POLITICO-George Washington University Battleground Poll: 
Voters Are Evenly Split Between President Obama and an Unnamed Republican Nominee 
President Obama Leads Mitt Romney 48 to 43 Percent

WASHINGTON – President Barack Obama and the yet-to-be-determined Republican presidential nominee are essentially tied at 44 percent and 43 percent respectively among likely voters according to a new POLITICO-George Washington University Battleground Poll released today. When asked to choose between Mitt Romney and President Obama, the incumbent president leads 48 percent to 43 percent. When asked to choose between Herman Cain and President Obama, the president’s lead grew to 49 percent over 40 percent for Herman Cain. According to the poll, an unnamed Republican is more favored by likely voters than either Mitt Romney or Herman Cain.

“Obama has gotten a bump in recent polls and faced with a real Republican, not a hypothetical one, pulls in a lead overall and in intensity and a double digit lead among independents,” said Democratic pollster and President of Lake Research Partners Celinda Lake. “The challenge for the president and Democrats is to stay on message on our plans for the economy and jobs which dominate voters’ concerns and whatever the Super Committee does, protect Social Security and Medicare.”

“Asking voters to choose between Obama and any Republican candidate produces a straight pro-Obama versus anti-Obama response,” said Christopher Arterton, a George Washington University professor of political management. “Yet the fact that neither of the two Republican frontrunners do as well against Obama as the generic candidate speaks to the difficulties Republican voters are having coalescing around a single nominee.”

Forty-eight percent of Americans believe that Mitt Romney will win the Republican nomination regardless of which candidate they personally plan to vote for.

Consistent with other recent public polls, 83 percent of Americans disapprove of Congress’ effectiveness. However, when asked specifically how their own member of Congress is doing, 46 percent responded that they either approve or strongly approve compared to only 39 percent who disapprove or strongly disapprove of their representative’s job performance.

Overall, voters believe that the three most important issues for Congress to focus on are the economy and jobs, government spending and the budget deficit. The economy tops the list of concerns at 21 percent, followed by the deficit and spending at 19 percent and jobs at 18 percent. All other issues were totally overshadowed by these economic and spending concerns, with 7 percent or less voicing individual concerns on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, illegal immigration, taxes, terrorism, education, health care, gas and energy prices and Medicare and Social Security.
“The American Electorate remains primarily focused on the economy, jobs and federal spending and looks at nearly every issue through that economic lens,” said Ed Goeas of the Tarrance Group. “With an overall job approval for the president that is net negative by eight-points, and specific job approval on the economy, jobs, spending/budget and dealing with Congress all net negative by eighteen-points, this is going to be a tough re-election year for President Obama. The advantage tends to go to the incumbent in post WWII electoral politics, but President Obama finds himself in a very deep hole a year out from in the election and an even more narrow timeframe to show real improvements to the American economy.”

Seventy-five percent of Americans continue to feel that the country is on the wrong track. While concerns about the national debt persist, 50 percent of voters are not at all familiar with the Super Committee that was established to examine ways to balance the federal budget. Although a majority of Americans believe cuts must be made to balance the budget, 71 percent would be extremely concerned or very concerned about cuts to Social Security and Medicare and 50 percent would be extremely concerned or very concerned about cuts to defense spending. On the other hand, voters do favor some proposals for increased revenues such as closing tax loopholes and reforming the tax code to make it fairer and increasing taxes on wealthy Americans and corporations.

The POLITICO-George Washington University Battleground Poll is a nationally recognized, series of surveys conducted by Republican pollster Ed Goeas of The Tarrance Group and Democratic pollster Celinda Lake of Lake Research Partners. The George Washington University Global Media Institute, affiliated with the Graduate School of Political Management (GSPM) and the School of Media and Public Affairs (SMPA), serves as the university’s home for the partnership. George Washington’s Gelman Library houses the data archive of the survey results dating back more than two decades. The poll, which is distinguished from other surveys by its presentation of separate analyses from these top pollsters representing both sides of the aisle, surveyed 1,000 registered likely voters nationwide Nov. 6 through Nov. 9, 2011, and yields a margin of error of \( \pm 3.1 \) percent.

As the country shifts its focus to the 2012 elections, the POLITICO-George Washington University Battleground Poll results will be a valuable tool in anticipating the outcome and gauging voter attitudes and concerns. Analyses and full results can be found at www.gwu.edu and POLITICO.com.

Christopher Arterton, professor of political management at GW; Celinda Lake, president of Lake Research Partners; and Ed Goeas, President/CEO of The Tarrance Group; are all available for comment. For Professor Arterton, contact Angela Olson at 202-994-3087. For Ms. Lake, contact Daniel Gotoff at Lake Research Partners, 202-776-9066. For Mr. Goeas, contact Brian Nienaber at The Tarrance Group, 703-684-6688.