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Orion Poll Reveals Early Numbers in Several West Virginia Statewide Races

President, Governor, Supreme Court Campaigns – Plus New Approval Numbers

Charleston, W.V. – A new poll by Orion Strategies surveys the opinions of historic likely voters on several campaigns currently being waged in West Virginia.

“It’s still early in the election process, but these numbers give us a snapshot in time of where voters in West Virginia see the campaigns as of today – and many are still quite undecided,” explained Curtis Wilkerson, principal of Orion Strategies. “Voters are telling us that they are going to absolutely vote Republican for President and currently are leaning toward voting slightly more Democratic for Governor.”

57% of respondents report they are likely to vote Republican for President while only 24% report they are likely to vote Democratic. In the race for West Virginia Governor, 37% say they are more likely to vote Democratic and 33% are looking to a Republican candidate – but 30% are still undecided. That is holding steady from similar numbers reported by Orion Strategies six months ago.

In the West Virginia Democratic Primary for President, Sanders leads by eight points – 32% to 24%, but a plurality at 44% are still undecided.

On the Republican ticket, Trump is still ahead at 38% - but the next highest number is 24% for those in the unsure category. Rubio, Cruz and Carson are statistically tied at 12%, 11% and 10% respectively with next-door Ohio Governor John Kasich coming in currently at 6%.

In a potential race between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, Trump would win 61% to 24% with only 15% undecided. In a situation with Hillary Clinton and an unnamed Republican nominee, the unnamed Republican would carry 63% of the vote to Clinton’s 21%.

In the race for West Virginia Governor, Jim Justice leads the Democratic Primary pack with 24% of the vote to Jeff Kessler’s 16% and Booth Goodwin’s 14%. A hefty 45% are undecided in this three-way race. In potential November matchups, Justice would lead presumptive Republican nominee, and current State Senate President, Bill Cole 37% to 33% with the rest undecided. Goodwin slightly trails in that prospective race at 36% for Cole and 33% for Goodwin. Bill Cole would take 40% of the vote were the November election held today compared to 30% for Jeff Kessler and the rest undecided.

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“We also took a look at the new way the Supreme Court election will be held, using nonpartisan candidates that will all be on the May primary ballot,” said Wilkerson. “Currently, it seems that name identification is having impact until the television ads start airing.”

Although a significant 55% of the vote is still undecided, the leader in the Supreme Court race is former Supreme Court Justice and Attorney General Darrell McGraw at 25% of the survey’s respondents. Current Supreme Court Justice Brent Benjamin comes in at 10% with both Wooton and Walker currently polling at 4% statewide and 2% for relatively unknown candidate Wayne King.

In other races, the Democratic primary contest for Secretary of State has Natalie Tennant at 59% of the vote to challenger Delegate Patsy Trecoast.

In a prospective race for West Virginia Auditor between Republican Delegate J.B. McCuskey and Democrat Jason Pizatella – the race is currently at 31% for McCuskey and 22% for the newly announced Pizatella with 50% undecided at this point in the campaign.

In regards to job performance ratings, voters are holding at 23% approval for President Obama – a number consistent with Orion’s last public poll from August. In regards to West Virginia figures, United States Senator Capito currently ranks highest at 54% approval with Senator Manchin pulling in 45%. The West Virginia Legislature is currently the lowest at 31% approval.

Yesterday, Orion Strategies released numbers on a variety of issues currently before the West Virginia Legislature. One issue that has already passed is right to work legislation. Only 32% of voters believe it will benefit West Virginia’s economy while 47% believe it will hurt.

The live-interview telephone survey was conducted Sunday and Monday of this week among historic, likely voters in West Virginia. A total of 306 respondents completed the entire survey – giving the poll a 5.6 +/- margin of error with a 95 percent confidence rate. The sample was proportionate to each of the three congressional districts in the state. All 55 counties were called, and results were collected from 53 of those counties. Partisan registration among respondents was 50 percent Democratic, 35 percent Republican and 15 percent Independent.

Orion Strategies, a strategic communication firm with offices in Charleston and Buckhannon, conducts polling and research surveys on behalf of various clients, including trade associations, law firms, universities, media outlets and political campaigns. The firm also conducts surveys for change of venue requests on prominent court cases. Curtis Wilkerson, Principal of Orion Strategies, is a member of the American Association of Public Opinion Research. Learn more about Orion Strategies at: www.orion-strategies.com

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Key Findings on Issues from Yesterday's News Release

Do you believe citizens should be required to show a state or federal issued photo ID before being allowed to vote?

77% Yes 20% No 3% Unsure

Should West Virginia implement mandatory drug testing to help determine eligibility for welfare and other forms of government aid and assistance?

77% Yes 18% No 5% Unsure

Would you support an increase to the tobacco and cigarette tax to help fund the Public Employee Insurance Agency?

59% Yes 35% No 6% Unsure

Do you believe that the tax should be increased an additional 45-cents, or do you believe it should be raised \$1 or more?

34% \$0.45 52% \$1 14% Unsure

Do you support the sale of alcohol starting at 10 A.M. on Sundays in restaurants and wineries?

38% Yes 55% No 7% Unsure

Do you believe that there are certain educational concepts and standards that students in every grade should learn regardless of the teacher or school?

81% Yes 9% No 11% Unsure

Should students take a test at the end of each year to determine if they have or have not learned a certain amount of knowledge during the school year?

77% Yes 18% No 5% Unsure

In regards to public education, do you support West Virginia replacing the Common Core content standards with the West Virginia College and Career Readiness standards?

54% yes 15% No 31% Unsure

Should West Virginia permit the sale of raw unpasteurized milk?

44% Yes 41% No 15% Unsure

Do you believe that WV should offer tax breaks to entice new businesses that would not otherwise relocate to the state?

78% yes 16% No 6% Unsure

Do you believe that the state should pay for education and training opportunities for out-of-work coal miners?

82% Yes 16% No 3% Unsure

Do you believe these same education and training opportunities should also be paid for in regards to other out-of-work individuals other than coal miners?

74% Yes 21% No 5% Unsure

In 2013, WV passed a new law to allow for Public Private Partnerships on large highway construction projects. Route 35, the Coalfields Expressway and Corridor H have had projects awarded using this program – which allows for contractors to build now and be paid over time. Do you believe that the legislature should renew this legislation?

63% Yes 16% No 21% Unsure

Do you believe that people should need a permit in order to carry a concealed firearm?

71% Yes 27% No 2% Unsure

Do you believe that West Virginia's coal industry will recover after President Obama leaves office?

43% Yes 44% no 13% Unsure

(Note that totals may not equal 100% due to rounding)

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