



***THE MSU-BILLINGS POLL:  
NATIONAL, STATE,  
AND  
LOCAL ISSUES  
OCTOBER 2008***

***23rd POLL!***



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**The following students participated in the survey projects:**

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## INTRODUCTION

The “MSU-Billings Poll” began in 1989. This year is the twentieth anniversary of the survey. During this time twenty-three surveys have been completed. The Co-Directors of the Poll were Dr. Craig Wilson (Political Science), Dr. Scott Rickard (Director of the Center for Applied Economic Research) and Dr. Dan Lennon (Sociology).

This report summarizes the results of the statewide random sample telephone survey of adult Montanans who were likely to vote in this year’s election. The poll was conducted October 16 – 20. Students enrolled in Political Science 350, Public Opinion and Polling completed the 403 interviews for this survey. One part-time assistant was employed to supervise/make phone calls to help ensure the project was completed in a timely manner. The survey was completed using random digit dial methodology, which selects both the phone numbers and members of a household to interview. The poll was conducted at MSU-Billings’ CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) Laboratory. Up to five attempts were made to reach selected households. The survey results have a +/- 5% margin of error at a confidence level of 95% (95% of the time the results will fall within the +/- 5% margin of error). Factors such as question order and wording can affect survey results. Statistical tests were employed to determine whether statistically significant relationships ( $p=.05$ ) existed between key variables.

## II. STATE ISSUES

### A. GOVERNOR ELECTION

#### 1. ELECTION FOR GOVERNOR

A majority (60.2%) of the respondents said “Schweitzer,” when asked: “If this year’s election for Montana governor were held today, for whom would you vote?” (names were read in alternating order)

#### VOTE IN GOVERNOR’S RACE

<u>Schweitzer</u>	<u>Brown</u>	<u>Jones</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
<b>60.2%</b>	<b>27.3%</b>	<b>4.3%</b>	<b>8.2%</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### Statistically Significant Relationships:

- **Schweitzer’s** supporters were compressed of 45.6% Democrats, 13% Republicans, 39.7% independents, and 1.7% of those undecided about their partisanship.
- **Brown’s** voters were made up of 69.7% Republicans, 23.9% independents, 3.7% Democrats and 2.8% of those undecided about their partisanship.
- **Jones** supporters consisted of 52.9% independents, 23.5% of those undecided about their partisanship, 17.6% Republicans, 5.9% Democrats.
- Schweitzer’s supporters were 56.5% female and 43.5 male. Brown’s backers were 58.7% male and 41.3% female. Jones voters were 64.7% male and 35.3% female.
- A majority (67.8%) of Schweitzer’s supporters were pro-choice, while majorities of Brown’s (61.5%) and Jones (52.9%) voters were pro-life.

#### 2. WHICH GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATE RUN MOST NEGATIVE CANDIDATE

When asked, “which of the major party gubernatorial candidates do you feel has run the most negative campaign, a plurality (33.1%) polled said they were undecided, followed by Roy Brown (30.1%). The results for this question fall within the +/- 5% margin of error for this survey.

#### MOST NEGATIVE CAMPAIGN

<u>Schweitzer</u>	<u>Brown</u>	<u>Both Same</u>	<u>Neither</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
<b>12.8%</b>	<b>30.1%</b>	<b>12.5%</b>	<b>11.5%</b>	<b>33.1%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- While 47.9% of Democrats thought Brown had run the most negative campaign, 21.8% of Republicans said the same of Schweitzer.
- Pluralities of women (37%) and men (28.4%) were undecided about whom had run the most negative campaign.

**B. U. S. SENATE RACE**

**A mistake was made in formatting the question regarding the U. S. Senate race. It did not include an “undecided” option. This forced the respondents into making a choice between candidates. It is unethical for pollsters to not allow individuals interviewed to respond they are “undecided.” Thus, the results for this question are invalid and will not be reported.**

**This same mistake was made for the question regarding the Superintendent of Public Instruction.**

**I apologize for these errors and will redouble my efforts to see that they are not repeated in future polls.**

**Craig Wilson**

**C. U. S. HOUSE RACE**

The query regarding the U. S. House contest was phrased, “if the election for Montana’s seat in the U. S. House of Representatives were held today would you vote for” (the names were read). A majority (59.2%) of those polled replied “Rehberg.”

**VOTE IN U. S. HOUSE RACE**

<u>Rehberg</u>	<u>Driscoll</u>	<u>Fellows</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
<b>59.2%</b>	<b>25.3%</b>	<b>4.5%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- **Rehberg’s** voters were 48.1% Republican, 34.9% independents, 14.5% Democrats and 2.6% of those undecided about their partisanship.
- **Driscoll’s** supporters were 65.3% Democrats, 28.7% independents, 5% Republicans and 1% of individuals undecided about their partisanship.
- Majorities of men (64.2%) and women (54.3%) said they’d vote for Rehberg.
- A majority or plurality of every age group said they would vote for Rehberg.
- A plurality (47.2%) of Rehberg voters were pro-life, a majority (74.3%) of Driscoll supporters pro-choice.
- Age was not related to intended vote.
- Rehberg was backed by a majority (81%) of pro-life voters and plurality (43.4%) of pro-choice voters.
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**D. CHIEF JUSTICE OF MONTANA SUPREME COURT**

When asked about race for Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, a plurality (48.4%) said “McGrath” in reply to the question phrased, “In the non-partisan race for Chief Justice of the Montana Supreme Court, Ron Waterman and Mike McGrath are seeking the position. If the election were held today would you vote for McGrath or Waterman?”

**VOTE FOR CHIEF JUSTICE OF MONTANA SUPREME COURT**

<u>McGrath</u>	<u>Waterman</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
48.4%	15.5%	36.1%	100%

**Statistically Significant Relationships:**

- 66.4% of Democrats, 33.9% of Republicans, and 48.3% of independents said they backed McGrath. Waterman had the support of 18.5% Republicans, 20.3% of independents and 6.7% of Democrats.

**E. MONTANA SECRETARY OF STATE RACE**

Three candidates are running to be Montana’s Secretary of State. The question regarding this contest was phrased: “In the contest for Montana Secretary of State, Democrat Linda McCulloch, Republican Brad Johnson and Libertarian Sieglinde Sharbono are seeking the position. If the election were held today would you vote for” (names read). A plurality (40.6%) of the interviewees chose “McCulloch.”

**VOTE IN SECRETARY OF STATE RACE**

<u>McCulloch</u>	<u>Johnson</u>	<u>Sharbono</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
40.6%	34.6%	3.8%	21%	100%

**Statistically Significant Relationships:**

- Johnson’s voters comprised 65.3% Republicans, 25.9% independents, 14.3% Democrats and 2.5% of those of other partisanship. McCulloch’s supporters were made up of 53.7% Democrats, 37.7% independents, 8% Republicans and .8% of partisans of other types.
- A plurality (46.6%) of women backed McCulloch, a plurality (42.1%) of men Johnson.

**F. MONTANA STATE AUDITOR RACE**

The question regarding the Montana State Auditor race was worded: “In the race for Montana State Auditor, Democrat Monica Lindeen is opposed by Republican Duane Grimes. If the election were held today do you think you would vote for” (names read). A plurality (41.1%) of those polled supported “Lindeen.”

**VOTE IN STATE AUDITOR RACE**

<u>Lindeen</u>	<u>Grimes</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
<b>41.1%</b>	<b>34.6%</b>	<b>24.3%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- Grimes’ voters were 59.4% Republican, 29.7% independents, 8.7 Democrats and 2.2% other partisans. Lindeen’s backers were composed of 56.1% Democrats, 34.8% independents, 7.9% Republicans and 1.2% other partisans.
- A plurality (49%) of women supported Lindeen, a plurality (40.5%) of men Grimes.

**G. CONTEST FOR MONTANA SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

See U. S. Senate race. The results for this question are not reported because it did not include an “undecided” option.

**H. VOTE IN MONTANA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES RACE**

When asked, “In terms of electing a representative to the Montana State House of Representatives, if the election were held today, do you think you would vote for the Republican or Democratic candidate in your district,” a plurality (42.6%) of the respondents said “Democrat.” The results for this question fall within the +/- 5% margin of error for this survey.

Last year in reply to this same question a plurality of 34% of those interviewed said “Democrat.”

**VOTE IN MONTANA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES RACE**

<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Neither/Other</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
<b>40.6%</b>	<b>42.6%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>11.8%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- A plurality (48.9%) of males planned on voting Republican, a plurality (48.1%) of females for Democrats.

## **I. MONTANA ATTORNEY GENERAL**

In the Attorney General’s race when asked, “In the contest for Montana Attorney General, Republican Tim Fox is facing Democrat Steve Bullock. If the election were held today would you vote for Bullock or Fox?” A plurality (45.1%) of those polled said “Bullock.”

### **VOTE IN ATTORNEY GENERAL RACE**

<b><u>Bullock</u></b>	<b><u>Fox</u></b>	<b><u>Undecided</u></b>	<b><u>Total</u></b>
<b>45.1%</b>	<b>37.6%</b>	<b>17.3%</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### **Statistically Significant Relationships:**

- Bullocks voters were 50% Democrats, 40% independents, 7.2% Republicans and 2.8% of other partisanship. Fox’s supporters were 58.7% Republican, 30% independents, 8.7% Democrats and 2.7% of other partisanship.
- A majority (51%) of women backed Bullock, a plurality (45.3%) of males Fox.
- In terms of age Bullock received his highest percentage support from those age 18-29 (52.4%), Fox from voters 60 or older (46.2%).

## **J. BALLOT ISSUES**

Questions were asked about two of the ballot issues being voted on in the general election.

### **1. LEGISLATIVE REFERENDUM 118 (6 MILL LEVY)**

The question regarding the commonly referred to “6 Mill Levy” was worded: “Legislative Referendum 118 would allow the continuation of the statewide six mill levy property tax use to support Montana’s State universities technical schools. If the election were held today would you vote for or against this measure?” A majority (69.1%) of the interviewees supported the continuation of the levy.

### **VOTE FOR 6 MILL LEVY**

<b><u>For</u></b>	<b><u>Against</u></b>	<b><u>Undecided</u></b>	<b><u>Total</u></b>
<b>69.1%</b>	<b>23.1%</b>	<b>7.8%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- In terms of party, 82.4% of Democrats, 69.9% of independents and 58.9% of Republicans said they would vote “yes” on the levy.
- Age, gender, income did not correlate to this question.
- The greatest support for the mill levy existed among those with a post-graduate degree (83.3%), while the strongest opposition came from individuals with a grade school education (40%).

**2. EXPANSION OF CHILDREN’S HEALTH CARE COVERAGE**

The question regarding the relatively complex initiative to expand children’s health insurance in Montana was phrased: “Ballot Initiative 155 would allow expanded health care coverage for uninsured children under the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), the Montana Medicaid Program and employer-sponsored health insurance. The State Health Department may raise income eligibility limits for children covered by CHIP and Medicaid, help children with employer sponsored insurance and work to encourage the enrollment of uninsured children in CHIP. Funding for this program will come from a combination of state and federal funds. If the CHIP election were held today would you vote for or against this Initiative?” A majority (73.4%) of the interviewees said they planned on supporting this initiative.

**VOTE ON EXPANDED CHILDREN’S INSURANCE PROGRAM IN MONTANA**

<u>For</u>	<u>Against</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
<b>73.4%</b>	<b>18.8%</b>	<b>7.8%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- In terms of partisanship, 90.8% of Democrats, 72.7% of independents and 59.7% of Republicans supported this plan.
- Gender, age, education and income were not related to responses to this question

## IV. LIFESTYLE ISSUES

### 1. LEGAL AGE TO CONSUME ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES IN MONTANA

A question about drinking alcoholic beverages was worded, “do you believe that the legal age to consume alcoholic beverages in Montana should be lowered from 21 to 18?” A majority (74.6%) of the interviewees replied “no.”

#### LOWER DRINKING AGE FROM 21 TO 18 IN MONTANA

<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
22.9%	74.6%	2.5%	100%

#### Statistically Significant Relationships:

- Majorities of Republicans (81.5%), Democrats (72.3%) and independents (69.2%) opposed lowering the age to drinking age
- In terms of age, those 30-39 (41.5%) supported lowering the drinking age to 18 to the greatest extent, while the most opposition was found among the post-60 cohort (81.4%).

### 2. PRO-CHOICE OR PRO-LIFE ON ABORTION

A majority (53.3%) of the respondents said “pro-choice” when asked the question, “on the issue of abortion, do you consider yourself to be pro-life or pro-choice?”

#### PRO-CHOICE OR PRO-LIFE ON ABORTION

<u>Pro-Choice</u>	<u>Pro-Life</u>	<u>Neither/Depends</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
53.3%	34.4%	11%	1.3%	100%

#### Statistically Significant Relationships:

- Majorities of Democrats (75.6%) and independents (58%) were pro-choice, a majority of Republicans (63.7%) pro-life.
- Age, gender, education and household income were not relation to opinion on abortion.
- A majority (68.7%) of those who said they were pro-life rated religion at a “5,” while a plurality (30.2%) of the pro-choice voters rated religion as a “5.”

### 3. TEACHING THEORIES OF EVOLUTION AND CREATIONISM

When asked the question: “In Montana public high school science classes do you think that only the theory of evolution or only the theory of creationism should be taught,

or should they both be taught,” a majority ( 66.6%) of the respondents answered “both.”

**TEACHING EVALUATION OR CREATIONISM**

<u>Only Evolution</u>	<u>Only Creationism</u>	<u>Both</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
20.1%	6.8%	66.6%	6.5%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- Majorities of Republicans (72.6%), independents (70.6%), and Democrats (53.8%) favored teaching both theories.
- A plurality (26.2%) of those polled favoring only the teaching of evolution rated religion a “2” in their lives, while a majority (92.6%) supporting only teaching creationism rated religion as “5.”

**4. IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION IN EVERYDAY LIFE**

A “1” to “5” scaled question about religion was worded, “On a scale of 1 to 5 with “1” being “not important at all” and “5” being “very important,” how important is religion in your everyday life,” a majority (44.7%) replied “5,” or “very important.” The mean response was 3.7.

In reply to this same question in last year’s poll, a plurality (46.6%) of the interviewees said “5” (very important). And the mean response was 3.8.

**IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION IN EVERYDAY LIFE**

<u>1-Not Important</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5-Very Important</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Mean</u>
9.8%	13.6%	17.6%	14.3%	44.7%	100%	3.7

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- A majority of Republicans (57.3%) and pluralities of Democrats (42.9%) and independents (37.1%) rated religion a “5” in their lives.
- A plurality of every age group rated religion at a “5,” except for the plurality (33.3%) of 18-29 year olds who scored it at “1” (not important”).