

# LOCAL NEWS

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TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 2008

## Polls give McCain hefty lead in Tenn.; Obama has Nashville

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No one knows who will come out ahead when Nashville hosts next week's presidential debate, but John McCain heads into town with a clear lead in the latest statewide polls.

Republican nominee McCain leads Democrat Barack Obama by a margin of 48 percent to 36 percent in a statewide poll released Monday by Middle Tennessee State University.

Obama does enjoy strong support in Nashville, site of the upcoming Oct. 7 town-hall debate at Belmont University:

Belmont University tightens security in advance of the Oct. 7 presidential debate. **On 4B.**

More election coverage. **On 8A**

59 percent of Nashville voters polled favored him, compared with 26 percent for McCain.

"McCain leads Obama in Tennessee as he has since at least a year ago," Jason Reineke, associate director of the MTSU poll, said in a statement. "But Nashville should feel like friendly ground to Sen. Obama. In a way, both candidates will have a home field advantage during the debate."

A McCain spokesman said

the Republican candidate doesn't put much faith in polling.

"The only poll that matters is the final tally on November 4," McCain spokesman Mario Diaz said.

The Obama campaign did not respond to calls seeking comment.

The MTSU poll also found that McCain, who, like Obama placed a lackluster second in

► Please see **POLL, 4B**

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## Poll: McCain acquires Clinton backers' support

**FROM PAGE 1B**

Tennessee's presidential primary, has managed to pick up a number of Hillary Clinton's Democratic supporters to shore up his base. About one of every four respondents who said they voted for Clinton, now say they will vote for McCain.

Among Clinton supporters, 56 percent support Obama while a quarter remain undecided.

Overall, about 10 percent of Tennesseans surveyed said they remained undecided about their presidential choice.

### Economy is top concern

The MTSU poll was a telephone survey of 635 Tennesseans of voting age.

About half of those surveyed identified themselves as "likely voters," and among this group, McCain's lead grew to 55 percent to Obama's 35 percent.

This isn't the first statewide poll to show McCain with a double-digit lead over Obama. Last week, a Mason-Dixon survey of 625 registered, likely voters found McCain leading 55 percent to 39 percent over Obama.

The week before, an ARG poll showed McCain ahead 59 percent to 36 percent, while a Rasmussen poll in August showed the gap as 60 percent

for McCain to 35 percent for Obama.

The economy is the No. 1 concern of Tennesseans as they head into the election; it was named as the top problem facing the country by 53 percent of those surveyed.

The poll also found that in the U.S. Senate race, Republican Sen. Lamar Alexander was the choice of 50 percent of respondents, with 26 percent favoring Democratic candidate Bob Tuke and 23 percent undecided.

MTSU students conducted the poll Sept. 15-27. It has a margin of error of plus or minus 4 percentage points.

To read the entire poll, visit [www.mtsusurveygroup.org](http://www.mtsusurveygroup.org).

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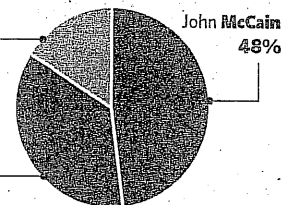
## MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY POLL RESULTS

McCain leads by 12%

Your vote for president is ...

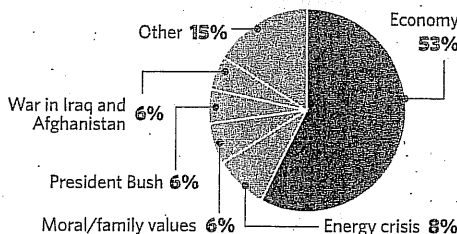
Other or undecided 16%

Barack Obama 36%



### Concerns about the economy dwarf every other worry on the minds of Tennesseans.

When asked about the biggest problem facing the country, more than half picked the economy over any other issue, including wars, terrorism and health care.



SOURCE: MTSU poll.

NOTE: Margin of error +/- 4%

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### Other results from the MTSU poll:

- The top concerns of those polled were the economy, energy issues, education and taxes. The lowest concerns were abortion, gay marriage and race relations.
- 50 percent of Tennesseans favor incumbent Sen. Lamar Alexander in the U.S. Senate race, while 26 percent favor Democrat Bob Tuke and 23 percent are undecided.
- 32 percent approve of President Bush's job performance.

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- 58 percent approve of Gov. Phil Bredesen's job performance.
- 14 percent are satisfied with the direction the nation is heading.
- 47 percent are satisfied with the direction the state is heading.
- 26 percent believe Barack Obama's "lipstick on a pig"

comment was a sexist dig at Sarah Palin.

- 28 percent believe Palin's claim that she said "no thanks" to the Bridge to Nowhere.
- 50 percent think churches should stay out of politics.
- 41 percent think politicians don't talk enough about religion, while 23 percent think politicians talk too much about religion.