



Political Insiders Poll



Would Florida GOP Gov. Charlie Crist benefit by running for the Senate as an independent?

Democrats (105 votes)

Yes 68 percent
No 31 percent

Volunteered: Both yes and no, 1 percent.

Yes

"Crist could be another Joe Lieberman, drawing significant Democratic support as an independent."

"Probably a great time to be perceived as 'independent,' given the dynamics of the two major parties, the 'tea party' movement, et cetera."

"It is the only way Crist can win. Support for the Obama stimulus and a grateful presidential hug finished Crist's GOP campaign chances."

"Crist can either be a former governor who got wiped out in a primary or position himself against both parties. Anybody paying attention to Nick Clegg, [leader of Britain's Liberal Democrats]?"

"The Lieberman of the South: Charlie Crist. The only difference is that he behaves like an actual member of his party."

"It's his only opportunity to be on the ballot in November, where he will be formidable, [and become] a pivotal and principled voice in Washington."

"Might hurt [likely GOP nominee Marco] Rubio if [Crist] is on the ballot as an independent, and revenge is sweet. He might even win."

"If he really wants to be senator, he has no other choice."

"Both Republican and Democratic candidates come from the ideological bases of each party, creating an even greater opportunity up the middle."

"He could win as an indie and, if he did, become a looming national figure."

No

"Partisan ties are so strong that voters go back to those partisan lines when they become unsure about someone. And federal [campaign] contributions are so ideological that a candidate who cannot self-fund does not have a chance."

"He'll lose anyway and be a man without a party."

"It might increase his chances. But, unlike Lieberman, he is not assured of a win. Bad way to go out for a sitting governor with a distinguished career."

"While Rubio will clean his clock this year, the pendulum will swing back. Florida is too purple for there to be no place for Crist as a Republican."

"He needs another comeback strategy away from this race."

Republicans (104 votes)

Yes 37 percent
No 62 percent

Volunteered: Only if he wins, 1 percent; probably lose anyway, 1 percent.

Yes

"It would take nothing short of a miracle for Crist to pull this back from [Marco] Rubio [in the GOP primary]."

"Crist is toast with the GOP, but as indie he has potential to drive right down the middle and win a plurality in the general."

"There is no room in the party for moderates like Crist. The GOP is lurching right, more concerned with the 'tea party' than swing moderates."

"Americans are disgusted with both parties. And Crist could capitalize on that sentiment. Unfortunately for him, he is the establishment. It will be hard to make the transition to an outsider."

"Why not go for the gold now rather than wait for some future opportunity that may never come?"

"It is the only hope he has got. The bloom will be off the Rubio rose by the fall, and Crist picks up the petals."

No

"Loses money and his traditional support."

"Crist is toast under any scenario. The photo [of him] embracing Obama and his stimulus killed him, though he's taking a year to lay down."

"He should withdraw, endorse Rubio, and run against [Democratic Sen.] Bill Nelson in 2012 with Rubio's support."

"He can come back from losing a primary, but he'll never recover from costing Republicans a safe seat."

"Has lost the Republican primary and will lose in the general election: Cannot finance a statewide campaign without the party."

"It makes it harder for us, but in reality Charlie Crist's best day as an independent will be the day before he announces. It will be all downhill from there."

"Unlikely to win and would burn any chance of being a future Republican anything."

"It worked for Lieberman, but I don't think it would work for Crist. He'll be a pariah in his party, and it will further stoke the energy behind Rubio."

"He will lose and be left with no friends or potential employers."

"His brand is probably beyond repair."

—JAMES A. BARNES AND PETER BELL

NationalJournal.com

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Political Insiders Poll



How closely should the Republican Party align itself with the “tea party” movement?

■ Democrats (105 votes)

| | Today* | September 2009 |
|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Very closely | 27 percent | 22 percent |
| Somewhat closely | 49 percent | 31 percent |
| Not at all | 23 percent | 46 percent |

*Volunteered: Not closely, 2 percent.

■ Very closely

“The tea party is the leading edge of the anti-Obama movement. And tapping into it can only energize Republicans.”

“Why not? The tea party is mostly white, wealthier than average Americans, and overwhelmingly registered as Republicans: They are the GOP.”

“That would be the best gift they could give Democrats this November.”

■ Somewhat closely

“Need their votes, but can’t get the baggage that comes with it.”

“Tea party’s anti-government position is the Republican donors’ sweet spot, but its anti-establishment position threatens the corporate financial base of the party. Therein lies the tension.”

“How can they not? They helped create the lock-and-load environment.”

“But not enough to get stuck holding a sign that says, ‘I’m With Crazy.’”

“While it energizes some of the GOP base, the tea party speaks to the worst in the GOP and alienates midstream voters.”

“This tea party is nitroglycerine for the Republicans. It could as easily blow themselves up as their opponents.”

■ Not at all

“They will turn independents away in droves. Aligning with the fringes of the party will only solidify their candidates as out of the mainstream.”

“With the tea party, it seems it’s all or nothing.”

“The Republicans are riding a tiger. It might be exhilarating for a while, but eventually the tiger eats you.”

■ Republicans (104 votes)

| | Today* | September 2009 |
|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Very closely | 14 percent | 4 percent |
| Somewhat closely | 65 percent | 49 percent |
| Not at all | 16 percent | 45 percent |

*Volunteered: Up to the tea party, not the GOP, 2 percent; not closely, 1 percent; only with its ideas, 1 percent; GOP should stand on its principles, 1 percent.

■ Very closely

“GOP needs their numbers and their intensity.”

“This isn’t a lot different from the rise of the evangelical Christians. They are committed voters/activists. And we want them with us.”

■ Somewhat closely

“Without motivating tea party activists, Republicans don’t stand a chance.”

“They are a genuine insurgent movement and can be potent partners in toppling the Obama regime. However, they are not terribly interested in real-world governance. And a mature political party has to be.”

“The GOP needs to harness their energy without appearing to be taken over by them.”

“There is a growing fringe element—see, birthers—that’s killing this group and emptying the movement of any sustainable credibility.”

“You can’t disavow a group of people that hates the government when you’re the party of smaller government.”

“We need to blow the dog whistle that those voters answer to on issues like spending, taxes, and growth of government.”

“Understand their anger. Adopt their messages. Avoid their messengers.”

■ Not at all

“Parties that give themselves over to outside movements lose their identity. Look at the Democrats after the ‘68 campaign.”

“Media will be searching high and low for tea party wack jobs.”

—JAMES A. BARNES AND PETER BELL

■ Democratic Political Insiders Jill Alper, Brad Bannon, Dave Beattie, Andy Bechhoefer, Cornell Belcher, Matt Bennett, Mitchell W. Berger, Mike Berman, Stephanie Bosh, Paul Brathwaite, Donna Brazile, Mark Brewer, Ed Bruley, George Bruno, Deb Callahan, Bonnie Campbell, Bill Carrick, Guy Cecil, Martin J. Chavez, Tony Coelho, Jerry Crawford, Stephanie Cutter, Jeff Danielson, Peter Daou, Howard Dean, Jim Demers, Tad Devine, David Di Martino, Debbie Dingell, Monica Dixon, Patrick Dorton, Anita Dunn, Jeff Eller, Steve Elmendorf, Carter Eskew, Eric Eve, Vic Fazio, Peter Fenn, Scott Ferson, Jim Fleischmann, Tina Flournoy, Don Foley, Don Fowley, Vincent Frillici, Gina Glantz, Niles Godes, John Michael Gonzalez, Joe Grandmaison, Anna Greenberg, Stan Greenberg, Pat Griffin, Larry Grisolan, Michael Gronstal, Lisa Grove, Marcia Hale, Jill Hanauer, Dick Harpootian, Paul Harstad, Laura Hartigan, Mike Henry, Karen Hicks, Leo Hindery, Jr., Harold Ickes, Marcus Jodette, John Jameson, Steve Jarding, Jonathon Jones, Jim Jordan, Gale Kaufman, Lisa Kountoupeas, Kam Kuwata, Celinda Lake, David Lang, Penny Lee, Chris Lehane, Jeff Link, Bill Lynch, Bob Maloney, Steve Marchand, Jim Margolis, Paul Maslin, Keith Mason, Terry McAuliffe, Susan McCue, Gerald McEntee, Tom McMahon, Phil McNamara, David Medina, Mark Mellman, John Merrigan, Steve Murphy, Janet Napolitano, David Nassar, Marcia Nichols, John Norris, Tom Ochs, Tom O’Donnell, Scott Pavven, Jeffrey Peck, Debora Pignatelli, Tony Podesta, Jack Quinn, Larry Rasky, Bruce Reed, Mame Reiley, Steve Ricchetti, Will Robinson, Steve Rosenthal, David Rudd, John Ryan, Wendy Sherman, Terry Shumaker, Sean Sinclair, Phil Singer, Erik Smith, Doug Sosnik, Greg Speed, Darryl Sragow, Ken Strasma, Katrina Swett, Sarah Swisher, Jeffrey Trammell, Ed Turlington, Mike Veon, Rick Wiener, Bridgette Williams, James Williams, JoDee Winterhof, Brian Wolff, Jon Youngdahl and Jim Zogby.

■ GOP Political Insiders Dan Allen, Stan Anderson, Gary Andres, Saulius (Saul) Anuzis, Rich Ashooh, Whit Ayres, Brett Bader, Mitch Bainwol, Gary Bauer, David Beckwith, Clark Benson, Wayne Berman, Brian Bleron, Charlie Black, Kirk Blalock, Carmine Boal, Jeff Boeyink, Ron Bonjean, Jeff Buley, Luke Byars, Nick Calio, Al Cardenas, Danny Carroll, Ron Christie, Jim Cicconi, Rob Collins, Cesar Conda, Jake Coman, Scott Cottingham, Charlie Crist, Greg Crist, Diane Crookham-Johnson, Fergus Cullen, Tom Davis, Mike Dennehy, Ken Duberstein, Steve Duprey, Debi Durham, Frank Fahrenkopf, John Feehery, Don Fierce, Mindy Finn, Mindy Fletcher, Carl Forti, Alex Gage, Sam Geduldig, Adam Geller, Benjamin Ginsberg, David Girard-diCarlo, Bill Greener, Jonathan Grelia, Lanny Griffith, Janet Mullins Grissom, Doug Gross, Todd Harris, Steve Hart, Christopher Healy, Ralph Hellmann, Chris Henick, Terry Holt, David Iannelli, Barry Jackson, Clark Judge, David Keating, David Kensingler, Bruce Keough, Bob Kjellander, Ed Kutler, Chris Laciotta, Jim Lake, Steve Lombardo, Kevin Madden, Joel Maiola, Gary Maloney, David Marin, Mary Matalin, Dan Mattoon, Brian McCormack, Mark McKinon, Kyle McSarrow, Ken Mehlman, Jim Merrill, Tim Morrison, Mike Murphy, Phil Musser, Ron Nehring, Terry Nelson, Neil Newhouse, David Norcross, Ziad Ojaki, Jack Oliver, Todd Olsen, Connie Partoyan, Dana Perino, Van B. Poole, Tom Rath, Scott Reed, David Rehr, Steve Roberts, Jason Roe, David Roederer, Dan Schnur, Russ Schriefer, Rich Schwarm, Brent Seaborn, Rick Shelby, Andrew Shore, Kevin Shuvalov, Don Sipple, Fred Steeper, Bob Stevenson, Eric Tanenblatt, Sara Taylor, Richard Temple, Heath Thompson, Jay Timmons, Warren Tompkins, Ted Van Der Meid, Dirk van Dongen, Jan van Lohuizen, Stewart Verdery, Dick Wadhams, John Weaver, Lezlee Westine, Tom Wilson, Dave Winston, Ginny Wolfe, and Fred Wszolek.