News Release

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Texas Tech Survey Update: Abbott to Win Texas Governor, Voter ID Law Didn’t Cause Problems and Texans Split on Gay Marriage

After reassessing the results of last week’s Texas statewide telephone poll, researchers at Texas Tech University’s Earl Survey Research Center issued updated numbers on issues from who will likely be the next governor of Texas to gay marriage and voter ID laws.

“Although the substantive results remain the same—for example, Texas gubernatorial candidate Greg Abbott remains ahead of Wendy Davis—our standard internal verification checks indicated the initially released results used inaccurate weights,” said Mark McKenzie, an associate professor of political science whose students conducted the poll along with Dr. Seth C. McKee’s students. “We have adjusted the weights and updated the results, which we believe are more representative of attitudes in Texas. We deeply regret the initial error.”

In a statewide telephone survey, students queried more than 450 Texas residents of voting age from March 6 to April 3. In the survey, the results (weighted for race and gender, with unprompted “don’t know” responses excluded) indicate that 40 percent of Texans identify as Republicans or leaning Republicans, 35 percent identify as Democrats or leaning Democrats, 12 percent identify as pure independents, and 12 percent identify with some other party. Original results were released during a news conference on April 17.

According to the new numbers for Texas governor, 51 percent of those polled said they’d vote for Republican Greg Abbott, while 41 percent said they’d vote for Democrat Wendy Davis. Eight percent said they would vote for some other party/candidate.

However, even though Texas remains a conservative state, attitudes about gay marriage have changed in Texas during the last year, McKenzie said.

“In the past, support for gay marriage in this state was below 40 percent,” he said. “Now, we’re closely divided on the issue. Fifty-three percent of Texans think gay marriage should be recognized whereas 47 percent are against (the difference is within the margin of error). Democrats and Independents strongly support gay marriage, while Republicans are strongly opposed to it.”
And despite the controversy swirling around Texas’ voter photo ID law, McKenzie said researchers had trouble finding anyone who had problems with their photo ID. Of those polled, 96 percent said they had no problems having to show a photo ID at the polls.

Also, a majority of Texans believe illegal immigrants should be allowed to stay and apply for citizenship (61 percent) as opposed to being required to leave (19 percent). Texans’ support for pathways to citizenship is similar to what the nation as a whole believes on this issue.

Sen. Ted Cruz received a 58 percent approval rating, Gov. Rick Perry had a 59 percent approval rating and Sen. John Cornyn received 64 percent approval.

Texans’ opinion of President Barack Obama’s job approval rating now stands at 36 percent. Nationwide, the president’s job approval rating currently sits at about 43 percent, according to Gallup. The 2010 Affordable Care Act received 68 percent disapproval. Finally, seventy-two percent think the nation is heading in the wrong direction.

On other issues, Texans:

• Are divided over the Tea Party movement (30 percent approve versus 25 percent disapprove, while 45 percent responded they were not familiar with the movement).

• Believed that Voter ID laws are mainly used to prevent fraud (75 percent).

• Thought the National Security Agency’s mass collection of telephone numbers violated peoples’ privacy rights (56 percent) rather than was necessary to fight terrorism (44 percent).

The poll has a margin of error of +/- 4.6 percent.

Surveys are conducted each semester by political science majors in the department’s undergraduate classes and are administered at the Earl Survey Research Laboratory by the Department of Political Science.

For a copy of the updated figures, please contact John Davis.

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