

## **Third-Party Prospects Prompt a Stifled Yawn**

Whatever separates them politically, Pat Buchanan, Donald Trump and Jesse Ventura share one attribute: Relatively few Americans would seriously consider voting for any of them.

So it is with other figures raised lately as potential third-party presidential candidates: Whether it's Warren Beatty, Ross Perot, Lowell Weicker or even Oprah Winfrey, public interest amounts to pretty much of a stifled yawn.

Winfrey, who's declined a draft by some Reform Party activists in suburban Minnesota, gets one of the better receptions: Eighteen percent of Americans say they'd consider her for president, about as many as would think about Perot. More than 70 percent, though, wouldn't seriously consider either one.

Ditto for Beatty, Buchanan, Trump and Ventura: Anywhere from 72 to 77 percent in this ABC News Nightline poll say they would not seriously consider voting for any of them. (Fewer rule out Weicker, seemingly because many don't know enough about him to say.)

Fifteen percent would seriously consider Buchanan or Ventura, 11 percent Trump, eight percent Beatty, and given current knowledge of him, five percent Weicker. Compare those to Colin Powell's 40 percent, as a potential third-party candidate, in 1995.

|                | Would consider | Would not consider |
|----------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Ross Perot     | 19%            | 72                 |
| Oprah Winfrey  | 18             | 74                 |
| Pat Buchanan   | 15             | 72                 |
| Jesse Venura   | 15             | 74                 |
| Donald Trump   | 11             | 77                 |
| Warren Beatty  | 8              | 77                 |
| Lowell Weicker | 5              | 58                 |

Any candidate who says the right things could catch on. But for now the "would consider" numbers may be more like a cap than a base, since seriously considering a candidate is still a long way from actually voting for one. That's a lesson Perot knows: When ABC News asked this question four years ago, 30 percent said they'd seriously consider voting for him. In the end, just eight percent did.

Conditions clearly do not look ripe for a third-party candidacy. For one thing, most voters say they'd be satisfied with a choice between George W. Bush and Al Gore. More critical is the strong economy; economic satisfaction tends to reinforce support for the status quo. It was during the broad economic discontent of 1992 that Perot hit his high water mark.

SPLITS – There are some demographic differences in these results. Twenty percent of men say they'd give Ventura a serious look; that falls to nine percent of women. But 22 percent of women say they'd consider Winfrey, compared to 14 percent of men.

Several of these may-be, would-be or won't-be candidates are somewhat more intriguing to younger people, notably Perot, Trump and Ventura. And Buchanan's a bit more interesting to Republicans (19 percent) than Democrats (11 percent), a slight change from last month, when he drew some interest, if not a lot, from both groups evenly.

METHODOLOGY - This ABC News poll was conducted by telephone Oct. 7-10, 1999, among a random national sample of 908 adults. The results have a 3.5-point error margin. Field work by TNS Intersearch of Horsham, 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>

Here are the results:

1. I'm going to read the names of a few possible third-party candidates for president. For each, please tell me if you would seriously consider voting for that person, or not. First is... (Scramble list.)

|                | Would consider | Would not consider | No opin. |
|----------------|----------------|--------------------|----------|
| Warren Beatty  | 8              | 77                 | 14       |
| Pat Buchanan   | 15             | 72                 | 14       |
| Ross Perot     | 19             | 72                 | 9        |
| Donald Trump   | 11             | 77                 | 11       |
| Jesse Venura   | 15             | 74                 | 11       |
| Lowell Weicker | 5              | 58                 | 37       |
| Oprah Winfrey  | 18             | 74                 | 8        |

Trend, where available:

|                |    |    |    |
|----------------|----|----|----|
| Pat Buchanan   |    |    |    |
| 10/10/99       | 15 | 72 | 14 |
| 9/19/99*       | 19 | 76 | 5  |
| 8/9/95         | 15 | 76 | 8  |
| Ross Perot     |    |    |    |
| 10/10/99       | 19 | 72 | 9  |
| 8/9/95         | 30 | 67 | 3  |
| Lowell Weicker |    |    |    |
| 10/10/99       | 5  | 58 | 37 |
| 8/9/95         | 4  | 76 | 20 |

For comparison:

|               |    |    |   |  |
|---------------|----|----|---|--|
| Colin Powell  |    |    |   |  |
| 8/9/95        | 40 | 52 | 8 |  |
| Jesse Jackson |    |    |   |  |
| 8/9/95        | 22 | 75 | 3 |  |

\*vs Gore and Bush