

**Wide Open GOP Field:** The lack of a Republican primary front-runner at this stage of the race is not unusual. In the last nine GOP primaries, four had a candidate leading some polls by double digits at this point, while five contests had a candidate ahead by single digits.

The latest *Wall Street Journal*/NBC News poll showed that this primary contest falls into the latter category. The poll also showed that five candidates have improved their appeal to voters since March. Former Florida Governor Jeb Bush had a 26-point increase in the number of voters who could possibly support him (49% to 75%). Florida Senator Marco Rubio had an 18-point increase (56% to 74%). Former Hewlett-Packard CEO Carly Fiorina and former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee had a 13-point increase (18% to 31% and 52% to 65% respectively) and Texas Senator Ted Cruz had an 11-point increase (40% to 51%). Six of the remaining 13 candidates improved their standing since March, but by single digits.

A front-runner is unlikely to emerge until the late fall or winter, but candidates must prove themselves by developing a clear, concise conservative agenda to break away from the pack. They must project the personal characteristics GOP voters want to see in their leaders. The candidates who have seen an increase in the number of voters who could support them are obviously succeeding at this, but the contest is certain to remain tight through the fall.

