



University of North Florida
Public Opinion Research Lab
www.unf.edu/coas/porl/

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New UNF Poll Shows Sen. Bill Nelson Leading Gov. Rick Scott in 2018 Senate Election

A new poll of registered voters in Florida by the Public Opinion Research Laboratory (PORL) at the University of North Florida shows that, when asked about the 2018 election, 44 percent of Florida registered voters said they would vote to re-elect Sen. Bill Nelson, while 38 percent said they would vote for Gov. Rick Scott and 12 percent were undecided.

“Even though it’s very early in the 2018 election season, Nelson’s six-point lead is meaningful,” said Dr. Michael Binder, UNF Public Opinion Research Laboratory faculty director. “This race is going to get national attention and Rick Scott’s alliance with Donald Trump will likely factor into this election’s outcome next year.”

Although Donald Trump won the state in the presidential election, the majority of Florida’s registered voters—51 percent—disapprove and only 44 percent approve of the way Trump’s handling his job as president.

“Trump’s soft job-approval numbers could have huge implications during the midterm races, just ask all the Democrats that lost in 2010 when Obama’s numbers were the lowest they had been to that point, and Republicans that ran in 2006, when Bush’s popularity was plummeting,” noted Binder.

An even greater percentage of Florida registered voters—65 percent—disapprove of the way the U.S. Congress is handling its job, while 28 percent approve. When asked about Marco Rubio, 48 percent of Florida registered voters disapprove of the way he’s handling his job as U.S. Senator, while 40 percent approve and 12 percent don’t know.

“Even though Rubio was able to win re-election in November, he’s continued to have low job-approval numbers,” Binder said. “It will be interesting to see how his latest interactions with protestors affects his approval going forward.”

For Bill Nelson, 42 percent of Florida registered voters approve of his job performance as U.S. Senator, 28 percent disapprove and 29 percent don't know.

"A 42 percent job approval isn't a number an incumbent is usually happy about but with only 28 percent of the electorate disapproving of the job he's doing, Nelson is a net positive 14 points. That difference in approval is greater than Rubio, Trump and his likely re-election opponent, Scott," said Binder.

The majority—51 percent—of Florida registered voters disapprove, while 46 percent approve of Trump's travel ban executive order, which prohibits travel to the U.S. for the next three months by citizens of seven majority Muslim countries. It also suspends the U.S. refugee program. Following national trends, Florida opposes the Trump immigration ban, but the state is divided, according to Binder.

For all of the controversy surrounding transgender rights, 62 percent of registered Florida voters don't think using the same bathroom as a transgender individual would make them uneasy. The overwhelming majority—79 percent—don't think transgender individuals are a sexual threat to children and women.

"Hopefully, findings like these can change the way the debate over the rights of transgender people is presented in the media," said Dr. Curtis Phillips, UNF associate professor of psychology. "Too often, which bathroom a transgender person uses is presented as controversial when, in fact, most people aren't concerned."

For crosstabs by partisanship, gender and race, go to <http://www.unf.edu/coas/porl/>.

Methodology

The Florida statewide poll was conducted by PORL Monday, Feb. 13, through Sunday, Feb. 26, by live callers via the telephone, and calls were made from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. daily. The sample of phone numbers was created through the voter file provided by Florida's Division of Elections January 2017 update and selected through the use of probability sampling among registered voters in the Florida voter file. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish by more than 245 UNF undergraduate students. Overall, there were 973 completed surveys of Florida registered voters, 18 years of age or older.

The margin of sampling error for the total sample is +/- 3.14 percentage points. Margin of sampling error estimates for each strata can be found below. The breakdown of completed responses on a landline phone to a cell phone was 27 to 73 percent. A single interviewer, through hand dialing, upon reaching the specific registered voter as identified in the Florida voter file, asked the respondent to participate, regardless of landline telephone or cell phone. To ensure a representative sample being collected, the state was stratified using the 10 Florida designated market areas. In addition, because of Miami-Dade County's unique population, it was separately accounted for in its own strata, creating 11 strata. Quotas were placed on each of these stratified areas to ensure a proportionate amount of completed surveys from across the state. The total sample was then weighted by partisan registration, gender, race and age from the Florida voter file to match the active registered voters in Florida. There were no statistical adjustments made due to design effects. This survey was sponsored by the UNF PORL and directed by Dr. Michael Binder, UNF associate professor of political science.

The PORL is a full-service survey research facility that provides tailored research to fulfill each client's individual needs from political, economic, social and cultural projects. The PORL opened in 2001 and is an independent, non-partisan center, a charter member of the American Association for Public Opinion Research Transparency Initiative and a member of the Association of Academic Survey Research Organization. For more information about methodology, contact Dr. Binder at porl@unf.edu or at (904) 620-2784.

Completed Surveys by strata

Total Sample	973
1 – Pensacola	37
2 – Panama City	16
3 – Tallahassee	25
4 – Jacksonville	83
5 – Gainesville	17
6 – Orlando	179
7 – Tampa	237
8 – West Palm Beach	106
9 – Fort Myers	62
10 – Broward/Monroe	100
11 – Miami-Dade	111

Margin of sampling error by strata

Total Sample	+/- 3.14%
1 – Pensacola	+/- 16.11%
2 – Panama City	+/- 24.50%
3 – Tallahassee	+/- 19.6%
4 – Jacksonville	+/- 10.76%
5 – Gainesville	+/- 23.77%
6 – Orlando	+/- 7.32%
7 – Tampa	+/- 6.37%
8 – West Palm Beach	+/- 9.52%
9 – Fort Myers	+/- 12.45%
10 – Broward/Monroe	+/- 9.80%
11 – Miami-Dade	+/- 9.30%

Survey Results

Do you approve or disapprove of the way that Donald Trump is handling his job as President of the United States?

Answer Options	Florida Registered Voters n=957
Strongly Approve	28%
Somewhat Approve	16%
Somewhat Disapprove	7%
Strongly Disapprove	44%
Don't Know	4%

Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that the United States Congress is handling its job?

Answer Options	Florida Registered Voters n=966
Strongly Approve	7%
Somewhat Approve	21%
Somewhat Disapprove	19%
Strongly Disapprove	46%
Don't Know	7%

Do you approve or disapprove of the way that Marco Rubio is handling his job as United States Senator?

Answer Options	Florida Registered Voters n=956
Strongly Approve	15%
Somewhat Approve	25%
Somewhat Disapprove	17%
Strongly Disapprove	31%
Don't Know	12%

Do you approve or disapprove of the way that Bill Nelson is handling his job as United States Senator?

Answer Options	Florida Registered Voters n=945
Strongly Approve	13%
Somewhat Approve	29%
Somewhat Disapprove	16%
Strongly Disapprove	12%
Don't Know	29%

If the 2018 election for US Senator from Florida were held today, how would you vote if the candidates were [ROTATE ANSWERS]

Answer Options	Florida Registered Voters n=957
Bill Nelson, the Democrat	44%
Rick Scott, the Republic	38%
Someone Else	3%
Would not vote	3%
Don't Know	12%

As you may know, Donald Trump signed an executive order, which prohibits travel to the U.S. for the next three months by citizens of seven majority Muslim countries and suspends the U.S. refugee program for four months while reducing the total number of refugees the U.S. will accept this year. Overall, do you support or oppose this executive order?

Answer Options	Florida Registered Voters n=960
Strongly Approve	34%
Somewhat Approve	12%
Somewhat Disapprove	9%
Strongly Disapprove	42%
Don't Know	2%

Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:

The idea of a transgender individual using the same bathroom as me makes me uneasy.

Answer Options	Florida Registered Voters n=958
Strongly Agree	23%
Somewhat Agree	12%
Somewhat Disagree	15%
Strongly Disagree	47%
Don't Know	3%

Transgender people are a sexual threat to children and women.

Answer Options	Florida Registered Voters n=950
Strongly Agree	8%
Somewhat Agree	7%
Somewhat Disagree	17%
Strongly Disagree	62%
Don't Know	7%

Race	Florida Registered Voters n=973
White (not Hispanic)	65%
Black (not Hispanic)	14%
Hispanic	15%
Other	6%

Gender	Florida Registered Voters n=973
Men	46%
Women	54%

Party Registration	Florida Registered Voters n=973
Republican	36%
Democrat	38%
NPA and other	26%

Age	Florida Registered Voters n=969
18 to 24	9%
25 to 34	15%
35 to 44	14%
45 to 55	17%
56 to 64	18%
65 and older	27%

Telephone	Florida Registered Voters n=969
Landline	27%
Cell phone	73%

Survey language completed in...	Florida Registered Voters n=969
English	97%
Spanish	3%

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