

How Bad Are Jeb Bush's Prospects Right Now? This Bad

I wrote earlier this week that Jeb Bush may not be the Republican Establishment's candidate in 2016. Here's more proof I'm on the right track.

On Sunday, *The Weekly Standard* released its latest straw poll of its readers. When asked which candidate was their first choice, the results were:

<i>Marco Rubio</i>	<i>21 percent</i>
<i>Donald Trump</i>	<i>15 percent</i>
<i>Ted Cruz</i>	<i>15 percent</i>
<i>Carly Fiorina</i>	<i>12 percent</i>
<i>Ben Carson</i>	<i>11 percent</i>
<i>Scott Walker</i>	<i>9 percent</i>
<i>John Kasich</i>	<i>7 percent</i>
<i>Jeb Bush</i>	<i>4 percent</i>

Yes, even in *The Weekly Standard*—where willingness to invade another sovereign nation is considered the paramount qualification for elective office—Donald Trump is man-handling Jeb Bush, piling up nearly four times as many supporters.

Even when adding up all the times a candidate is listed in the top three choices, Bush is near the bottom of the pile:

<i>Carly Fiorina</i>	<i>52 percent</i>
<i>Marco Rubio</i>	<i>46 percent</i>
<i>Ben Carson</i>	<i>44 percent</i>
<i>Ted Cruz</i>	<i>40 percent</i>
<i>Scott Walker</i>	<i>29 percent</i>
<i>Donald Trump</i>	<i>25 percent</i>
<i>John Kasich</i>	<i>20 percent</i>
<i>Jeb Bush</i>	<i>14 percent</i>

The *Standard* tried bravely to spin the polls as an “Elite Eight.” But finishing eighth out of 17 candidates is not impressive—especially when you do it twice, even after the magazine reconfigures its formula.

It doesn’t help Jeb that the week that began with this poll ended with a new CNN poll that saw Jeb slip 4 percent, to claim only 9 percent of his party’s support, landing him in third place behind Trump and Dr. Ben Carson. (Interestingly, Trump, Carson, Cruz, and Huckabee gained ground; everyone else fell behind.)

As I have said, we are months away from the first caucus, much less the nomination, and things can change dramatically during that time period.

But notice that in the *Weekly Standard* poll Rubio, Walker and Kasich *all* top Bush. Any one of the three has the capacity to be the “Establishment” candidate—although Walker has shown an independent streak that concerns the donor class.

Rubio has realized that he needs to move to the Right to become more palatable to his party’s base—many of whom remember him fondly when he was elected during the Tea Party landslide of 2010.

My personal feeling has always been: Don’t count Kasich out. He has solid ties to Wall Street and generally favors their take on social issues. Like Walker, he’s from Middle America. Like Christie, he speaks his mind. But he has a charisma (in the secular sense) most of them lack. And his record of accomplishment in Ohio—just right-leaning enough to keep most of the conservatives on board but not enough that he comes across as one of them—will make him an attractive candidate for centrists.

A Kasich win in New Hampshire could make him the Establishment’s new favorite in 2016.