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AG Race Neck and Neck, Says Likely Voter Survey; Hull Maintains Comfortable Lead Over Johnson

The Attorney General's race remains locked in a statistical dead heat, according to the first survey of likely voters in Arizona this election season. Candidate support remains soft, however, with large numbers of people knowing little about the race and many saying they may change their minds before Election Day. The survey also found that Governor Hull continues to maintain a very comfortable lead over her Democratic opponent: Paul Johnson. Much of her support is drawn from Democratic defectors including former supporters of Eddie Basha in 1994.

This survey of 402 likely voters in Arizona was conducted by the Social Research Laboratory at Northern Arizona University. The survey was conducted between September 29 and October 7. Results are accurate within a 5% margin of error. This is the first survey of likely voters to be released to the public during the current election season.

A Tight Battle for Attorney General

Tom McGovern and Janet Napolitano are running neck and neck in the race for Attorney General. Forty-two percent of likely voters say they would vote for Tom McGovern, the Republican candidate for Attorney General, if the election were held today. Forty percent of likely voters would vote for Janet Napolitano, the Democratic

candidate. Thomas Eblen, the Libertarian candidate has three percent support. Fifteen percent of likely voters remain undecided.

Both major party candidates are safely holding on to members of their own party. Seventy-two percent of Democrats support Napolitano and 72 percent of Republicans say they support McGovern. Independents, however, are breaking evenly for the major party candidates. Thirty-six percent of independents support Napolitano, compared to 35 percent supporting McGovern. One-in-five independents (20%) say they don't know yet whom they will vote for in the Attorney General race.

Candidate support is being driven by two major factors: sex and family income. There is a significant gender gap emerging in the race for Attorney General. Women clearly favor the Democratic candidate, Janet Napolitano. Men tend to favor McGovern, the Republican candidate. In addition, voters coming from lower income families, tend to support Napolitano while a majority of voters from higher income families (those making over \$60,000 per year) favor McGovern.

Candidate Support Remains Soft

Voter attitudes remains soft, however, as a majority of likely voters (53%) say they are either not very familiar or not at all familiar with the candidates running for Attorney General. When likely voters were asked to identify which candidate has a better understanding of the important legal issues facing Arizona, relatively equal numbers of respondents selected McGovern (38%) and Napolitano (33%). Similarly the two major party candidates received equal levels of support when respondents were asked which candidate cares more about people like them (McGovern—25%; Napolitano—22%) and who is more honest (McGovern—21%; Napolitano—22%). What is most striking is that one quarter of likely voters say they don't know who has a better understanding of legal issues, 43% don't know who cares more about people like them, and 41% do not know which candidate is more honest.

“The race is close right now,” said Fred Solop, director of the survey, “But, as Election Day comes closer, people will be seeking more information about the Attorney General candidates. As more information becomes available, levels of support could shift dramatically.”

In addition, the Social Research Laboratory survey found a significant portion of candidate support to be soft. More than one-in-three likely voters now supporting a candidate say they may change their mind before Election Day (38%). Thirty-three percent of Napolitano supporters say they may change their mind before Election Day and 41 percent of McGovern supporters say they may change their mind. Women are more likely than men to say they may change their mind before Election Day (44% versus 33%).

Undecided Voters Will Play a Significant Role

Who are the undecided voters that will eventually choose the next Attorney General of Arizona? The key distinguishing characteristic of undecided voters appears to be gender. Two-thirds of the undecided population are women (65%) while only one-third (35%) are men. Income also seems to be an important factor, as 40 percent of middle class voters (family incomes between \$30,000 and \$60,000) remain undecided in this race. In addition, 59 percent of likely voters who are somewhere in between conservative and liberal remain undecided.

“The gender gap is an important factor in the Attorney General race,” Solop said. “To the extent that women make up the largest block of undecided voters and Napolitano draws more support from women than men, we will be watching the gender gap in this election. It is the women’s vote that is likely to decide the outcome of the Attorney General race in Arizona,” added Solop.

Governor Hull Sails Toward Reelection

The Social Research Laboratory survey also asked likely voters whom they are supporting in the Gubernatorial race. Jane Hull, the Republican Party candidate, is leading Paul Johnson, the Democratic candidate, by a 2:1 margin. Hull is supported by a majority of likely voters with 56 percent of the vote compared to Johnson’s 29 percent of the vote. Katherine Gallant, the Libertarian candidate, is supported by 3 percent of likely voters and Scott Malcomson, the Reform Party candidate, has 2 percent support. Ten percent of the electorate remains undecided in this race. If all undecided voters cast their vote for the major party challenger—Paul Johnson—Hull would still win with a comfortable margin.

Governor Hull is benefiting from Democratic Party defections and the support of independents. Among voters who identify themselves as Democrats, 33 percent say they support Jane Hull, the Republican candidate, while only 54 percent support Paul Johnson. On the other hand, 86 percent of Republican voters support Hull. Only 6 percent of Republicans are planning on voting for Johnson. A majority of independents (52%) also say they would vote for Hull if the election were held today. Only one-quarter of independents (25%) would cast a vote for Johnson.

Apparently Hull's effort to woo supporters of Eddie Basha, the Democratic candidate for governor in 1994, is working. Half of former Basha voters (50%) now support Hull, while only 22 percent say they support Johnson, the Democratic candidate. This finding suggests that commercials featuring a Basha endorsement of Hull are effective.

A small gender gap is emerging in the gubernatorial race. While majorities of both men and women support Hull's reelection efforts, Hull is garnering more support from men than women. While 60 percent of men support Hull, just 52 percent of women are supporting Hull's candidacy. Almost a third of women voters (32%) say they would vote for Johnson if the election were held today and 25 percent of men now support Johnson.



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STATEWIDE TELEPHONE POLL

Social Research Laboratory

Northern Arizona University

BACKGROUND MEMO

The statewide telephone poll of likely voters was conducted between September 30 and October 8, 1998. A random sample of 402 Arizonans who were registered to vote and likely to vote on election day was interviewed by telephone. Figures of this sampling size are subject to a sampling error of about +/- 5 percent at a 95 percent confidence interval. Sampling error is the probable difference in results between interviewing everyone in the population versus a scientific sample taken from the population. Sampling error does not take into account additional sources of error inherent in any study of public opinion. The data referred to in this release are presented below.

When voters go to the polls in November, they will be electing an Attorney General for Arizona. The Democratic candidate for Attorney General is Janet Napolitano, the Republican candidate is Tom McGovern and the Libertarian candidate is Thomas Eblen.

How familiar are you with the candidates running for Attorney General? Are you Very Familiar, Somewhat Familiar, Not Very Familiar, or Not At All Familiar with the Attorney General candidates?

	%	
Very Familiar	13	(N= 402)
Somewhat Familiar	32	
Not Very Familiar	33	
Not at all Familiar	20	
Know some/Not others	1	
Don't know/Not sure	1	
Refused/No answer	--	
Total	100%	

Regardless of who you support, which candidate do you think has a better understanding of the important legal issues facing Arizona--Napolitano, McGovern or Eblen?

	%	
Napolitano	33	(N=315)
McGovern	38	
Eblen	1	
None	2	
All	1	
Don't know	26	
Total	100%	

Who do you think cares more about people like you?

	%	
Napolitano	22	(N=315)
McGovern	25	
Eblen	2	
None	7	
All	2	
Don't know	43	
Total	100%	

Who do you think is more honest?

	%	
Napolitano	22	(N=315)
McGovern	21	
Eblen	1	
None	9	
All	5	
Don't know	41	
Total	100%	

Suppose the election for Attorney General was held today and you had to choose right now--would you vote for Janet Napolitano, the Democrat, Tom McGovern, the Republican or Thomas Eblen, the Libertarian candidate? [Names are Rotated]

	%
Janet Napolitano	40
Firm	(66%)
Weak	(33%)
McGovern	42
Firm	(57%)
Weak	(41%)
Eblen	3
Firm	(34%)
Weak	(66%)
Undecided/Don't know	15
Total	100%

(N=394)

	Napolitano	Mc-Govern	Eblen	Don't Know	
Party					
Democrat	72	15	1	11	(N=137)
Republican	14	72	3	11	(N=144)
Independent	36	35	10	20	(N=70)
Ideology					
Liberal	75	14	0	11	(N=52)
Conservative	24	64	2	11	(N=129)
In Between	41	37	6	17	(N=203)
Sex					
Female	43	35	3	19	(N=196)
Male	35	50	4	11	(N=191)
Income					
< \$30K	49	32	3	16	(N=100)
\$30K - \$60K	39	42	2	16	(N=143)
> \$60K	34	53	3	11	(N=101)

[Characteristics of Respondents Expressing No Preference in AG Race]

	Don't Know
	%
Lean Direction	
To Napolitano	7
To McGovern	6
To Eblen	6
Don't Know	81
Party	
Democrat	27
Republican	28
Independent	24
Ideology	
Liberal	10
Conservative	24
In Between	59
Sex	
Female	65
Male	35
Income	
< \$30K	28
\$30K - \$60K	40
> \$60K	19

Suppose the election for Governor was held today and you had to chose right now--would you vote for Jane Hull, the Republican candidate for Governor, Paul Johnson, the Democratic candidate, Katherine Gallant, the Libertarian candidate, or Scott Malcomson, the Reform Party candidate? [Names are rotated]

	%
Jane Hull	56
Firm	(68%)
Weak	(30%)
Paul Johnson	29
Firm	(65%)
Weak	(33%)
Katherine Gallant	3
Firm	(48%)
Weak	(52%)
Scott Malcomson	2
Firm	(0%)
Weak	(100%)
Other candidate	1
Don't know	10
Total	101%

(N=400)

	Hull	Johnson	Gallant	Malcomson	Don't Know
Party					
Democrat	33	54	2	1	10
Republican	86	6	1	2	5
Independent	52	25	5	3	13
Previous Gov. Vote					
Symington	56	30	3	1	10
Basha	50	22	4	7	16
Ideology					
Liberal	37	47	3	0	13
Conservative	69	17	0	5	8
In Between	52	32	5	0	11
Sex					
Female	52	32	3	1	13
Male	60	25	3	3	8
Income					
< \$30K	49	33	3	2	12
\$30K - \$60K	61	26	5	2	7
> \$60K	59	26	1	2	12

(N=138)
(N=144)
(N=74)
(N=290)
(N=80)
(N=52)
(N=132)
(N=206)
(N=197)
(N=196)
(N=100)
(N=144)
(N=104)