

Low Interest in a Buchanan Quest

A third-party presidential quest by Pat Buchanan would draw as much interest from Democrats as from Republicans – but not a lot from either group.

Nineteen percent of Americans say they'd seriously consider voting for Buchanan as a third-party candidate in a race against Republican George W. Bush and Democrat Al Gore. That includes 16 percent of Democrats and 17 percent of Republicans.

From 76 percent of potential voters, Buchanan gets not a nibble.

This is not to say 19 percent actually would vote for him – just that they'd think about it, which makes this look more like a cap than a base. In August 1995, 30 percent said they'd seriously consider Ross Perot. He ended up with just eight percent of the vote.

In that same poll four years ago, 15 percent said they'd consider Buchanan, 76 percent not – about the same result as today.

	Seriously consider Buchanan?	
	Yes	No
All	19%	76
Democrats	16	79
Republicans	17	80
Independents	24	72

Buchanan is considering bolting the Republican Party and seeking the Reform Party nomination; he's said he'll announce his decision next month.

THIRD – It does not look like a propitious year for a third-party candidacy in general. Strong third-party efforts tend to be fueled by economic discontent, which is essentially absent this year; and by unhappiness with the major-party candidates, which also is muted.

In an ABC News/Washington Post poll earlier this month, 62 percent said they'd be satisfied with a choice of Bush or Gore. That compares to just 46 percent satisfaction with a Clinton-Dole race in October 1995.

Also in this month's ABC/Post poll, just three percent of leaned Republicans favored Buchanan for their party's nomination, and just six percent named him as a second choice.

DEMOS - A demographic profile of Buchanan's potential support as a third-party candidate does not augur well for his vote-getting ability. In addition to independents, he piques the most interest among low-income, less-educated and younger Americans – all among the least-likely groups to turn out at the polls.

For instance, 23 percent of people who haven't gone beyond high school say they'd give serious consideration to Buchanan; this falls to 12 percent of people who've earned a college degree. College graduates account for about a quarter of the general population – but about 40 percent of voters.

SIPHON – If Buchanan does run, he could impact the race in two ways – one, by siphoning votes disproportionately from one of the major-party candidates; two, by forcing one of them (such as Bush) to defend his or her conservative flank.

Exit polls show that Perot did not directly affect the outcomes of the 1992 and 1996 races, when he was the Reform candidate: He drew votes equally from the Republicans (George Bush and Bob Dole) and from the Democrat (Bill Clinton). A state-by-state analysis shows that Bush or Dole would have won no more than three additional states if Perot hadn't run - nowhere near enough to reverse Clinton's electoral college victories.

METHODOLOGY - This ABC News.com survey was conducted by telephone Sept. 15-19, 1999, among a random national sample of 1,006 adults. The results have a three-point error margin. Fieldwork by ICR-International Communications Research of Media, Pa.

Analysis by Gary Langer.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com on the Internet at:

<http://www.abcnews.com/sections/us/PollVault/PollVault.html>

12. Suppose (rotate) (Al Gore is the Democratic nominee for president next year), (George W. Bush is the Republican nominee) and Pat Buchanan runs as a third-party candidate. Given those choices, would you seriously consider voting for Buchanan, or not?

	Would consider	Would not consider	No opin.
9/19/99	19	76	5
8/9/95*	15	76	8

*List, included Powell, Perot, Jackson, Weicker.