



What GOP Voters Are Thinking: A Snapshot from Maryland

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Before our local Maryland primary on April 26 — part of the so-called I-95 set of primaries that was Donald Trump’s penultimate victory before his clinching Indiana win — I spent a couple of days canvassing for John Kasich and local candidates door to door, at public places, and at the polls in Frederick and Montgomery Counties. I’ve done this a couple of times before elections and have never regretted it; I always learn a lot about what’s on other people’s minds.

A few takeaways from this season:

- 1) Trump had plenty of support in the places I went, across a considerable diversity of voters at many income and education levels. Unlike Trump supporters I had encountered on Twitter, most of his real-life voters were not angry or combative, though some were.
- 2) I was a little shocked at how unpopular Ted Cruz was. The two main reasons were, first, that he “wore his religion on his sleeve,” as one voter put it, which seemed to have alienated even many voters for whom religion was very important in their own lives, and, second, that he was too negative or couldn’t get along with people. I myself would have rated Trump as worse than Cruz on this latter dimension but Trump supporters assured me that his trash talk was just talk and that on some level he wanted to get along with everyone unlike Cruz who really did make enemies.
- 3) Related to 2), while I had tended to see Trump and Kasich as opposites, many voters liked both or were undecided between them. One theme was that both understood business and would be good for the economy. Another was that both got things done in contrast to Cruz who you could expect to stand in the way of a workable deal just to make some point or other.
- 4) People really want to go with the winning side. That Trump was going to win (at least win the Republican nomination) was seen as a powerful reason for supporting him and some voters felt they would be throwing their vote away by voting for Kasich (who came in second in my state) even if they thought the Ohioan would make the better president.

These opinions are all different from my own, to one extent or another, but that’s the point of going out to talk to other people instead of staying home talking with one’s own circle.

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