



Badger Poll™ #2, Release 1
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GUBERNATORIAL CAMPAIGN AT AN EARLY STAGE
by G. Donald Ferree, Jr.

As we move into the summer preceding the gubernatorial election, the public's views of the incumbent Governor remain lukewarm. But the populace is not really at all focused on the election campaign as yet, most challengers are not at all widely known, and neither the Governor nor his putative opponents enjoy a clear advantage. These are some of the findings of the most recent Badger Poll™, which surveyed some 524 randomly selected state residents by telephone from June 8 to 17. This Badger Poll™ was conducted by the University of Wisconsin (Madison) Survey Center and was paid for by private funds made available through the UW-Madison Chancellor's Office and University Communications. The Capital Times was the media sponsor of this survey.

Governor Scott McCallum's job ratings continue to be middling in the abstract. Overall, 3% rated him excellent, 32% good, 35% fair and 19% poor. The pattern of the two middle categories comprising the bulk of the population, with relatively few choosing one of the "extreme" ratings, suggests something of a lack of passion in the public's view. (For politicians like Bill Clinton, for example, impressions around the country tended to be more polarized). As one might expect, there is a partisan cast to views of the Governor. More than half of all Republicans rated him excellent or good, as may be seen in the detailed tables following this summary. The corresponding figure among Democrats was less than one in five.

This question was included in the first Badger Poll™ conducted in March of this year (field work from March 5-17). On that survey, 3% rated him excellent, 23% good, 40% fair, and 23% poor. That means that, compared to March, the shift is equivalent to a bit more than one resident in eight moving UP one point on the scale.

That poll showed McCallum standing less strong in the minds of state residents than his predecessor, a phenomenon which persists. In June, looking back on the previous term, 26% of state residents think Tommy Thompson did an excellent job, 42% good, 21% fair, and 9% poor. In March, comparable figures for Thompson were 15% excellent, 51% good, 23% poor, 8% poor. The shift for Thompson was about the same size as for McCallum. The fact that the man for whom McCallum served as Lieutenant Governor (and his fellow partisan) looks good in retrospect may cut both ways.

Although the calendar says there are less than five months left before this fall's gubernatorial election, and both parties have recently held their statewide conventions, it appears that the campaign is still in quite an early stage. Specifically, fewer than half of all Wisconsin residents say they are now paying either "a lot" or "some" attention to the people running for Governor. Of these, by far the larger portion (36%) are paying "some" attention. Fewer than one in ten claims to be paying "a lot" of attention. On the other side, one in three (33%) describes themselves as paying "only a little attention", while about one in four (22%) opt for "none at all".

One major component of any election campaign is views of the incumbent if there be one. (Although some will religiously vote party preference or other factor). More exactly, many ask themselves the question, "has the incumbent done a good enough job to deserve another term. If the answer is "yes", it can be extremely hard for a challenger to "break through". Of course, if the answer is "no", this is bad news for the incumbent, but challengers must still make the case that they would at least not be worse.

At present, three in ten Wisconsinites (30%) feel the Governor deserves re-election, while half again as many (43%) would "rather see someone else as Governor". This suggests an opening for would be challengers. Partisanship relates clearly to this, with two thirds of Democrats, looking to an alternative, while Republicans say by a five to two margin that the incumbent should be returned.

Another basic indication of strength or weakness can be found in "favorability" figures. The public can be quite positive about politicians as shown by the three in four (74%) who have a favorable impression of the President, contrasted with about one in six (17%) whose stance is unfavorable. This also means that nine in ten are willing to give an impression as opposed to saying that they "don't know enough to make up your mind". Among his fellow Republicans, Bush achieves almost unanimous (97%) favorability, which drops as one moves across the partisan spectrum. Still, among Democrats, favorable impressions outnumber unfavorable ones by a 50%-37% margin.

The Governor is neither as well known, nor as well liked. Overall, his favorability ratio is 39%-32%, meaning that seven in ten are willing to give a general impression. Members of all three partisan groups are (roughly) equally likely to have an impression, but the balance shifts from 58%-10% favorable among GOP adherents to almost as strongly in the opposite direction (57%-18%) Unfavorable among Democrats. On this question, Independents more closely resemble Republicans than they do Democrats.

Jim Doyle (35%-15%) is the best known of the Democratic challengers, and favorable impressions outnumber unfavorable ones by more than two to one. At the same time, half of all state residents do not have (or are not willing to state) a clear enough sense to come down on one side or the other. Sentiment falls off from onesidedly favorable (if one has an impression) among Democrats to evenly split among the fewer than one in two Republicans who take a stance. The other three Democrats are much less well known. Overall, Barrett (16%-7%) and Falk (16%-9%) have similar profiles. Each does better among Democrats than Republicans, each does better among women than men (with the former group more likely to call themselves Democrats), thus there is not a strong sense of Falk being the "women's candidate" for good or ill. Gary George is no better known than his rivals, but overall impressions (among the one in five who state them) are more likely to be negative than positive by a 15%-6% margin. He shows less of a partisan pattern than do others, however.

Ed Thompson, at 16% favorable but 26% unfavorable is better known than any of the Democrats except Doyle, but the unfavorable balance of opinion is a problem. Independents as a group come closely to splitting evenly. Democrats and Republicans resemble one another.

Green party candidate Jim Young is largely unknown, with more than nine in ten failing to state an impression overall, and the handful who do have a general stance split evenly.

The overall pattern is one where, save for the Governor, and to a rather lesser extent, Doyle, the typical candidate is known to only a relatively small group of state residents. This, along with the low stated level of attention being paid to the campaign, is another indication that, whatever the calendar says, the public has not really engaged.

The Governor was paired with each of the four Democrats in a runoff. Before looking at the actual results, it should be noted that, in every case a sizable group availed itself of the opportunity to say that they hadn't "really formed an opinion". This should not be surprising, granted the generally low levels of awareness of candidates, but is a salutary reminder that stated preferences at early stages may represent an advantage to be built upon, or an impediment to be overcome, but one must be careful NOT to interpret them as what "would happen if the election were held today". First of all, it is not taking place, which means we still have essentially the bulk of the campaign in the future, and the choice has not yet really narrowed to one Republican and one Democrat. Secondly, the public KNOWS that the election is still a ways off, and however much they may later engage, they have not yet done so.

That said, all the "runoffs" are close. McCallum and Barrett each garner the support now of one in four (24%), with fewer than half taking a stance. Republicans and Democrats are more or less mirror images, with half of each group backing "their" candidate, and only a handful "defecting". Among Independents, what sentiment there is splits evenly.

The overall results for McCallum versus Doyle (24%-25%) are virtually identical. Partisan groups, too, have the same profile for Doyle as they did for Barrett. If Falk is the "nominee", even more (over six in ten) are not willing not to come down in one camp or the other. Those who do, give McCallum at most a modest edge (21%-17%). Republicans are more likely to take a position than either Independents or Democrats.

The level of fence-sitters in a McCallum-George matchup is similar to that found when Falk is the Democratic alternative, but the Governor has a larger group of "initial backers" (25%-11%). But this must be viewed in the context of George's largely being an unknown in the state, and less favorably viewed. There is, in any event, substantial time. Republicans onesidedly back the Governor (half prefer him, as was the case for the others, with only a handful "defecting"). Only about three in ten among the other partisan groups come down at all clearly on one side or the other, with Independents giving McCallum about as big (or small) and edge as Democrats give George.

The third party alternatives are also awaiting a breakthrough. When respondents were reminded of Thompson the Libertarian and Young the Green candidate, almost two thirds (63%) denied there was "a serious chance" that they "would wind up voting for either Thompson or Young". The proportion who named either or both as a possibility ranged from one in six among GOP adherents to one in four among Democrats. Thompson is more commonly named than Green, by 18% compared to 12% if one counts in those who say they may vote for either. Like

every other aspect of this campaign, there is plenty of room (and a good bit of time) for this too change, but potential voters must first pass through a stage of being willing to consider a third party alternative before they could become anchored in either camp.

At this stage, the contest is largely the Governor versus relatively unknown challengers. While McCallum is close to or "leading" all the alternatives, the fact that public is uncertain (to put it mildly) that they want the incumbent back provides a potential opening. But those who would take advantage of that opening must make their own case and become known.

A final indication that the public is well aware that the election is NOT being held tomorrow is found in answers to the query asking the level of confidence residents had, that "by the time the campaign is over" they would "have enough information to really make up you mind about who would make the best Governor for Wisconsin?". Three in four are either "very confident" (31%) or "somewhat confident" (41%). This is so much higher than measures of familiarity, or the proportion willing to state preferences at this stage, that the public intends to engage in the future, but is aware that it has not yet really done so to this point.

One interesting pattern is that women as a group tend to be less likely to be engaged in the campaign so far than are men as a group. On every single question asked on this topic, women were more likely to claim low attention, or to say they had not made up their minds, or to not come down on one side or the other. The magnitude differs sharply depending on the issue.

Thus, women were fewer than ten points more likely not to rate McCallum, to be following the campaign only a little or less, or to express an opinion on whether or not they would consider voting for a third party candidate.

Except for Falk, women were clearly less likely to have an impression about each of the candidates. The differences were most telling when it came to Jim Doyle and Ed Thompson. In the runoffs, the gender difference is smallest for Barrett, but Falk versus McCallum has almost as great a tendency for women not to take a stand as is the case for George and Doyle.

Some of this may be due to women's lesser tendency to call themselves Republicans compared to men, in a campaign where there is one central incumbent GOP politician, but the gender differences are bigger than the partisan ones, suggesting that something else is going on.

In any event, for women as for the entire state, things remain early. While these questions provide hope of one sort or another for many camps, the situation persists in being fluid. Stay tuned.

Statewide Marginals and Percentages for Key Groups

What follows is the exact question wording for each of the items referred to in the release. The first column is the percentage of the entire sample giving each response. The second and third reports the percentages for men and women separately. The fourth, fifth, and sixth columns show self-described Democrats, Independents, and Republicans. Columns seven through ten group respondents by their age group (calculated from year of birth: 18-29; 30-44; 45-59; sixty and older.)

Q01. INTERVIEWER: (DO NOT ASK) Enter respondent's gender

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
MALE	49%	100%	--%	40%	60%	54%	45%	55%	43%	52%
FEMALE	51	--	100	60	40	46	55	45	57	48

Q04: How would you rate the job Scott McCallum is doing as Governor of Wisconsin? Excellent, good, fair or poor?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
EXCELLENT	3%	4%	2%	1%	2%	6%	5%	2%	--%	6%
GOOD	32	30	35	16	31	48	29	32	30	36
FAIR	35	36	33	34	44	30	30	34	41	31
POOR	19	22	16	41	16	4	24	16	22	18
TOO SOON (vol.)	4	4	4	4	3	5	1	5	3	4
DON'T KNOW	7	4	10	5	4	8	11	11	4	5
REFUSED	*	--	*	--	--	--	--	--	*	--

ELEC01: Up to now, how much attention have you paid to the candidates running for Governor of Wisconsin this year? A lot, some, only a little, or none at all?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
A LOT	8%	9%	7%	7%	10%	8%	4%	5%	10%	11%
SOME	36	38	34	38	38	39	24	34	42	39
ONLY A LITTLE	33	34	32	36	35	30	32	31	35	33
NONE AT ALL	22	19	26	19	18	22	40	31	13	17
DON'T KNOW	*	1	*	*	--	1	--	--	--	1
REFUSED	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

ELEC02: As of now, do you think you would like to see Scott McCallum reelected in 2002, or would you rather see someone else as Governor instead?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
LIKE RE-ELECTED	30%	33%	27%	13%	28%	53%	27%	30%	22%	42%
LIKE SOMEONE ELSE	43	45	41	68	44	21	52	37	49	36
DON'T KNOW	27	21	32	18	28	26	21	33	26	22
REFUSED	1	1	1	1	--	--	--	--	2	--

ELEC03: For each of the following people, please tell me if you have a favorable impression of them, an unfavorable impression, or don't know enough to make up your mind. George W. Bush

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
FAVORABLE	74%	76%	72%	50%	77%	97%	67%	79%	78%	69%
UNFAVORABLE	17	16	17	37	16	--	17	14	18	19
DON'T KNOW ENOUGH	9	8	10	12	7	3	16	8	4	12
DON'T KNOW	*	--	*	*	--	*	--	--	--	1
REFUSED	*	--	1	1	--	--	--	--	1	*

ELEC04: Scott McCallum (Do you have a favorable impression of him, an unfavorable impression or don't you know enough to make up your mind?)

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
FAVORABLE	39%	44%	34%	18%	42%	58%	27%	44%	35%	45%
UNFAVORABLE	32	33	31	57	33	10	40	24	42	24
DON'T KNOW ENOUGH	29	22	34	25	23	31	33	32	22	30
DON'T KNOW	1	1	1	*	2	1	1	--	1	1
REFUSED	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

ELEC05: Tom Barrett (Do you have a favorable impression of him, an unfavorable impression or don't you know enough to make up your mind?)

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
FAVORABLE	16%	17%	15%	23%	20%	10%	9%	16%	21%	14%
UNFAVORABLE	7	11	4	5	7	12	--	5	6	15
DON'T KNOW ENOUGH	75	70	80	70	70	76	88	79	71	67
DON'T KNOW	2	3	2	2	4	2	2	--	2	4
REFUSED	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

ELEC06: Jim Doyle (Do you have a favorable impression of him, an unfavorable impression or don't you know enough to make up your mind?)

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
FAVORABLE	35%	43%	26%	42%	41%	20%	25%	37%	37%	34%
UNFAVORABLE	15	19	12	7	17	24	5	13	17	21
DON'T KNOW ENOUGH	49	37	61	51	38	55	67	50	46	44
DON'T KNOW	1	2	1	--	4	1	2	--	1	2
REFUSED	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

ELEC07: Kathleen Falk (Do you have a favorable impression of her, an unfavorable impression or don't you know enough to make up your mind?)

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
FAVORABLE	16%	14%	18%	20%	22%	9%	25%	11%	16%	15%
UNFAVORABLE	9	12	6	9	14	8	3	5	12	13
DON'T KNOW ENOUGH	74	72	75	70	60	82	70	84	71	69
DON'T KNOW	2	2	1	2	3	1	2	--	1	4
REFUSED	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

ELEC08: Gary George (Do you have a favorable impression of him, an unfavorable impression or don't you know enough to make up your mind?)

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
FAVORABLE	6%	7%	6%	7%	5%	4%	3%	10%	7%	4%
UNFAVORABLE	15	19	11	13	19	21	1	6	19	28
DON'T KNOW ENOUGH	77	72	83	78	72	75	94	84	74	64
DON'T KNOW	1	2	1	2	4	1	2	--	1	4
REFUSED	*	--	*	--	--	*	--	--	--	*

Q05: And, looking back, how would you rate the job Tommy Thompson did as Governor? (Excellent, good, fair, or poor?)

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
EXCELLENT	26%	27%	25%	16%	25%	38%	26%	29%	21%	31%
GOOD	42	41	42	28	45	54	28	49	45	39
FAIR	21	22	20	35	21	5	28	15	21	23
POOR	9	9	9	19	8	2	14	7	12	5
DON'T KNOW	2	1	3	3	2	2	4	2	1	2
REFUSED	*	--	*	--	--	--	--	--	*	--

QD05: Generally speaking, do you consider yourself a Democrat, a Republican, an Independent, or something else?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
DEMOCRAT	31%	26%	37%	100%	--%	--%	39%	29%	30%	32%
REPUBLICAN	31	34	28	--	--	100	22	36	29	35
INDEPENDENT	20	24	15	--	100	--	16	16	24	20
OTHER	10	8	11	--	--	--	12	13	9	5
NONE	6	5	6	--	--	--	10	4	5	6
DON'T KNOW	1	1	2	--	--	--	1	2	1	1
REFUSED	2	2	2	--	--	--	--	*	3	2

QD11: In what year were you born? (ENTER FOUR-DIGIT YEAR)

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
18-29	14%	13%	15%	18%	12%	10%	100%	--%	--%	--%
30-44	26	29	22	24	21	30	--	100	--	--
45-59	35	31	39	33	43	32	--	--	100	--
60 and over	24	26	23	24	24	27	--	--	--	100
DK/REFUSED	1	1	1	1	--	1	--	--	--	--

* denotes less than .5%

-- denotes 0%

HOW THE POLL WAS DONE

This BADGER POLL™ was conducted by the University of Wisconsin Survey Center as part of its ongoing program of research designed to benefit the research community and the people of Wisconsin, under the direction of G. Donald Ferree, Jr., Associate Director for Public Opinion Research of the Center. This survey was supported by private funds made available by the UW-Madison Chancellor's Office and University Communications. The media sponsor of the survey was the Capital Times newspaper of Madison. The BADGER POLL™ is intended to be a "poll of record" for the state, investigating matters of concern to Wisconsinites including politics, culture, and their daily lives, adhering to the highest standards of polling methodology and rigorous independence.

A total of 524 randomly selected adult residents of Wisconsin were interviewed over the telephone from June 8-17, inclusive. Telephone numbers were generated by computer in proportion to the number of adults living in each

area of the state. Theoretically, results from this survey have a "margin of error" of a little over +/- 4%. This means that, had we asked every eligible adult in Wisconsin, exactly these questions at the time the survey was conducted, there is only a one in twenty chance that the answers would differ by more than that in either direction from what we report here. There could be differences because of changes in question wording, events occurring in the meantime, or any of the practical difficulties involved in taking a scientific survey. Results based on subgroups are subject to a larger "margin of error".