

BATTLEGROUND

15 Years

Much has changed in the past fifteen years. In 1991, Operation Desert Storm began, Boris Yeltsin was elected President of Russia, the Soviet Union collapsed, Communism fell in the USSR, and a primitive form of the World Wide Web was put online. The first Battleground Poll was also conducted in June of 1991 as an in-depth bipartisan look into the nation's perception of the 1992 presidential election. The poll, conducted by Ed Goeas of Tarrance & Associates along with Celinda Lake from Greenberg-Lake, two leading and prominent polling companies, surveyed 1,000 registered voters across the nation.

This survey was the first to suggest that even though President George H. W. Bush had a job approval rating of 72%, he was very vulnerable for re-election because he was only showing 27% solid supporters. This proved to be an accurate portrayal of how the 1992 presidential elections would play out. Over the years, the poll has been the first to suggest other trends among hot issues such as crime in the early 1990's and education in the mid 1990's. This poll was also the first to point out the rising prominence of the marriage gap vs. the gender gap which is now widely commented on by other pollsters and pundits.

The Battleground Poll has been there through four Presidential and three mid-term election cycles. We have conducted twenty-nine individual surveys and daily tracking throughout the fall of four presidential campaigns totaling over 80,000 interviews among voters. The names of our companies have changed (although Ed Goeas and Celinda Lake have remained lead researchers the entire time), and sponsorship of the poll has changed. The Battleground Poll is now proudly sponsored by George Washington University, which now houses all past Battleground data and makes that data available to students, the media, and researchers. What has not changed on the Battleground Poll is its accuracy. Of the four Presidential elections, the Battleground Poll provided the closest predictor of the actual outcome among all public polls in three of the four- coming within a tenth of a point to the actual results in the 2004 election.

Besides accuracy, the keys to the Battleground Poll's success and longevity are consistency and depth of analysis. The Battleground poll has used consistent sampling and questionnaire language for the past fifteen years while other public polls make

occasional changes and adjustments to sampling and wording of key questions in order to make the results more newsworthy. These changes make comparisons across time very difficult. Using consistent sampling and language means that the results of the latest Battleground poll can be directly compared to survey results from 1991. That said, the Battleground has made room for new and rotating questions from poll to poll, to ensure that the issues of the day are covered.

Also unique and important to the Battleground poll is the depth of analysis. Unlike many other polls which are sponsored by one organization (which may or may not have an agenda), or bipartisan polls in which the analysis is a joint effort (and thus watered down to avoid conflict), the Battleground poll is analyzed and presented separately by two of the premier pollsters on both sides of the aisle. Republican Ed Goetas of The Tarrance Group and Democrat Celinda Lake of Lake Research Partners look at the same poll results, and each write their own individual Republican and Democratic strategic analysis of the data.

It is important to have the two separate analyses because it gives journalists and the public two unique views of the same numbers and how political pollsters ultimately use that data. The two separate strategic memos allow the pollsters to show the strengths and weaknesses of their respectable party, which tends to exist in every survey.

The Tarrance Group and Lake Research Partners in conjunction with George Washington University are proud to celebrate this milestone. We look forward to the road ahead. It is uncertain what the next fifteen years will bring, but what is certain is the Battleground Poll will be there with its accuracy and precision.