

THE WMUR POLL

University of New Hampshire Survey Center

BENSON, FERNALD OPEN LEADS FOR NH GOVERNOR

By: Andrew E. Smith, Ph.D. 603/862-2226
UNH Survey Center
www.unh.edu/survey-center

DURHAM, NH -- Craig Benson has maintained his lead in the race for the Republican gubernatorial nomination while Bruce Keough has passed Gordon Humphrey for second place. In the Democratic primary, Mark Fernald has opened a significant lead over Bev Hollingworth.

These findings are based on the latest **WMUR Poll**, conducted by the University of New Hampshire Survey Center for WMUR-TV, Manchester, NH. Five hundred ninety-one (591) likely primary voters were interviewed between August 26 and September 3, 2002 (margin of sampling error, +/-4 percent). Included in this sample were 344 likely GOP primary voters (margin of sampling error, +/-5 percent) and 247 likely Democratic primary voters (margin of sampling error, +/-6 percent).

GOP PRIMARY

The race for Governor of New Hampshire is promising to be one of the most expensive in U.S history. And the man who has spent the most money, Cabletron co-founder Craig Benson, is poised to win the Republican nomination.

In the latest WMUR poll, Benson is favored by 44 percent of likely Republican primary voters, 23 percent favor former State Senator Bruce Keough, 21 percent support former U.S. Senator Gordon Humphrey and 13 percent are still undecided. Support for Benson has been in the low 40 percent range throughout the summer, according to polls conducted by the University of New Hampshire Survey Center.

The most interesting finding of the WMUR poll is that support for Gordon Humphrey, the early favorite in this race, continues to decline. Despite a large, and often negative advertising campaign, Humphrey is now in third place behind Bruce Keough.

Benson is also seen by Republican primary voters as the likely winner in the race. When asked who they thought would win, 46 percent of likely GOP primary voters named Benson, 25 percent named Humphrey, only 6 percent named Keough, and 23 percent are not sure.

When asked why they favor their choice for Governor, Benson supporters most frequently mention his business background (25%), that they like him better (24%), that they agree with him on the issues (19%), and that he has the best chance of winning in November (8%). Keough supporters cite his position on education funding (30%), that they agree with him on the issues (21%), that they just like him better than the other candidates (13%), and negative ads by other candidates (10%) as the reasons they plan to vote for him. Humphrey supporters mention that they agree with him on the issues (32%), that they like him better than the other candidates (26%), and his previous experience in politics (10%) as reasons they plan to vote for him

Democratic Primary

Among Democrats, State Senator Mark Fernald of Sharon has pulled away from State Senator Bev Hollingworth of Hampton. Currently, 50 percent of likely Democratic primary voters say they plan to vote for Fernald, 27 percent plan to vote for Hollingworth, 5 percent favor some other candidate, and 19 percent remain undecided. Support for Fernald has increased substantially over the summer. In the June Granite State Poll, Fernald and Hollingworth were essentially tied with 32 percent favoring Fernald and 31 percent favoring Hollingworth.

Likely Democratic primary voters also believe that Fernald is going to win the race. Currently, 46 percent think Fernald will win, 23 percent think Hollingworth will win, and 31 percent are undecided.

When asked why they plan to vote for Fernald, his supporters say they just like him better (22%), his position on education funding (21%), that they agree with him on the issues (17%), and that they agree with his position in support of an income tax (16%). Hollingworth supporters say they like her better than Fernald (24%), that they agree with her on the issues (23%), they agree with her position on education funding (15%), and that they don't like Fernald (14%) as reasons they plan to vote for her.

SUB-GROUP ANALYSIS

Mark Fernald gets his strongest support among liberal Democrats, people who are extremely interested in the primary, and voters who favor an income tax to fund schools.

Bev Hollingworth gets her strongest support from undeclared voters who plan to vote in the Democratic primary and women.

Craig Benson does well among most subgroups of Republican primary voters, but his strongest supporters are residents of the 1st Congressional District.

Bruce Keough's strongest supporters are voters with post-graduate educations, residents of western New Hampshire, voters who favor an income tax to fund education, and swing voters.

Gordon Humphrey's strongest support comes from conservative Republicans, supporters of a state wide property tax to fund education, and voters who have lived in New Hampshire for 5 years or less.

NH Gubernatorial Election - Likely GOP Primary Voters *

	<u>Oct. '01</u>	<u>Feb. '02</u>	<u>April '02</u>	<u>June '02</u>	<u>Sept. '02</u>
Benson	13%	20%	37%	43%	44%
Keough	4	6	8	15	23
Humphrey	37	37	27	23	21
Corbin	2	2	-	-	-
Other/Neither	8	9	10	6	*
Undecided	35	26	18	13	13
	(N=200)	(N=226)	(N=236)	(N=229)	(N=335)

Corbin has dropped out of the GOP race.

* Less than 1 percent.

Who Think Will Win NH Gubernatorial Primary Election - Likely GOP Primary Voters

Benson	46%
Humphrey	25
Keough	6
Undecided	23
	(N=336)

**Why Favor Benson?
(Likely GOP Primary Voters)**

	<u>Sept. '02</u>
Business background	25%
No reason, I like him better	24
Agree with him on the issues (in general)	19
Best chance to win in November	8
Negative ads by other candidates	5
Time for a change	4
Position on funding education	4
Dislike other candidates	2
Other	4
Don't know	5
	(N=146)

**Why Favor Humphrey?
(Likely GOP Primary Voters)**

	<u>Sept. '02</u>
Agree with him on the issues (in general)	32%
No reason, I like him better	26
Previous political experience	10
Don't trust Benson	9
More conservative	7
Dislike other candidates	6
Position on funding education	5
Other	1
Don't know	4

(N=69)

**Why Favor Keough?
(Likely GOP Primary Voters)**

	<u>Sept. '02</u>
Position on funding education	30%
Agree with him on the issues (in general)	21
No reason, I like him better	13
Negative ads by other candidates	10
Dislike other candidates	7
Best chance to win in November	5
Don't trust Benson	3
More conservative	3
Time for a change	3
Other	1
Don't know	4

(N=75)

NH Gubernatorial Election - Likely DEM Primary Voters *

	<u>Oct. '01</u>	<u>Feb. '02</u>	<u>April '02</u>	<u>June '02</u>	<u>Sept. '02</u>
Fernald	22%	19%	16%	32%	50%
Hollingworth	24	18	23	31	27
Normand	-	7	8	-	-
Other/Neither	11	12	10	12	5
Undecided	41	44	44	25	19
	(N=172)	(N=196)	(N=172)	(N=179)	(N=242)

Normand has dropped out of the race.

Who Think Will Win NH Gubernatorial Primary Election - Likely DEM Primary Voters

Fernald	46%
Hollingworth	23
Undecided	31
	(N=243)

**Why Favor Fernald?
(Likely DEM Primary Voters)**

	<u>Sept. '02</u>
Position on funding education	21%
No reason, I like him better	22
Agree with him on the issues (in general)	17
Position on Income Tax	16
Dislike Hollingworth	4
Experience in NH Senate	4
Best chance to win in November	2
Don't know	14
	(N=120)

**Why Favor Hollingworth?
(Likely DEM Primary Voters)**

	<u>Sept. '02</u>
No reason, I like her better	24%
Agree with him on the issues (in general)	23
Position on funding education	15
Dislike Fernald	14
Experience in NH Senate	8
She's a woman	4
Position on Income Tax	3
Other	2
Don't know	8
	(N=63)

WMUR Poll Methodology

These findings are based on the most recent WMUR Poll conducted by the University of New Hampshire Survey Center from August 26 to September 3, 2002. A random sample of 591 likely September primary voters was interviewed by telephone. In 95 of 100 cases, the statewide estimates will be accurate to +/- 4 percent. Results reported for other subgroups have potential for somewhat larger variation than those for the entire population. The margin of sampling error for likely GOP primary voters (N=344) is +/-5 percent and the margin of sampling error for likely Democratic primary voters (N=247) is +/-6 percent.

The data have been weighted to adjust for numbers of adults and telephone lines within households, sex of the respondent, region of the state, and likelihood of voting in the September 10 NH Primary Election. 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 Granite State Poll were asked:

- "Now, I am going to read the names of the candidates who are on the Republican primary ballot for Governor. If you were voting in the Republican primary for Governor today, would you vote for ... Craig Benson ... Gordon Humphrey ... or Bruce Keough?" ROTATE CANDIDATES IF DK/UNDECIDED: "Do you lean toward Keough, Humphrey or Benson?"
- "What is the MOST important reason why you plan to vote for BENSON/HUMPHREY/KEOUGH?"
- "Regardless of who you plan to vote for ... which candidate do you think will win the Republican primary for Governor ... Craig Benson ... Gordon Humphrey ... or Bruce Keough?"
- "I am going to read the names of the candidates who are on the Democratic primary ballot for Governor. If you were voting in the Democratic primary for Governor today, would you vote for ... Bev Hollingworth or Mark Fernald?" ROTATE CANDIDATES IF DK/UNDECIDED: "Do you lean toward Fernald or Hollingworth?"
- "What is the MOST important reason why you plan to vote for FERNALD/HOLLINGWORTH?"
- "Regardless of who you plan to vote for ... which candidate do you think will win the Democratic primary for Governor ... Mark Fernald or Bev Hollingworth?"

Republican Primary - N.H. Governor

STATEWIDE	<u>Benson</u> 44%	<u>Humphrey</u> 21%	<u>Keough</u> 23%	<u>Other</u> 0%	<u>Undecided</u> 13%	<u>(N=)</u> 335
Undeclared	49	18	22	0	10	102
Registered Republican	41	22	23	1	14	233
Conservative GOP	43	29	21	0	7	156
Moderate GOP	49	17	17	0	17	112
Swing Voter	34	10	34	3	20	47
Moderate DEM	43	0	36	2	19	14
Extremely interested in Primary	41	23	24	0	11	80
Very interested	47	19	27	0	7	155
Somewhat interested	39	21	16	1	23	94
Not very interested	60	2	2	0	35	5
Will vote unless emergency	32	21	24	2	21	56
Will definitely vote	46	20	22	0	11	275
1st District	53	18	16	0	12	151
2nd District	35	22	28	1	13	184
Northern NH	47	16	23	0	14	51
Western NH	36	7	45	0	13	32
Central/Lakes	48	19	24	0	9	66
Hillsborough County	37	24	17	1	21	96
Seacoast	48	26	20	0	7	89
Favor Income tax for schools	31	11	41	3	14	42
Favor Sales tax	51	20	18	0	11	73
Favor Property tax	34	32	26	0	8	20
Favor Legalized gambling	44	10	24	0	23	57
Favor Const. Amendment	42	26	21	0	10	123
18 to 29	45	23	19	0	13	71
30 to 45	37	21	29	1	12	102
46 to 64	55	18	20	0	6	55
65 and over	42	22	21	0	15	94
5 years or less in NH	32	35	19	1	14	27
6 to 10 years	39	19	27	0	15	32
11 to 20 years	45	17	24	0	15	72
More than 20 years	45	21	22	1	11	195
Male	47	23	23	0	8	194
Female	39	18	22	1	19	141
High school or less	60	16	17	0	7	77
Some college	40	22	20	0	18	91
College graduate	40	27	20	1	12	116
Post-graduate	31	12	47	0	10	47

Democratic Primary - N.H. Governor

	<u>Hollingworth</u> 27%	<u>Fernald</u> 50%	<u>Other</u> 5%	<u>Undecided</u> 19%	<u>(N=)</u> 242
STATEWIDE					
Registered Democrat	22	55	7	17	165
Undeclared	38	38	1	23	77
Moderate GOP	31	46	2	21	12
Swing Voter	17	50	7	27	49
Moderate DEM	34	42	5	20	85
Liberal DEM	25	58	5	12	94
Extremely interested in Primary	28	58	9	5	54
Very interested	27	50	6	18	107
Somewhat interested	25	44	2	29	70
Not very interested	28	40	3	29	9
Will vote unless emergency	34	42	6	19	33
Will definitely vote	26	51	5	18	204
1st District	29	48	4	19	112
2nd District	25	51	6	18	129
Northern NH	19	52	10	19	31
Western NH	19	43	15	23	27
Central/Lakes	26	60	0	14	42
Hillsborough County	33	43	4	20	72
Seacoast	27	52	4	17	69
Favor Income tax for schools	24	62	0	14	94
Favor Sales tax	31	44	2	23	36
Favor Property tax	53	41	1	5	11
Favor Legalized gambling	29	24	16	30	53
Favor Const. Amendment	22	62	8	8	20
18 to 29	22	52	7	20	36
30 to 45	31	47	8	14	107
46 to 64	37	45	0	18	41
65 and over	13	54	3	31	49
5 years or less in NH	34	55	3	9	33
6 to 10 years	9	42	3	47	27
11 to 20 years	29	60	6	5	41
More than 20 years	27	47	6	19	137
Male	17	54	11	18	110
Female	34	46	0	19	131
High school or less	18	50	4	28	54
Some college	29	47	9	15	45
College graduate	33	49	0	18	69
Post-graduate	25	52	9	13	73