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ISSUES AND THE STATE OF THE STATE IN THE CAMPAIGN  
by G. Donald Ferree, Jr.

In addition to sounding the "horserace" for Governor, the most recent Badger Poll@ plumbed the role a number of issues could play in the campaign. Results reported are based on interviews with some 539 registered voters, interviewed by telephone from September 17 to September 25th, inclusive. The "margin of error" for this survey is just about plus or minus four percent.

The Governor's proposal sharply to cut (and then eliminate) revenue sharing with the municipalities may be a focus of some attention. For months, his opponents enjoyed the luxury of attacking the idea, without necessarily having to provide an alternative, so if this were a dominant issue that could be a major problem for the incumbent. In the event, just under half (47%) said that candidate's positions on "helping cities and towns" would be very important in their decision making process. Adding in the four in ten (42%) who called it somewhat important accounted for almost nine voters in ten. It is also noteworthy that, Doyle backers are about ten points more likely to label this area as very important than are McCallum supporters. While a good deal of caution is warranted because of the small numbers involved, the fact that those expressing a preference for another candidate, or failing to choose one of the major party nominees also give this area marginally higher priority. At the same time, the mid-level priority of this issue for many will limit its potential impact, since if attention is focused on other more central issues, they could well override this.

The single issue most prominent in the list with which voters were presented was "ethics and honesty". Overall some 84% called this very important, with almost all the remainder (12%) opting for somewhat so. This was named as at least somewhat important by nineteen out of twenty in both Doyle and McCallum camps, but the emphasis was a bit stronger (88% compared to 81% calling the area very important for their choice) among the Governor's backers.

Four areas come next, typically viewed as "very important" by around seven in ten and as at least somewhat so by nineteen out of twenty. One is "improving access to health care", which 72% put at a high agenda priority. There is also a difference between the Governor's camp (60% call it very important) and the Attorney General's (76%) so label it. This is arguably the biggest difference in issue priority between the two constituencies.

Improving public education is also a major issue for many. Some 70% of voters overall called this very important. Doyle's backers tended to place more emphasis on this (74% very important) than do McCallum's (62%), but clearly neither constituency is prepared to ignore this.

At about the same level was keeping taxes down. Overall, just under seven in ten (69%) said this area would be very important in making their decision. Here, the McCallum-Doyle contrast (71% among the former's camp, 64% among the latter's) was much more modest. Almost as high a priority was reducing spending, viewed as central by 67% overall, contrasted with 71% for McCallum and 64% for Doyle. In any event, fiscal matters, and what to do with them, matter for many voters.

Protecting the environment is a notch or two lower, but still more than half (57%) claim that where candidates stand on this issue will be very important to them. This is another area where there are constituency related patterns to emphasis. Six in ten (60%) of Doyle's backers call this very important which view is shared by a plurality (46%) of McCallum's.

One issue occupying a lower rung is that of abortion. (Recall that is the issue area, not a particular position being asked about). Among all voters, four in ten (41%) call this very important. Including the one in four (28%) labeling it somewhat so accounts for just under seven residents in ten. In the absolute sense, this is not to be ignored (four in ten could sway the election), but clearly other issues are much more dominant, even assuming that the candidates stake out very clear positions.

It is also important to note that voters claim a wide range of areas are at the center of their attention. On the one hand, this reduces the possibility of the election coming down to a key issue or two. On the other it increases the possibility that -- even if one candidate seems to have a clear advantage with a group on one issue -- the very multiplicity of concerns could leave a rather murky comparison.

One potential major problem or opportunity for an incumbent is voter sentiment about the condition of the state under his or her tutelage. Here the situation is mixed for Scott McCallum. First, while six in ten (60%) believe the state is about as well off as it was before he became governor, one in three (32%) feel it is worse off, and they are scarcely balanced by those who feel it is now BETTER off (only 4%). (In June, comparable figures were almost the same: 5% better, 31% worse, 59% same). Not surprisingly, Doyle backers were more than twice as likely to say things were worse than were McCallum backers.

But this is only part of the story. While incumbents tend to come in for credit for good conditions and blame for bad ones, this is not automatic. A followup question asked how much of the "change is due to Governor McCallum and his policies". Fewer than one in ten (8%) said "a lot", although the four in ten (42%) who said some brings us to one in two respondents. Rounding out the list three in ten (29%) felt the Governor was responsible for only a little of the change (if any) they saw, and one in eight (12%) placed NONE of the credit or blame at his feet. McCallum and Doyle constituencies do NOT substantially differ in their views of the connection between the incumbent and the state of the state. In June, results were also similar (11% a lot; 35% some; 32% only a little; 13% none). Thus the months of campaigning has not appreciably changed either the perception of the state's situation, nor how much the Governor is responsible.

Earlier we noted that fiscal matters occupy an important place on the policy agenda. Three in four voters (75%) say that state taxes in Wisconsin are now "too high", while one in four (22%) find them to be "about right", and a handful (1%) call them too low. Two thirds of Doyle supporters call taxes too high, but eight in ten of the McCallum camp do (67% compared to 81%). In June, 77% found taxes too high, 19% about right, and 1% low, so this particular perception has not changed much in the aggregate.

The other side of the fiscal coin is spending. Resistance there is less striking. Six in ten (61%) overall say that state spending now is too high. Some 25% opt for just about right, and 3% feel it is too low. Again, the Governor's backers are more resistant than Doyle's (68% and 59% respectively labeling spending as too high). But this difference is scarcely overwhelming. Since June, similar to the other areas noted, little change is evident (then the results were 58% too high, 25% about right, 5% too low).

In a question not asked on the June Badger Poll<sup>0</sup>, however, the state is seen in a poor comparative light, helping to emphasize the sense that taxes should not go up. Just under half (45%) said that taxes in Wisconsin were much higher than in other states, and another third (36%) called them somewhat higher. Virtually all the remainder (14%) felt Wisconsin was "about average". McCallum's camp is agrees with Doyle that we stand above average, but differs in being about ten points less likely to say that taxes here are MUCH higher than only SOMEWHAT so.

One final aspect of the fiscal situation, is the question of whether we are facing a long- or short-term situation. (This may be almost as vital when whoever is elected confronts the next budget as it is for the campaign). In any event, while three in ten (30%) believe that it is necessary to choose between "serious service cuts and big increases in taxes", almost twice as many (57%) believe that it "is possible to both maintain essential services and keep taxes down". (June figures were, similar, but perhaps slightly more consistent with seeing a real, long-term problem: 34% must choose; 55% do not have to). McCallum and Doyle constituencies are very similar to one another.

On the one hand, if hard choices are not seen as necessary, this can increase the sensitivity to any reductions, or restriction on programs. On the other, if there are short-term or easy ways out of the fix, this may lessen the overall salience of the area, and cut into arguments of fiscal mismanagement made by an incumbent's opposition.

Statewide Marginals and Percentages for Key Groups  
ALL FIGURES REFLECT REGISTERED VOTERS ONLY

What follows is the exact question wording for each of the items referred to in the release. All results are for registered voters only. 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 "leaning preference" (McCallum, Doyle, other person, undecided). The final column shows those who said they were absolutely certain to vote in the election.

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

	GENDER			PARTISANSHIP			LEAN PREF			VOTE	
	TOT	M	F	DEM	IND	REP	MCC	DOY	OTR	DK	CRT
MALE	51%	100%	--%	41%	58%	52%	56%	42%	64%	55%	49%
FEMALE	49	--	100	59	42	48	44	58	37	45	51

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

	GENDER			PARTISANSHIP			LEAN PREF			VOTE	
	TOT	M	F	DEM	IND	REP	MCC	DOY	OTR	DK	CRT
Excellent	6%	6%	5%	1%	3%	14%	12%	2%	3%	3%	5%
Good	29	33	25	24	20	42	51	17	17	18	29
Fair	40	37	43	41	47	32	33	42	53	43	41
Poor	18	19	18	29	22	6	2	33	16	15	21
TOO SOON TO TELL (vol)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	1
DON'T KNOW	6	4	8	4	7	4	3	5	8	17	3
REFUSED	*	*	--	--	1	--	--	--	--	1	--

GOV01. The ballot for Governor this year is a race between Scott McCallum as the Republican, and Jim Doyle as the Democrat. Also on the ballot are Ed Thompson for the Libertarian Party and Jim Young for the Green Party. Which one will you vote for, or haven't you really made up your mind yet?

	GENDER			PARTISANSHIP			LEAN PREF			VOTE	
	TOT	M	F	DEM	IND	REP	MCC	DOY	OTR	DK	CRT
MCCALLUM	20%	22%	17%	6%	9%	50%	56%	--%	--%	--%	23%
DOYLE	26	23	30	52	19	6	--	61	--	--	32
THOMPSON	3	3	3	3	6	*	--	--	38	--	3
YOUNG	1	1	--	1	2	--	--	--	8	--	1
HAVEN'T MADE UP MIND	48	48	48	37	61	41	42	38	51	88	41
OTHER SPECIFIC PERSON	1	2	1	1	2	1	--	--	--	10	*
DON'T KNOW	1	1	*	*	1	--	--	1	3	1	*
REFUSED	1	1	1	*	1	2	1	*	--	1	1

GOV01A. (IF NO CHOICE) If you had to express a preference as of now, which one would you prefer?

	GENDER			PARTISANSHIP			LEAN PREF			VOTE	
	TOT	M	F	DEM	IND	REP	MCC	DOY	OTR	DK	CRT
MCCALLUM	31%	34%	28%	27%	23%	46%	100%	--%	--%	--%	36%
DOYLE	34	26	42	49	43	21	--	100	--	--	36
THOMPSON	7	9	4	5	8	7	--	--	83	--	7
YOUNG	1	2	1	--	3	--	--	--	18	--	*
DON'T KNOW	24	24	24	18	21	23	--	--	--	88	18
REFUSED	3	5	2	2	2	3	--	--	--	12	3

GOV05. (UNLESS McCallum or Doyle) If you had to choose between McCallum and Doyle, which one would you prefer?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			LEAN PREF			VOTE	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	MCC	DOY	OTR	DK	CRT
MCCALLUM	27%	33%	18%	15%	32%	55%	--%	--%	43%	18%	32%
DOYLE	27	21	35	50	28	18	--	--	44	19	34
EITHER/BOTH	1	2	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	2
NEITHER	10	16	2	4	13	--	--	--	7	12	9
DON'T KNOW	32	24	44	31	28	23	--	--	7	45	20
REFUSED	3	5	1	--	--	5	--	--	--	5	3

LEANERS. (CONSTRUCTED ITEM; COMBINING GOV01,GOV01A) Choice, including "if you had to make up your mind"

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			LEAN PREF			VOTE	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	MCC	DOY	OTR	DK	CRT
MCCALLUM	35%	39%	31%	16%	24%	70%	100%	--%	--%	--%	38%
DOYLE	43	36	50	70	46	15	--	100	--	--	47
THOMPSON	6	7	5	5	11	4	--	--	83	--	6
YOUNG	1	2	*	1	4	--	--	--	18	--	1
OTHER SPECIFIC	1	2	1	1	2	1	--	--	--	10	*
DON'T KNOW	12	12	12	7	13	10	--	--	--	80	8
REFUSED	2	2	1	1	1	1	--	--	--	11	1

MAJOR. (CONSTRUCTED ITEM, COMBINING LEANERS, GOV06) Major Party preference (pushing respondents for McCallum/Doyle choice

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			LEAN PREF			VOTE	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	MCC	DOY	OTR	DK	CRT
MCCALLUM	48%	52%	43%	25%	40%	77%	100%	--%	45%	62%	47%
DOYLE	50	44	56	74	57	21	--	100	36	30	51
EITHER/BOTH	1	2	1	1	1	1	--	--	5	5	1
NEITHER	1	3	*	1	2	1	--	--	14	3	2
DON'T KNOW	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
REFUSED	*	--	*	--	1	--	--	--	--	1	*

GOV06. Please tell me how important, if at all, each of the following issues is for making up your mind how to vote for Governor this year. First, the candidate's position on creating jobs. Is that very important, somewhat important, only a little important, or not important at all?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			LEAN PREF			VOTE	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	MCC	DOY	OTR	DK	CRT
VERY IMPORTANT	52%	47%	57%	58%	57%	36%	44%	55%	45%	62%	51%
SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	39	42	37	33	34	53	47	38	36	30	40
ONLY A LITTLE	6	7	5	7	5	6	6	6	5	5	5
NOT IMPORTANT AT ALL	3	5	1	1	3	5	4	*	14	3	3
DON'T KNOW	*	--	1	1	--	--	--	1	--	--	1
REFUSED	*	--	*	--	1	--	--	--	--	1	*



## GOV12. Reducing government spending

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			LEAN PREF			VOTE	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	MCC	DOY	OTR	DK	CRT
VERY IMPORTANT	67%	67%	66%	58%	70%	69%	71%	64%	62%	67%	67%
SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	27	25	29	31	25	26	25	27	32	30	25
ONLY A LITTLE	4	4	4	7	3	4	3	7	--	--	5
NOT IMPORTANT AT ALL	2	3	1	3	2	1	1	3	7	1	3
DON'T KNOW	*	1	--	1	--	--	*	--	--	1	*
REFUSED	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

## GOV13. Ethics and honesty

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			LEAN PREF			VOTE	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	MCC	DOY	OTR	DK	CRT
VERY IMPORTANT	84%	79%	90%	79%	83%	90%	88%	81%	85%	84%	85%
SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	12	15	9	18	12	7	8	15	11	13	12
ONLY A LITTLE	2	3	2	3	3	1	3	3	--	1	1
NOT IMPORTANT AT ALL	1	2	--	1	2	1	1	1	4	--	1
DON'T KNOW	*	*	--	--	1	--	*	--	--	1	*
REFUSED	*	*	--	--	--	1	--	--	--	1	*

## GOV13X. Abortion

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			LEAN PREF			VOTE	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	MCC	DOY	OTR	DK	CRT
VERY IMPORTANT	41%	32%	50%	38%	43%	44%	42%	40%	36%	41%	42%
SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	28	29	27	30	21	28	26	32	29	22	28
ONLY A LITTLE	10	13	8	9	14	11	13	8	12	12	10
NOT IMPORTANT AT ALL	16	21	11	19	15	15	16	16	19	14	16
DON'T KNOW	3	4	3	3	6	1	2	4	--	8	3
REFUSED	2	2	2	1	2	*	1	1	4	4	1

## GOV32. In the 1998 election for Governor, did you vote for Tommy Thompson, Ed Garvey, someone else, or didn't you happen to vote in that election?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			LEAN PREF			VOTE	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	MCC	DOY	OTR	DK	CRT
THOMPSON	50%	56%	43%	32%	41%	80%	77%	37%	36%	29%	58%
GARVEY	11	11	12	24	13	--	2	22	5	3	15
SOMEONE ELSE	5	3	6	7	8	--	2	7	8	4	5
DIDN'T VOTE	26	25	27	27	27	17	16	25	40	45	15
INELIGIBLE (VOL.)	2	2	1	1	2	2	--	2	5	4	1
DON'T KNOW	5	2	8	8	7	1	3	6	5	9	6
REFUSED	2	1	2	1	3	--	--	2	--	6	1





TAX02. How about the level of state spending, is that too high, too low, or just about right?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			LEAN PREF			VOTE	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	MCC	DOY	OTR	DK	CRT
TOO HIGH	61%	65%	58%	56%	64%	66%	68%	59%	54%	58%	62%
TOO LOW	3	2	4	4	2	2	2	3	1	3	3
JUST ABOUT RIGHT	25	27	23	28	25	23	25	25	27	22	25
DEPENDS ON PROG. (VOL)	2	1	3	3	2	1	1	3	1	2	2
DON'T KNOW	9	5	13	9	8	7	5	9	17	15	8
REFUSED	*	--	1	1	--	--	--	1	--	--	*

TAX04. Overall, compared to taxes in other states, do you think taxes here are much higher than average, somewhat higher than average, about average, somewhat lower than average, or much lower than average?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			LEAN PREF			VOTE	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	MCC	DOY	OTR	DK	CRT
MUCH HIGHER	45%	51%	38%	43%	47%	49%	52%	41%	47%	37%	50%
SOMEWHAT HIGHER	36	35	36	42	31	33	33	41	21	34	34
ABOUT AVERAGE	14	10	18	11	14	14	11	12	17	21	11
SOMEWHAT LOWER	2	2	3	2	4	2	1	2	4	4	2
MUCH LOWER	1	1	1	1	3	--	--	1	3	--	1
DEPENDS WHICH TAX (VOL)	*	*	--	--	--	1	1	--	--	--	--
DON'T KNOW	3	2	5	2	2	1	2	3	8	4	3
REFUSED	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

BUDG02. In order to balance the state budget, do you think a choice will have to be made between serious service cuts and big increases in taxes, or is it possible to both maintain essential services and keep taxes down?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			LEAN PREF			VOTE	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	MCC	DOY	OTR	DK	CRT
HAVE TO CHOOSE	30%	34%	25%	28%	36%	30%	32%	32%	25%	21%	32%
POSSIBLE TO DO BOTH	57	55	59	56	54	57	57	55	51	65	56
SOME OF EACH (VOL.)	3	4	2	2	3	4	3	3	3	2	3
DON'T KNOW	10	8	12	13	6	8	7	9	21	12	8
REFUSED	1	*	2	1	1	1	2	1	--	--	1

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

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			LEAN PREF			VOTE	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	MCC	DOY	OTR	DK	CRT
Democrat	34%	28%	41%	100%	--%	--%	16%	56%	28%	18%	35%
Republican	29	29	28	--	--	100	57	10	14	23	31
Independent	20	23	17	--	100	--	13	21	39	22	19
Other	10	12	9	--	--	--	6	8	12	24	8
None	4	4	3	--	--	--	4	2	8	7	4
DON'T KNOW	3	3	3	--	--	--	3	3	--	4	2
REFUSED	1	1	1	--	--	--	1	*	--	3	*

## 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. The media sponsors of the survey are the (Madison) Capital Times, and the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel. 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 539 "registered voters" (including some twenty who said they had definite plans to register on or before election day) were interviewed by telephone from September 17 to 25, 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 voter 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".