

What's Behind Ben Carson's Poll Drop?

With less than a year to go before the 2016 U.S. Presidential election, Dr. Ben Carson's campaign may need a shot of adrenaline – stat!

According to a Quinnipiac University National poll released today, the retired pediatric neurosurgeon has dropped to third place in national standings. “[Front-runner Donald] Trump gets 27 percent of Republican voters today, with 17 percent for Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida, 16 percent each for Carson and Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas and 5 percent for former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush. No other candidate tops 3 percent,” the poll reported.

A month ago, Trump had 24 percent and Carson 23 percent, leading to speculation that the good doctor might knock Trump off his perch. Instead, as Quinnipiac poll assistant director Tim Malloy declared, “Carson, moving to center stage just one month ago, now needs some CPR. The Doctor sinks. The Donald soars.”

Some other numbers in the poll don't bode well for Republican chances of recapturing the White House next year.

American voters shift to Clinton as the Democrat gains ground against Republicans, the survey reported:

- 47 – 41 percent over Trump, compared to 46 – 43 percent November 4;
- Clinton at 45 percent to Rubio's 44 percent, compared to a 46 – 41 percent Rubio lead last month;
- Clinton tops Cruz 47 – 42 percent, compared to Cruz at 46 percent to Clinton's 43 percent last month;

- Clinton at 46 percent to Carson's 43 percent compared to Carson's 50 – 40 percent lead last month.

There's been plenty of media speculation on why Carson's numbers have fallen. Although Trump has taken relatively mild potshots against Carson, compared with the real estate mogul's criticisms of other candidates – branding former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush as “low energy,” for example – Carson may have some self-inflicted political wounds. The controversy over his autobiography's claims of a “full scholarship” offer to the U.S. Military Academy, his “rabid dog” comment referring to ISIS infiltrators among Syrian refugees, and his uneven comments on foreign policy issues may have taken their toll.

Pollster Malloy says Democrats may be smacking their lips over the prospect of facing Donald Trump as the GOP standard-bearer.

“The GOP, 11 months from the election, has to be thinking, ‘This could be the guy,’” Malloy said “Secretary Hillary Clinton and Sen. Bernie Sanders have to be hoping Trump is the GOP's guy.”

Of course, 35 years ago, many Democrats relished the prospect of then-President Jimmy Carter going up against former Hollywood actor (and ex-governor) Ronald Reagan, a contest that didn't end well for Carter's party.