Obama's Class-Warfare Strategy a Loser in Florida

In poll, 54 percent say his policies hurt state's economy; independent voters slipping away

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President Barack Obama | Credit: Talk Media News - Flickr

A new Florida poll shows dwindling support for President Barack Obama and growing frustration with his rhetorical attacks on business.

The Aug. 8-9 survey finds that 54 percent of respondents -- including a third of all Democrats -- believe Obama's policies and his class-warfare agenda have hurt the Florida economy.

Just 44 percent of Floridians had a favorable opinion of the president, down 2 percentage points from this time last year, according to the poll released by the Associated Industries of Florida and conducted by McLaughlin & Associates.

Obama took his biggest lumps over his dealings with the business community.

Seventy-one percent of respondents said they agreed with the statement: "President Obama and other politicians should stop attacking the job creators such as corporations, Wall Street and oil companies and, instead, they should be looking to work with and compromise with business leaders to create jobs and improve the economy."

Sixty percent of Democrats and 73 percent of independents agreed with the statement.

“President Obama campaigned on a platform of hope and change. Obviously, this is not the kind of change Floridians were after and we’re seeing that reflected in the president’s decreasing popularity,” said Ryan Tyson, AlF’s vice president of political operations.

"Instead of driving forward policies that will lead to economic growth and job creation, this administration seems to have thrown our economy in reverse."
An overwhelming 84 percent of respondents, including 89 percent of independents, said the country is "on the wrong track."

Obama carried Florida and swept into office in 2008 by winning a majority of independent voters. But amid a slumping economy and repeated White House attacks on oil companies, corporate jet owners and "millionaires and billionaires," the president's support has eroded significantly among swing voters.

“One of the most revealing results of this poll is the high number of independents and ticket-splitters who are unhappy with the president and the way he has approached the challenges our nation is facing,” Tyson said.

“These results cannot be dismissed as partisan, but rather show that the chord of discontent runs deep and across all political leanings in Florida."

A Sunshine State News poll last month showed Republican Mitt Romney beating Obama, 46-42, in a hypothetical Florida match-up.

"This just confirms what most of us already think. Given the inability of this president to address the needs of the people of Florida, we expect to deliver the state to the Republicans in 2012," said Brian Hughes, spokesman for the Republican Party of Florida.

Damien Filer, spokesman for the liberal group Progress Florida, said Obama is facing headwinds created by Republican leaders in the state.

"It's tough for the president to create jobs in Florida when [Governor] Rick Scott stymies him at every turn, from laying off teachers to turning away jobs President Obama tried to send to Florida with high-speed rail and health-care funding," Filer said.

"Let's see an AI poll on that."

Kevin Wagner, a political science professor at Florida Atlantic University, questioned the wording of the AIF survey and suggested a built-in bias.

"The phrase -- 'President Obama and other politicians should stop attacking the job creators' -- uses loaded words and is intended to evoke a negative response. Imagine what different words you could use in that question and how they might elicit a different response," Wagner said.

Wagner also noted, "The poll was ordered by an interest group whose purpose is to support deregulation and business interests. That seems to be consistent with both the result and the way the poll is framed."

"It could well be true that people want the president to be more conciliatory toward
business, but based on what I have seen of this poll, this instrument would tell you very little."

The McLaughlin survey sampled 600 randomly selected respondents likely to vote in the general election. All interviews were conducted via telephone by professional interviewers. The survey had a margin of error of +/- 4 percent.