

Voting

With Your Pocketbook

Superintendents overwhelmingly say economic policy drives their voting preferences

BY DAVID FRABOTTA
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Americans are desperate for economic leadership. Ever since Herbert Hoover, Americans have used the resident of the Oval Office as a scapegoat for economic woes.

Hoover, of course, had the unfortunate timing of taking the oath of office less than a year before the stock market crash of 1929. By 1933, stock prices were down 80 from their highs in 1929, which opened the door for a fiscally minded challenger. Franklin Roosevelt was an effective persuader and exhilarating speaker, who had the ability to reassure Americans that the Great Depression would soon come an end.

Jimmy Carter and George H.W. Bush were other notable casualties of this fiscal warfare. The latter lost to an opponent, relatively unknown Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton, who hung a sign in his office to remind him, "The economy, stupid." How else could an incumbent president with an 89 percent approval rating lose a general election less than one year later?

America's economy is in tumultuous times once again, and superintendents appear to be voting with their pocketbooks, according to the *Golfdom* 2008 Election survey.

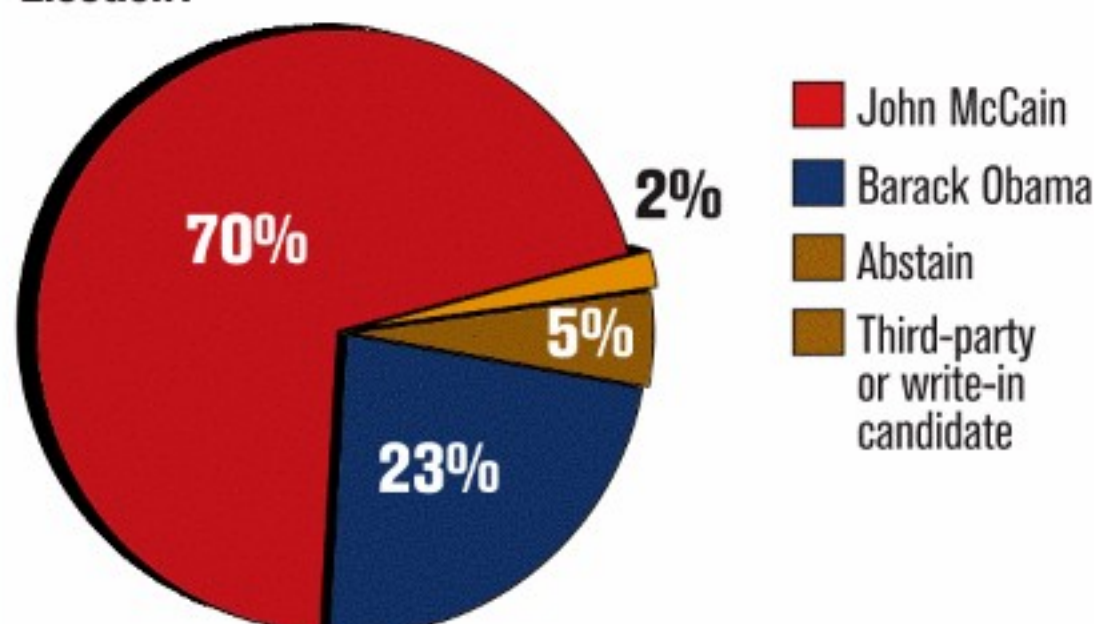
Housing foreclosures continue to send a frightening ripple through the banking sector,

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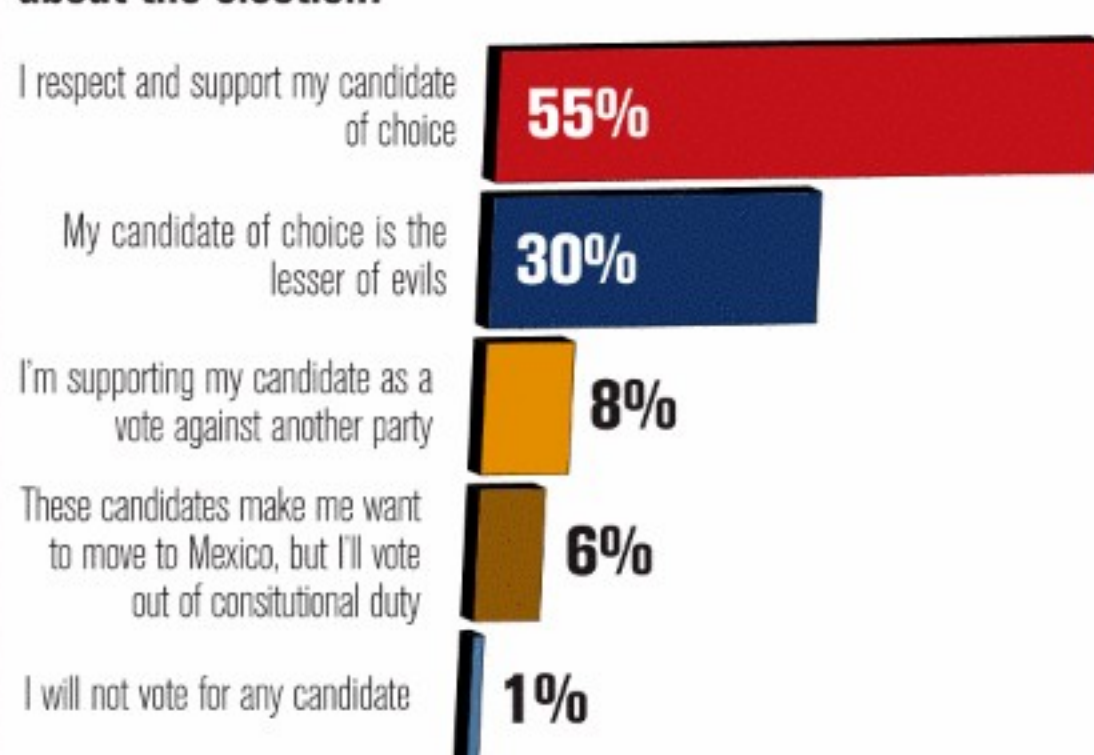
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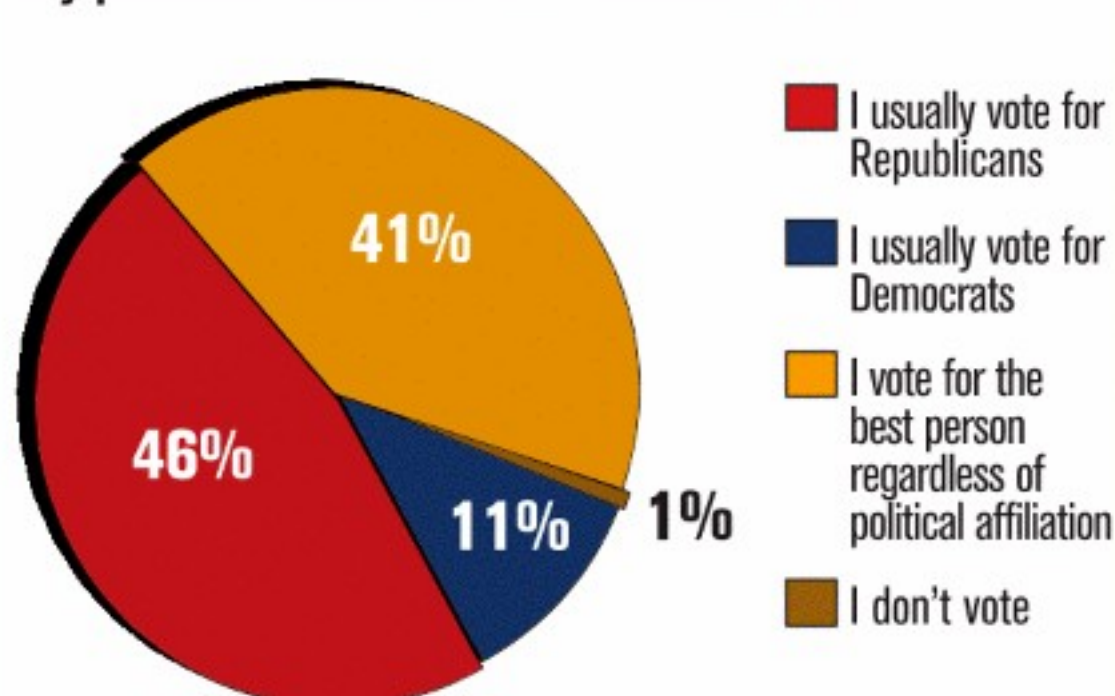
Who will you vote for in the November U.S. Presidential Election?



The following statement best describes your attitude about the election:



My political habits are best described as:



Did We Miss the Mark?

Not everyone received our survey with open arms. Several superintendents were offended that *Golfdom* was encroaching on individuals' rights to a secret ballot.

We should note: A secret ballot is not guaranteed in the federal Constitution. Because elections are run by the states, the right to a private ballot is guaranteed by state law. A secret ballot protects against undue influence and manipulation in cast-

ing a vote, and retaliation because of how one voted. Journalistic ethics would forbid *Golfdom* from disclosing results of our proprietary surveys, especially when it comes to voting. We gather information for editorial purposes only.

Even so, some respondents felt that we should get back to the business and agricultural stories that make *Golfdom* a valuable tool for superintendents.

One respondent wrote: "*Golfdom* has NO

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and jobs data is taking its toll on consumer confidence and spending. At presstime, the House of Representatives rejected a \$700-billion infusion into American banks facing financial ruin. Among the casualties so far are Lehman Brothers, a 158-year-old company that survived the Civil War and the Great Depression but was unable to weather the country's current foreclosure crisis, and Washington Mutual, which has the dubious distinction of being the largest bank failure in American history.

Foreclosures hit another record high in August as 304,000 homes were in some stage of default, and 91,000 families lost their houses. More than 770,000 homes have been repossessed by lenders in the 12 months since August 2007.

Golf has taken its trickle-down lumps along with the general economy. Not only is housing hampering golf development, but golf rounds are down 1.5 percent this year through July, according to Golf Datatech, and operating budgets continue to be hampered by escalating costs in everything from lobster at the clubhouse to turfgrass seed on the golf course.

Rounds are down significantly in the upper Midwest, where local economies have been hit hardest by the housing fore-

closures and unemployment. In the East North Central region — which comprises Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Wisconsin — rounds are down almost 5 percent this year. And in the West North Central Region — Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and Minnesota — rounds fell almost 8 percent through July compared to last year.

The loss of manufacturing in many Rust Belt states helped fuel much of the country's economic downturn and job losses. And their struggling status has been a reason for concern for economists and superintendents alike.

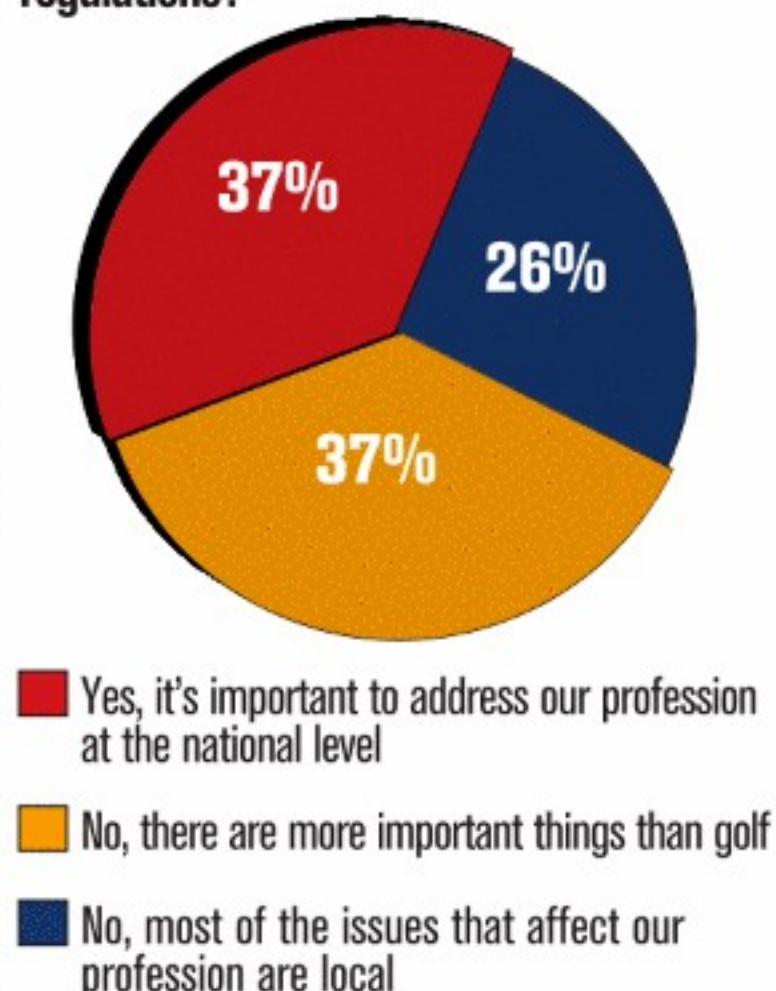
So it's no wonder that three-quarters of respondents to *Golfdom's* 2008 Election survey say they base their voting decision on who is best for the economy. The economy was the most important federal issue for 74 percent of respondents, followed by national security (59 percent), taxes (56 percent) and military conflicts (43 percent).

Given those issues that are most important for superintendents, respondents overwhelmingly plan to vote for Sen. John McCain next month. Seventy percent of superintendents say they will vote for the Republican ticket, while 23 percent say they will vote for Sen. Barack

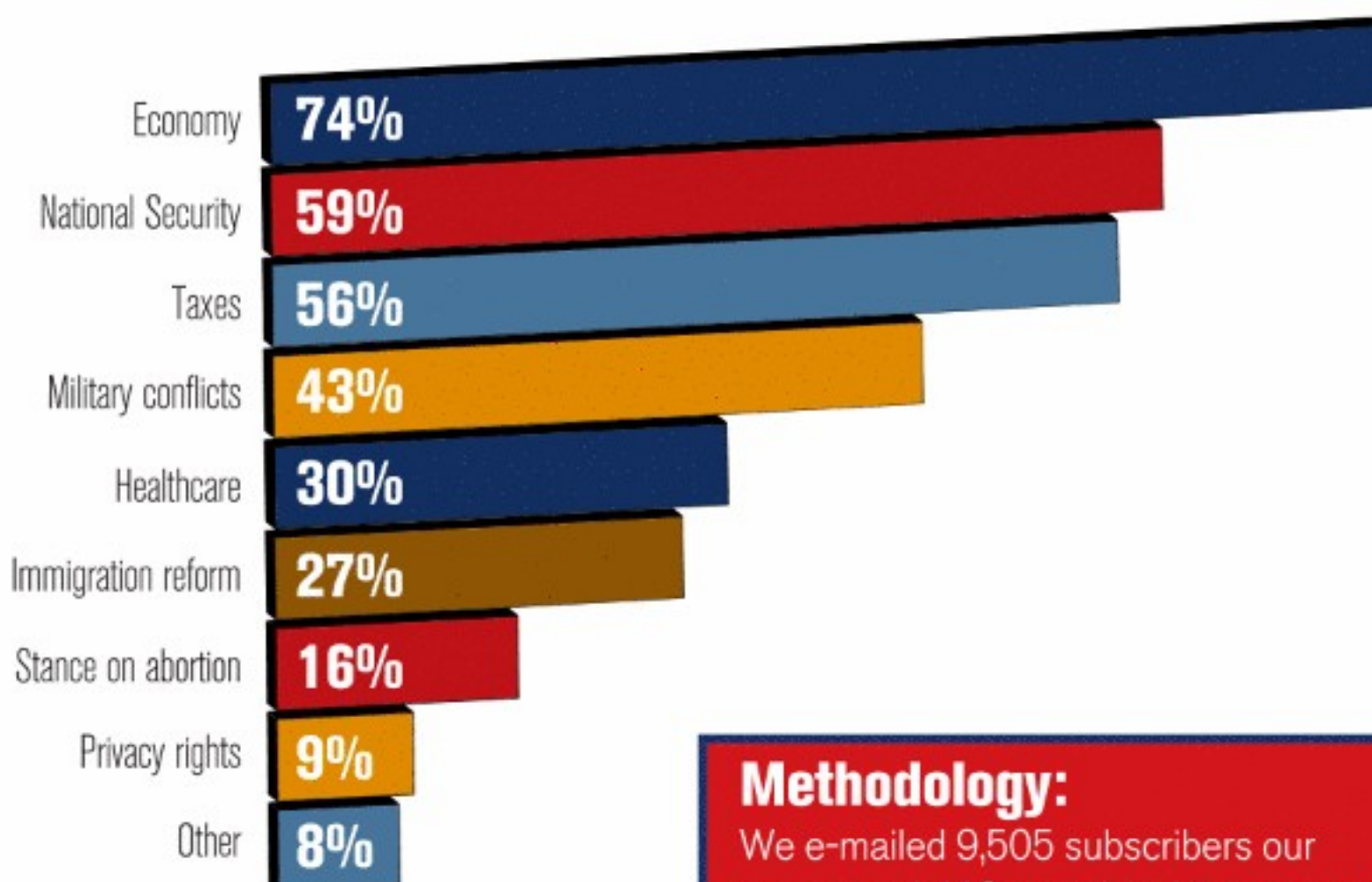
business surveying anyone in the turfgrass industry about this upcoming election and about their personal politics! Get back on track."

Of course, our sole purpose is to create content that our readers want and need, so drop us a line, and let us know what stories you like, dislike and what types of issues — turfgrass or otherwise — that you want us to cover. And we'll try not to keep the most pertinent issues in your lives a secret. dfrabotta@questex.com

Do turfgrass maintenance issues affect your federal voting preferences, such as worker availability (H2B) or chemical regulations?



What federal issues help dictate your candidate of choice? (please choose three answers)



Methodology:

We e-mailed 9,505 subscribers our survey, and 419 completed it, giving us a 4.4 percent response rate. The margin of error is plus or minus 4.68.

The survey was in the field for two weeks. No incentive was given, and the survey was only allowed to be completed once for every e-mail address.

Obama. Five percent of respondents said they would abstain from voting, and 1 percent said they would vote for a third-party candidate.

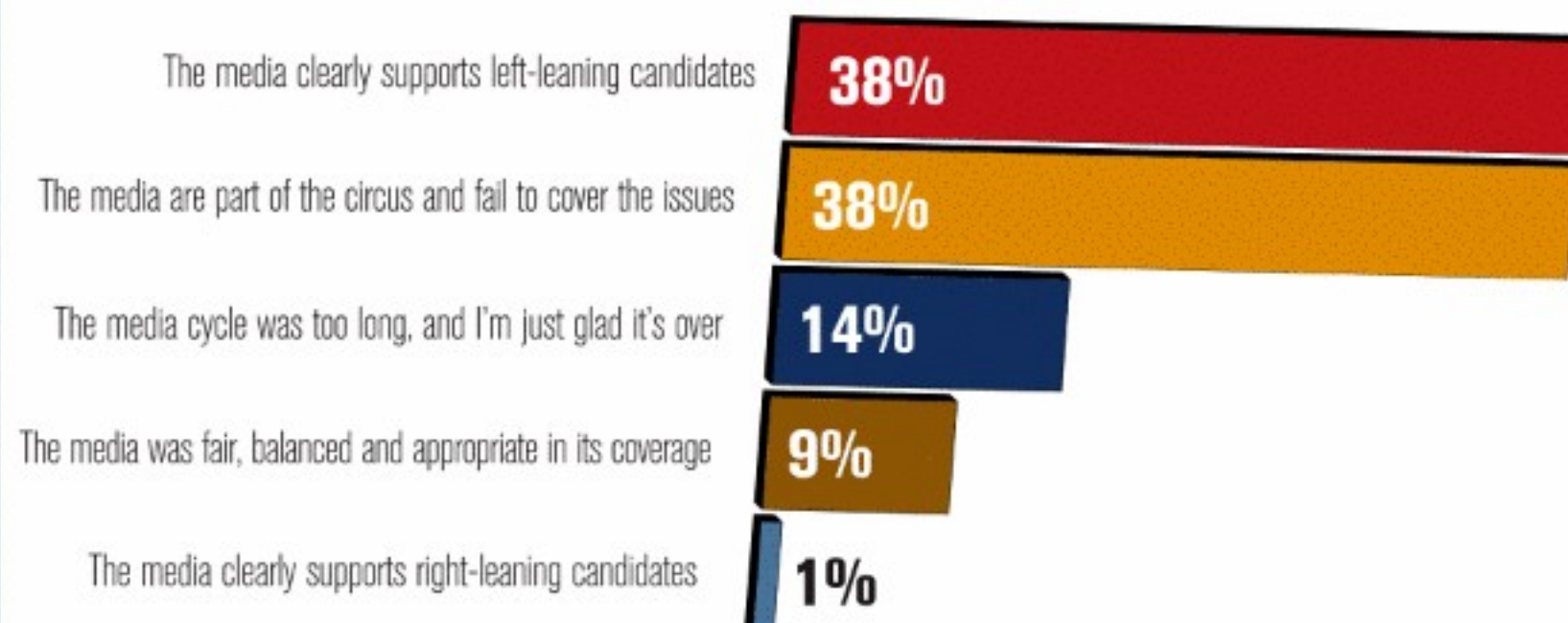
At presstime, the latest Gallup Poll showed Obama leading with 48 percent of the vote and McCain with 45 percent of the vote. Obama led throughout much of the campaign by double-digit margins, but McCain has gained ground since the Republican National Convention.

More than half of respondents (55 percent) say they support and respect their candidate of choice, despite the widespread public sentiment that neither candidate can possibly be the best that the country has to offer. Fewer than one in three of superin-

tendents (30 percent) said they were voting for the lesser of evils, and 10 percent said they were voting for a candidate to spite another political party. Five percent said they will vote out of constitutional duty.

Sixty-three percent of respondents said turfgrass maintenance issues do not influence their federal voting preferences, while 37 percent of respondents said it was important to address turfgrass maintenance issues, such as worker availability and chemical regulations, at the national level. Making up the 63 percent who do not vote on professional issues, 37 percent said there are more important things than golf, and 26 percent said most turfgrass maintenance issues are local. ■

What statement best reflects your opinion of the media coverage surrounding this election?



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