

How Ben Carson's West Point Flap Is Really Impacting His Campaign

Republican presidential candidate Ben Carson was viewed less favorably by a significant portion of Republicans after his claim to have won a scholarship to West Point was disputed, according to a new Reuters/Ipsos poll.

But in one positive sign for the neurosurgeon turned top-tier candidate, a majority of those polled said the controversy did not affect their view of him.

After hearing the report questioning Carson's recollections about the scholarship, 39 percent of Republicans said they had a less favorable view of him, with 26 percent saying it was "somewhat" less favorable and 13 percent saying it was "much" less favorable.

The majority of Republicans polled, 51 percent, said it made no difference. And an additional 10 percent said it gave them a more favorable view.

The poll also found that it caused concern among those who identify as independent. Among independents, 19 percent had a somewhat less favorable view of Carson and 17 percent had a much less favorable view.

The online poll had a 6 percent credibility interval for Republicans and 10 percentage points for Independents and was conducted between Nov. 9 and Nov. 11.

Carson, who has topped a few recent national polls of Republican presidential candidates and is holding onto second place in the Reuters/Ipsos poll, has been the subject of intense scrutiny in recent weeks. Parts of his biography were

called into question by publications that sought to verify stories in his 1990 autobiography "Gifted Hands."

In the book, Carson detailed having received a "full scholarship" to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. His campaign later said while he never applied or was accepted, he had been told by leadership in the ROTC program that he would have been accepted had he applied. West Point provides education and housing to all students for free.

Carson has pushed back against efforts by the media to discredit his biography. He has accused the press of lying about his past.

But the West Point story is not the only one that has surfaced. CNN published a report questioning Carson's account of violent episodes in his youth. The *Wall Street Journal* published another report questioning two additional stories, including one where he helped hide white students during riots at his high school and another where he was deemed the most "honest" student in a Yale course after taking a fake exam.

Questions were also raised on Thursday about Carson's relationship with a Pittsburg dentist who was convicted of felony health care fraud. Carson, calling the dentist his "very best friend" asked for the judge to be lenient in sentencing him. {eo}

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