THE WMUR / UNH POLL

University of New Hampshire

BENSON HOLDS WIDE LEAD IN NH GUBERNATORIAL RACE

By: Andrew E. Smith, Ph.D.   603/862-2226   **FOR RELEASE**
        UNH Survey Center   October 10, 2002
        www.unh.edu/survey-center

DURHAM, NH -- Republican businessman Craig Benson currently enjoys a wide lead over his Democratic rival, State Senator Mark Fernald in the race for Governor of New Hampshire

These findings are based on the latest **WMUR / UNH Poll**, conducted by the University of New Hampshire Survey Center. The WMUR / UNH Poll is sponsored by WMUR-TV of Manchester, New Hampshire. Six hundred fifty-one (651) New Hampshire likely voters were interviewed between October 3 and October 10, 2002 (margin of sampling error, +/-4 percent).   (For more detailed results, visit the Survey Center web site at www.unh.edu/survey-center and click on Press Releases.)

NH Governor

The race for governor of New Hampshire finds two political opposites in a race for the open seat (current governor Jeanne Shaheen is running for the U.S. Senate). Mark Fernald, a State Senator from Sharon won the Democratic primary and is best known for his pro-income tax position. Fernald has the daunting task of facing businessman Craig Benson, co-founder of Cabletron, in November. Benson is perhaps best known for having spent more than $10,000,000 in his Republican primary fight. Fernald, by contrast, spent far less than $1,000,000 in his fight for the nomination. In this battle between David and Goliath, Goliath is in the lead. In the latest WMUR / UNH Poll, Benson is favored by 49 percent of likely November voters, 33 percent favor Fernald, 2 percent favor Libertarian John Babiarz, 4 percent favor some other candidate, and 11 percent are undecided. Benson's lead over Fernald is essentially unchanged since June when he led Fernald 48 percent to 35 percent. Benson's tremendous funding advantage will make him difficult to defeat in November.

THE INCOME TAX

Fernald has made his task more difficult by strongly supporting an income tax to replace New Hampshire's state-wide property tax to fund education. New Hampshire has historically been opposed to an income tax and pro-income tax candidates have fared poorly in the past. An indication of the importance of the income tax in this race can be seen in the reasons voters give for supporting their candidate. The major reasons Benson voters give for voting for him are that they like him better than Fernald (25%), that he is a Republican (17%), that they generally agree with him on the issues (15%), his experience in business (14%), and his opposition to an income tax (12%). Fernald voters say the major reasons they plan to vote for him are that he is a Democrat (25%), that they dislike Benson (22%), that they favor an income tax to fund education (22%), they like him better than Benson (11%), and they generally agree with him on issues (9%).

FAVORABILITY RATINGS

Despite being battered by negative ads during the bruising GOP Primary, Benson has emerged relatively unscathed. Currently, 43 percent of likely voters have a favorable opinion of Benson, 33 percent hold an unfavorable opinion, 13 percent are neutral, and 11 percent don't know enough about him to say. Benson's net favorability rating, the percentage who have an unfavorable opinion of him subtracted from the percentage who have a favorable opinion, is a modest +10 percent, up from +4 percent in June.

Fernald is considerably less well known than Benson. Currently, 25 percent of likely November voters have a favorable opinion Fernald, 21 percent hold an unfavorable opinion, 12 percent are neutral, and 42 percent don't know enough about him to say. Fernald's net favorability rating is +4 percent, down from +10 percent in June.

SUB-GROUP ANALYSIS

Benson's strongest support comes from Republicans, opponents of abortion and gun owners. Benson is also leading Fernald among Independents by 45 percent to 27 percent.

Fernald gets his strongest support from Democrats, residents of western New Hampshire, and voters with post-graduate educations.

Gubernatorial Election Trial Heats
(Likely November Voters)

	June '02	Oct. '02
Benson (R)	48%	49%
Fernald (D)	35	33
Babiarz	--	2
Other	2	4
Don't Know	15	11
	(N=518)	(N=612)

Why Vote for Benson?
(Likely Benson Voters)

	Oct. '02
I like him better	25%
I'm/He's a Republican	17
Agree with him on the issues (in general)	15
His experience, past record as a businessman	14
Opposition to income tax	12
Dislike Fernald	8
Other	5
Don't know	4
	(N=294)

Why Vote for Fernald?
(Likely Fernald Voters)

	Oct. '02
I'm/He's a Democrat	25%
Education funding plan, pro-income tax	22
Dislike Benson	22
I like him better	11
Agree with him on the issues (in general)	9
His experience, past record	2
Other	7
Don't know	2

(N=200)

Favorability Ratings (Likely Voters)

	Favorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	DK Enough	Net	(N)
Benson	43%	33%	13%	11%	+10	(641)
Fernald	25	21	12	42	+4	(639)

Net Favorability Ratings

	Registered Voters			Likely Nov. Voters	
	Oct. '01	Feb. '02	April '02	June '02	Oct. '02
Benson	+2%	+3%	+10%	+4%	+10%
Fernald	+7	+12	+8	+10	+4

WMUR / UNH Poll Methodology

        These findings are based on the most recent WMUR / UNH Poll conducted by the University of New Hampshire Survey Center from October 3 to October 8, 2002. A random sample of 651 likely voters in New Hampshire was interviewed by telephone. In 95 of 100 cases, the statewide estimates will be accurate to plus or minus 3.8 percent. Results reported for other subgroups have potential for somewhat larger variation than those for the entire population.

        The data have been weighted to adjust for numbers of adults and telephone lines within households, respondent sex, and region of the state. In addition to potential sampling error, all surveys have other potential sources of non-sampling error including question order effects, question wording effects, and non-response.

Respondents to the WMUR / UNH Poll were asked:
- "Next, I'd like to get your overall opinion of some people running for office in November. As I read each name, please say if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of this person - or if you have never heard of him or her. Charlie Bass."
- "Craig Benson."
- "Jeb Bradley."
- "Martha Fuller Clark."
- "Mark Fernald."
- "Jeanne Shaheen."
- "John Sununu."
- "Katrina Swett."
- "Suppose the election for New Hampshire Governor was being held TODAY. Would you vote for Craig Benson, the Republican … Mark Fernald, the Democrat … or John Babiarz, the Libertarian?"

N.H. Governor

STATEWIDE	Benson 49%	Fernald 33%	Babiarz 2%	Other 4%	Undecided 11%	(N) 612
Registered Democrat	16	69	2	1	12	158
Undeclared	48	27	4	6	16	252
Registered Republican	75	12	2	5	6	202
Conservative GOP	81	5	3	5	6	170
Swing Voter	47	31	3	5	13	325
Liberal DEM	5	78	1	1	15	116
Democrat	18	63	2	3	14	225
Independent	45	27	3	9	16	97
Republican	76	11	2	4	7	271
May vote	41	25	6	6	22	63
Will vote unless emergency	42	37	3	3	16	188
Will definitely vote	54	32	2	5	7	361
1st District	54	27	3	2	14	322
2nd District	43	40	1	7	9	290
Northern NH	50	35	1	4	10	78
Western NH	38	49	1	6	7	60
Central/Lakes	49	36	3	5	7	95
Hillsborough County	53	28	1	6	13	186
Seacoast	48	31	5	2	14	193
18 to 29	54	26	6	2	13	158
30 to 45	50	33	2	5	10	238
46 to 64	50	35	0	8	7	94
65 and over	41	43	1	3	11	100
5 years or less in NH	43	34	5	3	16	84
6 to 10 years	57	30	3	1	8	45
11 to 20 years	45	37	1	4	13	120
More than 20 years	51	32	2	5	10	354
Male	52	32	4	4	7	293
Female	45	34	1	4	15	319
High school or less	53	24	3	4	16	143
Some college	55	24	4	5	12	150
College graduate	51	36	2	5	6	190
Post-graduate	34	50	1	3	12	125
Abortion always legal	38	43	4	4	11	296
Legal in some cases	60	22	2	5	11	221
Always illegal	69	18	0	3	10	56
Gun owning household	57	28	1	5	9	206
No guns in household	44	36	3	4	12	384

Favorability Rating - Craig Benson

	Favorable	**Neutral**	**Unfavorable**	**DK**	**(N)**
STATEWIDE	**43%**	**13%**	**33%**	**11%**	**641**
Registered Democrat	22	11	55	13	166
Undeclared	42	16	29	13	263
Registered Republican	59	12	22	7	212
Conservative GOP	65	12	16	7	173
Swing Voter	42	14	33	11	336
Liberal DEM	12	10	61	17	122
Democrat	21	13	52	13	234
Independent	38	15	34	13	100
Republican	63	11	18	8	277
May vote	31	23	23	24	71
Will vote unless emergency	36	14	37	13	199
Will definitely vote	48	11	33	7	372
1st District	50	12	28	10	339
2nd District	34	14	40	12	302
Northern NH	36	9	32	23	84
Western NH	24	17	40	19	59
Central/Lakes	45	10	38	7	100
Hillsborough County	49	13	32	6	195
Seacoast	43	15	31	10	203
18 to 29	45	13	28	14	163
30 to 45	44	14	33	9	244
46 to 64	45	10	35	10	97
65 and over	35	10	43	12	100
5 years or less in NH	43	7	30	20	89
6 to 10 years	38	12	31	19	48
11 to 20 years	41	12	40	7	123
More than 20 years	45	14	32	9	360
Male	43	11	34	12	306
Female	42	15	33	10	335
High school or less	48	13	24	15	147
Some college	50	14	25	11	155
College graduate	41	11	39	9	197
Post-graduate	32	13	45	11	127
Abortion always legal	36	11	41	12	303
Legal in some cases	50	14	25	10	223
Always illegal	54	18	19	9	60
Gun owning household	49	13	27	11	208
No guns in household	40	13	37	10	400

Favorability Rating - Mark Fernald

	Favorable	**Neutral**	**Unfavorable**	**DK**	**(N)**
STATEWIDE	25%	12%	21%	42%	639
Registered Democrat	44	10	15	31	166
Undeclared	23	14	15	48	263
Registered Republican	14	10	34	41	210
Conservative GOP	10	10	37	43	173
Swing Voter	26	13	20	42	334
Liberal DEM	48	9	5	38	122
Democrat	39	13	12	36	234
Independent	29	13	16	41	100
Republican	14	9	30	46	276
May vote	4	16	15	65	71
Will vote unless emergency	26	13	16	45	198
Will definitely vote	29	10	26	35	371
1st District	20	11	24	45	338
2nd District	31	12	19	38	301
Northern NH	26	13	25	35	84
Western NH	45	8	11	37	59
Central/Lakes	28	7	24	41	100
Hillsborough County	23	14	23	40	194
Seacoast	21	11	20	47	201
18 to 29	12	10	17	61	163
30 to 45	27	11	24	37	244
46 to 64	33	17	22	28	97
65 and over	37	6	19	38	100
5 years or less in NH	20	8	9	62	88
6 to 10 years	27	18	14	41	48
11 to 20 years	30	13	18	39	122
More than 20 years	25	10	27	37	360
Male	26	10	28	37	306
Female	25	13	16	46	333
High school or less	15	11	24	50	147
Some college	20	16	17	47	155
College graduate	28	10	23	39	196
Post-graduate	41	10	21	28	127
Abortion always legal	32	9	14	44	303
Legal in some cases	20	14	28	37	221
Always illegal	17	10	29	43	60
Gun owning household	23	13	21	43	207
No guns in household	27	11	22	40	399