legislation are very important to more than 70 percent of voters, and at least somewhat important to more than 90 percent of voters in determining who to support for president. Slightly below those issues are the candidates' position on Iran's nuclear program, and of significantly less importance are the candidates' stances on health insurance rules concerning contraception and same sex marriage.

“For a substantial number of voters, the presidential candidates' views on social issues are important in determining who to support,” Greenberg said. “However, for virtually all voters, knowing where the candidates stand on issues such as tax and energy policy, health care reform, and dealing with Iran are most important as they decide who to support in the race for president.”

**Most Voters Believe We Have Not Yet Seen America's Best Days**

“By a better than two-to-one margin, 64-31 percent, New Yorkers think America's best days are still to come rather than believing that America's best days are behind us,” Greenberg said. “While Democrats are most convinced of this, a majority of Republicans and independents agree, as do at least 60 percent of upstaters and downstaters, men and women, young, middle-aged and older voters, black and white voters, and voters from all income ranges. Although a majority of voters think the country is currently headed in the wrong direction, a much larger majority is optimistic about our nation's future.”

**With No Well Known Republican Challenger, Gillibrand Appears Ever Stronger Heading to Re-Election**

Senator Gillibrand's favorability rating is 54-24 percent. It was 52-20 percent last month. She has a 49 percent positive and 43 percent negative job performance rating. Currently, 58 percent of voters say they would re-elect Gillibrand, while 30 percent prefer 'someone else,' up from 53-27 percent last month.

“Gillibrand has a better than two-to-one favorability rating and a solid majority prepared to re-elect her. When matched up against Nassau County Comptroller George Maragos – who is virtually unknown to the vast majority of voters – she has a commanding 68-19 percent lead,” Greenberg said. “It is clear that New York Republicans – without a well-known or well-funded opponent to take on the incumbent – have their work cut out for them trying to win the only statewide office up in 2012. Eight months may be a long time, but New York Republicans have a lot of catching up to do.”

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This Siena College Poll was conducted February 26-29, 2012 by telephone calls to 808 New York State registered voters. It has a margin of error of  $\pm 3.4$  percentage points. There were 230 Republicans included with a margin of error of  $\pm 6.5$  percent. Data was statistically adjusted by age, party and gender to ensure representativeness. Sampling was conducted via random digit dialing to landline and cell phones weighted to reflect known population patterns. The Siena College Research Institute, directed by Donald Levy, Ph.D., conducts political, economic, social and cultural research primarily in New York State. SRI, an independent, non-partisan research institute, subscribes to the American Association of Public Opinion Research Code of Professional Ethics and Practices. For more information, call Steve Greenberg (518) 469-9858. For survey cross-tabs and frequencies: [www.Siena.edu/SRI/SNY](http://www.Siena.edu/SRI/SNY).



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## Siena College Poll Trends – March 2012

**Q. 4** Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion about Barack Obama?

DATE	FAVORABLE	UNFAVORABLE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
March 2012	61	36	3
February 2012	64	34	2
January 2012	59	38	3
November 2011	57	40	3
October 2011	55	43	3
September 2011	52	45	2
August 2011	52	45	3
July 2011	57	39	4
June 2011	59	38	4
May 2011	62	36	2
April 2011	63	34	3
March 2011	60	37	3
February 2011	62	35	3
January 2011	61	36	3
<b>HIGHEST EVER</b>	<b>81 (1/09)</b>	<b>46 (10/31/10)</b>	<b>40 (11/06)</b>
<b>LOWEST EVER</b>	<b>48 (11/06)</b>	<b>10 (1/09)</b>	<b>2 (9/11, 5/11)</b>

**Q. 19** How would you rate the job that Barack Obama is doing as President? Would you rate it excellent, good, fair, or poor?

DATE	EXCELLENT	GOOD	FAIR	POOR	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
March 2012	16	34	23	26	0
February 2012	15	34	27	24	0
January 2012	12	34	26	27	0
November 2011	10	33	28	29	0
October 2011	9	29	32	30	0
September 2011	11	29	28	33	0
August 2011	10	26	30	33	0
July 2011	13	32	30	25	1
May 2011	16	37	24	23	0
<b>HIGHEST EVER</b>	<b>16 (3/12, 5/11)</b>	<b>37 (5/11)</b>	<b>32 (10/11)</b>	<b>33 (9/11, 8/11)</b>	<b>1 (7/11)</b>
<b>LOWEST EVER</b>	<b>9 (10/11)</b>	<b>26 (8/11)</b>	<b>23 (3/12)</b>	<b>23 (5/11)</b>	<b>0 (many)</b>

**Q. 20** Barack Obama is running for re-election as President this year. I know it's a ways off, but as things stand now, would you vote to re-elect him or would you prefer someone else?^

DATE	RE-ELECT	PREFER SOMEONE ELSE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
March 2012	56	38	6
February 2012	58	36	5
January 2012	55	40	5
November 2011	51	42	7
October 2011	48	45	7
September 2011	47	47	6
August 2011	47	45	8
July 2011	50	41	9
June 2011	52	44	4
May 2011	54	39	6
April 2011	52	39	9
March 2011	49	43	8
February 2011	49	43	8
January 2011	50	40	10
<b>HIGHEST EVER</b>	<b>58 (2/12)</b>	<b>47 (9/11, 12/10)</b>	<b>10 (1/11, 12/10)</b>
<b>LOWEST EVER</b>	<b>43 (12/10)</b>	<b>36 (2/12)</b>	<b>4 (6/11)</b>

# Siena College Poll Trends – March 2012

**Q. 7** Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion about Mitt Romney?

DATE	FAVORABLE	UNFAVORABLE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
March 2012	32	57	10
February 2012	35	55	10
November 2011	36	48	16
October 2011	34	45	21
September 2011	30	46	24
August 2011	32	46	21
<b>HIGHEST EVER</b>	<b>36 (11/11)</b>	<b>57 (3/12)</b>	<b>35 (12/07)</b>
<b>LOWEST EVER</b>	<b>25 (12/07)</b>	<b>40 (12/07)</b>	<b>10 (3/12, 2/12)</b>

**Q. 8** Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion about Newt Gingrich?

DATE	FAVORABLE	UNFAVORABLE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
March 2012	21	70	8
February 2012	24	67	9
November 2011	26	58	16
August 2011	20	64	16
<b>HIGHEST EVER</b>	<b>26 (11/11)</b>	<b>70 (3/12)</b>	<b>16 (11/11, 8/11)</b>
<b>LOWEST EVER</b>	<b>20 (8/11)</b>	<b>58 (11/11)</b>	<b>8 (3/12)</b>

**Q. 9** Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion about Ron Paul?

DATE	FAVORABLE	UNFAVORABLE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
March 2012	29	52	19
February 2012	32	49	19
November 2011	26	46	28
August 2011	26	40	35
<b>HIGHEST EVER</b>	<b>32 (2/12)</b>	<b>52 (3/12)</b>	<b>38 (3/3/08)</b>
<b>LOWEST EVER</b>	<b>14 (3/3/08)</b>	<b>40 (8/11)</b>	<b>19 (3/12, 2/12)</b>

**Q. 10** Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion about Rick Santorum?

DATE	FAVORABLE	UNFAVORABLE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
March 2012	26	56	17
February 2012	28	46	26
August 2011	14	32	54
<b>HIGHEST EVER</b>	<b>28 (2/12)</b>	<b>56 (2/12)</b>	<b>54 (8/11)</b>
<b>LOWEST EVER</b>	<b>14 (8/11)</b>	<b>32 (8/11)</b>	<b>17 (3/12)</b>

**Q. 36** (REPUBLICANS ONLY) Looking ahead to the upcoming election for President. If the New York Republican primary for President were held today and the candidates were Newt Gingrich, Ron Paul, Mitt Romney, and Rick Santorum who would you vote for? (Order of candidates was rotated.)<sup>^</sup>

DATE	NEWT GINGRICH	RON PAUL	MITT ROMNEY	RICK SANTORUM	OTHER*	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
March 2012	13	11	38	23	NA	14
February 2012	29	16	31	13	NA	10
November 2011	12	9	32	NA	33	15
August 2011	3	8	18	1	61	9
<b>HIGHEST EVER</b>	<b>29 (2/12)</b>	<b>16 (2/12)</b>	<b>38 (3/12)</b>	<b>23 (3/12)</b>	NA	<b>15 (11/11)</b>
<b>LOWEST EVER</b>	<b>3 (8/11)</b>	<b>8 (8/11)</b>	<b>18 (8/11)</b>	<b>1 (8/11)</b>	NA	<b>9 (8/11)</b>

\* In August, choices also included Rudy Giuliani, George Pataki, Sarah Palin, John Huntsman, and Tim Pawlenty

\* In November, choices also included Michele Bachmann, Herman Cain, and Rick Perry

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**Q. 37** If the 2012 election for President were held today and the candidates were Barack Obama on the Democratic line and Newt Gingrich on the Republican line, who would you vote for? (Order of candidates was rotated.)

DATE	OBAMA	GINGRICH	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
March 2012	66	27	8
February 2012	68	26	6
November 2011	63	28	9
<b>HIGHEST EVER</b>	<b>68 (2/12)</b>	<b>28 (11/11)</b>	<b>9 (11/11)</b>
<b>LOWEST EVER</b>	<b>63 (11/11)</b>	<b>26 (2/12)</b>	<b>6 (2/12)</b>

**Q. 38** If the 2012 election for President were held today and the candidates were Barack Obama on the Democratic line and Ron Paul on the Republican line, who would you vote for? (Order of candidates was rotated.)

DATE	OBAMA	PAUL	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
March 2012	62	29	9
February 2012	65	29	6
November 2011	60	31	9
August 2011	57	32	11
<b>HIGHEST EVER</b>	<b>65 (2/12)</b>	<b>32 (8/11)</b>	<b>11 (8/11)</b>
<b>LOWEST EVER</b>	<b>57 (8/11)</b>	<b>29 (3/12, 2/12)</b>	<b>6 (2/12)</b>

**Q. 39** If the 2012 election for President were held today and the candidates were Barack Obama on the Democratic line and Mitt Romney on the Republican line, who would you vote for? (Order of candidates was rotated.)

DATE	OBAMA	ROMNEY	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
March 2012	60	34	6
February 2012	63	31	6
November 2011	59	34	7
October 2011	55	37	8
September 2011	56	36	8
August 2011	55	37	8
<b>HIGHEST EVER</b>	<b>63 (2/12)</b>	<b>37 (10/11, 8/11)</b>	<b>8 (10/11, 9/11, 8/11)</b>
<b>LOWEST EVER</b>	<b>55 (10/11, 8/11)</b>	<b>31 (2/12)</b>	<b>6 (3/12, 2/12)</b>

**Q. 40** If the 2012 election for President were held today and the candidates were Barack Obama on the Democratic line and Rick Santorum on the Republican line, who would you vote for? (Order of candidates was rotated.)

DATE	OBAMA	SANTORUM	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
March 2012	64	30	6
February 2012	65	28	6
<b>HIGHEST EVER</b>	<b>65 (2/12)</b>	<b>30 (3/12)</b>	<b>6 (3,12/ 2/12)</b>
<b>LOWEST EVER</b>	<b>64 (3/12)</b>	<b>28 (2/12)</b>	<b>6 (3,12/ 2/12)</b>

**Q. 5** Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion about Kirsten Gillibrand?

DATE	FAVORABLE	UNFAVORABLE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
March 2012	54	24	22
February 2012	52	20	29
January 2012	49	25	26
November 2011	49	25	26
October 2011	46	24	30
September 2011	46	25	29
August 2011	46	24	30
July 2011	49	21	30
May 2011	51	20	29
February 2011	57	18	25
<b>HIGHEST EVER</b>	<b>57 (2/11)</b>	<b>34 (10/31/10)</b>	<b>56 (1/09)</b>
<b>LOWEST EVER</b>	<b>26 (3/09)</b>	<b>14 (1/09)</b>	<b>14 (10/31/10)</b>

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**Q. 6** Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion about George Maragos?

DATE	FAVORABLE	UNFAVORABLE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
March 2012	5	17	78
February 2012	8	14	78
January 2012	8	12	79
November 2011	5	14	82
<b>HIGHEST EVER</b>	<b>8 (2/12, 1/12)</b>	<b>17 (3/12)</b>	<b>89 (5/10)</b>
<b>LOWEST EVER</b>	<b>5 (3/12, 11/11)</b>	<b>6 (5/10)</b>	<b>78 (3/12, 2/12)</b>

**Q. 21** Kirsten Gillibrand is running for re-election as United State Senator this year. As things stand now would you vote to re-elect her or would you prefer someone else? ^

DATE	RE-ELECT	PREFER SOMEONE ELSE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
March 2012	58	30	12
February 2012	53	27	20
January 2012	53	32	16
November 2011	53	30	17
October 2011	46	34	21
September 2011	45	34	22
August 2011	49	34	18
July 2011	50	29	21
May 2011	50	30	20
February 2011	52	29	19
<b>HIGHEST EVER</b>	<b>58 (3/12)</b>	<b>34 (10/11, 9/11, 8/11)</b>	<b>22 (9/11)</b>
<b>LOWEST EVER</b>	<b>45 (9/11)</b>	<b>27 (2/12)</b>	<b>12 (3/12)</b>

**Q. 54** Looking at the November election for United States Senator from New York, if that election were held today and the candidates were Kirsten Gillibrand on the Democratic line and George Maragos on the Republican line, who would you vote for? (Order of candidates was rotated.) ^

DATE	GILLIBRAND	MARAGOS	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
March 2012	68	19	13
February 2012	63	20	17
January 2012	63	22	15
November 2011	65	17	18
<b>HIGHEST EVER</b>	<b>68 (3/12)</b>	<b>22 (1/12)</b>	<b>18 (11/11)</b>
<b>LOWEST EVER</b>	<b>63 (2/12, 1/12)</b>	<b>17 (11/11)</b>	<b>13 (3/12)</b>

**Q. 2** Is the United States on the right track, or is it headed in the wrong direction?

DATE	RIGHT TRACK	WRONG DIRECTION	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
March 2012	40	52	8
February 2012	42	51	7
January 2012	37	56	7
November 2011	26	66	8
October 2011	22	71	7
September 2011	26	66	8
August 2011	20	74	6
July 2011	35	55	10
May 2011	43	49	9
March 2011	34	57	9
February 2011	44	47	9
January 2011	36	54	10
<b>HIGHEST EVER</b>	<b>62 (5/09)</b>	<b>74 (8/11)</b>	<b>17 (9/08)</b>
<b>LOWEST EVER</b>	<b>19 (10/08)</b>	<b>24 (12/09)</b>	<b>6 (8/11)</b>

**Poll Trend Notes:** \* All surveys are of registered voters except for the polls of October 2010, September and October 2008, and September and October 2006, which are polls of likely voters.

Trends reflect questions asked at least twice since the first Siena College Poll in February 2005.

Results listed here include all times questions have been asked since January 2011.

“Highest Ever” and “Lowest Ever” is provided at the bottom of each question.

^ Inconsequential wording change.