



Badger Poll™ #17, Release #3
University of Wisconsin Survey Center
University of Wisconsin Madison
September 30, 2004

NOTE: When using material from this release please cite the Badger Poll™ conducted by the University of Wisconsin Survey Center, paid for by private funds at the University. The Capital Times (Madison) and the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel are the poll's media sponsors.

CAMPAIGN ADS, AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE ECONOMY (SEPT. 2004)
by G. Donald Ferree, Jr.

Three in ten state residents (29%) say they have been paying "a lot" of attention to campaign ads this year. Adding in the just shy of four in ten (39%) who say they have been paying "some" accounts for some 58% of the population. This is lower than the somewhat more narrowly focused question about attention paid to the presidential candidates, but in absolute terms is moderately high.

A followup asked whether, to the best of respondents' recollections, there had been more ads backing Bush, more backing Kerry, or an equal number for each. This formulation was deliberately chosen to blur the distinction among ads formally sponsored by one campaign or the other and those officially sponsored by independent groups, which nonetheless clearly take sides between Bush and Kerry. Overall, some two thirds thought there had been an equal number of ads for the two camps. If either candidate had an advantage, or more precisely a greater number of ads, it was Bush by a ratio of about two to one (19% to 10%). It is worth noting, however, that self-described Democrats were clearly more likely to see a Bush preponderance while Republicans narrowly thought there had been more Kerry-backing ads. This also held up if one looked at those actually backing either man among registered voters saying they would at least probably vote.

The idea of limits on campaign spending receives a favorable reception here in Wisconsin. Respondents were first reminded of the status quo, that, "as you may know, the official campaigns get money from the federal government but in return there are limits on how much they can spend, and on how much individuals, companies and groups can contribute." Then they were asked whether this system is a good idea or bad idea. Good idea won out with 68% of the public, although one in four (25%) felt it was a bad idea. Republicans and Democrats tended not to differ much at all, nor did the candidate coalitions, although narrowly Bush voters were slightly more likely to endorse the basic spending rules.

The so-called independent commercials do not find abstract favor with the Wisconsin population. "Besides ads paid for by the campaigns, this year other groups which may favor one candidate but are not controlled by them have spent lots of money on so-called independent ads, which are NOT subject to spending limits. In general, do you favor or oppose allowing them to do this?" This question produced only in three who were in favor of these ads (34%), contrasted with some six in ten (59%) who did not feel they should be allowed to spend

unlimited amounts.

Opinion does not divide over partisan lines, with all three groups defined by self-described party having virtually identical views. This tactic is similarly unpopular among both Bush and Kerry camps as well.

Going along with this, when respondents were asked about the impact of these ads on the quality of the campaign, fewer than one in six thought they had raised it, either a lot (2%) or some (13%). One in four 28% did not see much difference in the quality of the campaign. This left just over one resident in two who felt that they had LOWERED (emphasis added) campaign quality, either some (27%) or a lot (26%). Partisanship made little difference, although opposition was perhaps very slightly less evident among Republicans. Similarly, members of neither the Bush nor Kerry camp saw much good in these commercials, though opinion was -- if anything -- shaded slightly more negative among Kerry backers. But the noteworthy finding is how similar the groups are.

By a bit more than two to one (65%-29%), residents think it is "not fair to blame candidates for ads put on by groups that support them but are not directly controlled by the candidates." Democrats are modestly more likely than Republicans to say it is fair to affix blame, but a strong majority nonetheless demurs. Similarly, one third of Kerry backers say it is fair to blame candidates for ads put on by groups backing them but not directly controlled by them, while the comparable figures among Bush backers is only about one in four. While the option was not explicitly offered to respondents, interviewers were instructed to note those cases where a respondent volunteered that it would depend on whether or not the candidate disavowed such commercials. But this answer was rarely noted.

One focus of the ads of (formally) independent groups has been the behavior of either Senator Kerry or President during the Vietnam era. Respondents were reminded that "recently, some ads have questioned what Senator Kerry did in Vietnam and what President Bush did when he was in the National Guard." and then were asked "do you think this is an appropriate issue to raise or is it a distraction from the real issues?" Overall, fewer than one in six (15%) thought this appropriate. Over eight in ten found it a distraction. No group examined showed anything like support for this kind of charge in the abstract, although Democrats and Kerry supporters were no more likely to condemn them. But in making their points, such ads much contend with a general sense in the electorate that their subject matter is NOT appropriate.

This means on the one hand, that there will be at least some tendency to discount whatever these particular ads say. At the same time, it tends to cheapen all advertising, particularly by these groups, insofar as they have been seen to have been engaged in inappropriate campaign behavior. That does not necessarily mean that such ads are without effect, but that they do not contribute to what residents see as the legitimate debate.

One particular focus of the ads has been the economy, and especially its condition, whether there is an improvement, and what the impact of Bush's policies have been. In terms of what is going on with the US economy overall, when respondents were asked whether over the next year or so the national economy would get better, get worse, or stay about the same, roughly equal numbers (41% and 38%, respectively) said it would get better or would stay the same. Only about one in eight (13%) expected the economy to get worse. In the abstract this is good news for Bush, certain better than if residents had looked to a downturn.

But these overall figures mask important distinctions among the population. For Democrats, and Kerry supporters, the most common perception is no change. Those who expect an improvement (28% among Democrats and Kerry supporters both), narrowly outnumber those expecting the economy will be worse (19% and 20%). Bush backers and Republicans hope for an improvement by about a two to one margin. Independents as a group fall between either partisan coalition, but closer to Democrats.

A parallel question asked about the WISCONSIN economy over the next year or so. Overall optimism was more measured, with just under half (47%) expecting things to stay about the same here. Those who did expect a change, however, came down on the side of improvement over worsening by about five to two. Republicans were clearly more optimistic about the Wisconsin economy than were Democrats and Independents, who tended to agree with one another. A similar gap was evident in comparing Kerry and Bush backers, with the last markedly more hopeful.

Comparing the two questions, one tends to find a bit more optimism about the US economy. This holds not just overall, but also comparing the answers among subgroups. With the interesting exception of Kerry backers, and Democrats, groups tend to view the US economy's future as more rosy (less guarded). These two groups do not distinguish as much between Wisconsin and the United States as others do.

In terms of impact on the campaign, optimism that the near term future will be better -- which also tends to be a better predictor of individuals' economic decisions than their perception of the PRESENT condition of the economy -- should work to Bush's advantage. The fact that Wisconsin tends to be seen in not quite so sanguine terms as the US economy may limit that, however.

Bush's recent handling of the economy, tapped by a question previously reported on how well he was doing with the economy, is another matter. Overall, fewer than four in ten rate his performance in this area as excellent (8%) or good (29%), while almost two thirds play it at fair (28%) or poor (35%). This is a potential negative for Bush, tempered by optimism about the future. Another factor is where these items now stand in historical context.

An accompanying chart gives the overall results (for all residents taken together) on some fourteen occasions since March 2002. We first saw a clear decline from March 2002's optimism (more than half seeing an improvement and only one in eight a worsening) to early 2003, when only one in three expected improvement. It then rebounded last spring, only to fall off some before modestly improving at the end of 2003 and start of 2004. Since then it fell slightly, plateaued for some months and is now very modestly lower than it was in June. At every single point, however, those expecting an improvement outnumber those expecting a downturn.

The Wisconsin series is less complete, and does not move in complete parallel. Thus, the current pattern is generally what it was in June, and previously we had not had more optimism about the short run future. So current perceptions of the Wisconsin economy, while absolutely less optimistic than the outlook for the US economy, are also higher compared to earlier readings. The US outlook is less upbeat than it recently has been.

In any event, a final measure of the campaign impact comes when one asks respondents to imagine what would have happened had Senator Kerry been in office. Criticism of what has happened under George W. Bush's stewardship is only half the story. If voters are not convinced he would be a good alternative

Views of Economy
Polls from March 2002 to September 2004

	<-----2004----->					<-----2003----->					<---2002--->					
	SPT	JUN	APR	MAR	JAN	DEC	OCT	AUG	MAY	APR	MAR	FEB	JAN	SPT	JUN	MAR
Next year																
US Economy																
BETTER	41%	46%	45%	45%	52%	54%	45%	44%	45%	53%	39%	33%	33%	37%	43%	56%
WORSE	13	14	16	17	11	12	14	17	14	12	21	23	23	18	9	12
SAME	38	37	37	36	34	32	39	37	40	31	36	42	42	41	46	31
DON'T KNOW	7	3	3	2	3	1	2	2	2	3	4	2	2	4	2	1
REFUSED	1	*	--	--	--	*	--	*	--	--	1	*	1	--	--	*
SPT JUN APR MAR JAN DEC OCT AUG MAY APR MAR FEB JAN SPT JUN MAR																
Next year for																
WI Economy																
GET BETTER	33%				35%			24%			28%		28%			33%
GET WORSE	13				13			19			23		18			24
STAY SAME	47				48			57			47		49			41
DON'T KNOW	5				3			1			2		5			2
REFUSED	1				--			--			*		--			*
SPT JUN APR MAR JAN DEC OCT AUG MAY APR MAR FEB JAN SPT JUN MAR																
Dealing with																
the economy																
EXC	8%	7%	5%	6%	6%	12%	5%	3%	4%	7%	5%	4%	4%	6%		
GOOD	29	26	24	23	23	28	23	23	34	32	22	26	23	30		
FAIR	28	31	35	32	31	34	34	38	30	32	39	38	38	36		
POOR	35	34	34	38	39	25	38	35	30	28	32	31	31	25		

to Bush, the decision may go to the incumbent either.

On this matter, the picture is mixed. Overall, the largest group is the 44% who believe the economy would not have been fundamentally affected. Among the half who do see a difference, Kerry has roughly a ten point advantage (32%-31%).

Three in four Democrats think things would have been better with Kerry. Half of Republicans think the economy is better under Bush than it would have been had Kerry been in the White House. So, while on balance each party says things would have been better with their man than his opponent, Democrats seem more clear. This carries over to the candidate coalitions too, where three in four of those backing Kerry say the economy would have been better had he been President. Only four in ten Republicans say it would have been worse had Kerry somehow replaced Bush.

Statewide Marginals and Percentages for Key Groups

What follows is the exact question wording for each of the items referred to in the release. (Order reflects the order of items on the original questionnaire, not the order of discussion above). The first six columns are based on the complete sample of Wisconsin residents, regardless of their registration status or intention to vote. These are next repeated for those persons who said they either were registered to vote or have definite plans to register on or before election day in order to vote. The groups are the full set of persons, men and women separately, and persons grouped by their self-described party identification. Following this are two columns showing those who both said they were probably or certainly actually going to vote and expressed a preference between Bush and Kerry.

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

	<-----ALL RESIDENTS----->						<-----REGISTERED VOTERS ONLY---->							
	TOT	M	F	D	I	R	TOT	M	F	D	I	R	GWB	JK
MALE	49%	100%	--%	41%	62%	49%	48%	100%	--%	40%	61%	48%	52%	47%
FEMALE	51	--	100	59	38	51	52	--	100	60	39	52	48	53

VOTE01. Up to now, how much attention have you paid to the candidates running for President in 2004? A lot, some, only a little, or none at all?

	<-----ALL RESIDENTS----->						<-----REGISTERED VOTERS ONLY---->							
	TOT	M	F	D	I	R	TOT	M	F	D	I	R	GWB	JK
A LOT	46%	45%	48%	47%	44%	53%	47%	45%	49%	46%	45%	53%	50%	46%
SOME	37	40	33	37	39	39	37	41	34	38	39	39	39	37
ONLY A LITTLE	12	11	13	13	11	6	12	11	12	13	12	6	8	13
NONE AT ALL	5	4	6	4	5	2	4	4	5	3	4	2	3	4
DON'T KNOW	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
REFUSED	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

VOTE24. This November, the ballot for President will be George W. Bush as a Republican, John Kerry as a Democrat, and Ralph Nader as an Independent. As of now, which one, if any, do you plan to vote for?

	<-----ALL RESIDENTS----->						<-----REGISTERED VOTERS ONLY---->							
	TOT	M	F	D	I	R	TOT	M	F	D	I	R	GWB	JK
GEORGE W. BUSH	46%	49%	43%	6%	35%	91%	47%	51%	44%	6%	36%	91%	89%	--%
JOHN KERRY	34	32	37	79	29	4	34	31	37	79	29	4	--	86
RALPH NADER	3	4	2	3	6	1	3	4	2	3	7	1	2	3
NONE OF THEM	4	5	3	1	11	*	4	5	3	1	11	--	1	4
INSISTS ON "OTHER"	*	--	*	--	--	--	*	--	*	--	--	--	--	--
WILL NOT VOTE	2	1	2	2	4	--	1	*	2	1	2	--	--	--
DON'T KNOW	8	7	9	7	14	2	8	7	9	7	14	2	6	5
REFUSED	3	2	5	3	1	2	3	2	5	3	1	2	2	2

VOTE25. If you had to make up your mind among these three, as of now who would you prefer?

	<----ALL RESIDENTS----->						<----REGISTERED VOTERS ONLY---->							
	TOT	M	F	D	I	R	TOT	M	F	D	I	R	GWB	JK
NOT ASKED	83%	85%	81%	87%	70%	96%	84%	86%	82%	88%	72%	96%	91%	89%
GEORGE W. BUSH	5	4	5	3	9	2	5	4	5	3	9	2	8	--
JOHN KERRY	4	5	4	4	7	1	4	5	4	4	7	1	--	9
RALPH NADER	2	2	1	1	4	*	1	1	2	1	4	--	1	1
NONE OF THEM	2	3	1	1	4	--	1	2	1	--	4	--	--	--
INSISTS ON "OTHER"	*	--	*	--	1	--	*	--	*	--	1	--	--	--
DON'T KNOW	3	2	4	4	3	*	3	2	3	4	2	*	*	1
REFUSED	1	1	2	*	1	1	2	1	2	*	1	1	--	--

VOTE26. Suppose you were choosing just between Bush and Kerry? Which would you prefer?

	<----ALL RESIDENTS----->						<----REGISTERED VOTERS ONLY---->							
	TOT	M	F	D	I	R	TOT	M	F	D	I	R	GWB	JK
NOT ASKED	89%	90%	89%	91%	81%	98%	90%	91%	89%	92%	81%	98%	97%	95%
GEORGE W. BUSH	2	3	2	3	4	*	2	2	2	3	4	--	3	--
JOHN KERRY	2	3	1	1	6	1	2	3	1	1	6	1	--	5
NONE OF THEM	2	3	1	--	6	--	2	2	1	--	5	--	--	--
INSISTS ON "OTHER"	*	--	*	--	1	--	*	--	*	--	1	--	--	--
DON'T KNOW	3	1	4	4	2	*	2	1	3	4	2	*	--	--
REFUSED	2	1	3	1	1	1	2	1	3	1	1	1	--	--

PUSH3WAY. (CONSTRUCTED ITEM FROM VOTE24, VOTE25) ADDING IN LEANERS If you had to make up your mind among these three, as of now

	<----ALL RESIDENTS----->						<----REGISTERED VOTERS ONLY---->							
	TOT	M	F	D	I	R	TOT	M	F	D	I	R	GWB	JK
GEORGE W. BUSH	51%	53%	48%	8%	44%	93%	52%	55%	49%	8%	45%	93%	97%	--%
JOHN KERRY	38	36	40	83	36	5	38	35	40	83	36	5	--	95
RALPH NADER	4	5	3	3	10	1	4	5	3	4	10	1	3	4
NONE OF THEM	2	3	1	1	4	--	1	2	1	--	4	--	--	--
INSISTS ON "OTHER"	*	--	*	--	1	--	*	--	*	--	1	--	--	--
DON'T KNOW	3	2	4	4	3	*	3	2	3	4	2	*	*	1
REFUSED	1	1	2	*	1	1	2	1	2	*	1	1	--	--

PUSH2WAY. (CONSTRUCTED ITEM, COMBINING VOTE24-25) Choice between Bush and Kerry

	<----ALL RESIDENTS----->						<----REGISTERED VOTERS ONLY---->							
	TOT	M	F	D	I	R	TOT	M	F	D	I	R	GWB	JK
GEORGE W. BUSH	53%	56%	50%	11%	48%	93%	54%	57%	51%	11%	49%	93%	100%	--%
JOHN KERRY	41	39	42	84	42	6	40	38	42	84	42	6	--	100
NONE OF THEM	2	3	1	--	6	--	2	2	1	--	5	--	--	--
INSISTS ON "OTHER"	*	--	*	--	1	--	*	--	*	--	1	--	--	--
DON'T KNOW	3	1	4	4	2	*	2	1	3	4	2	*	--	--
REFUSED	2	1	3	1	1	1	2	1	3	1	1	1	--	--

GWB06. How would you rate the job George W. Bush is doing handling the economy?
(PROMPT FOR CATEGORIES AS NECESSARY)

	<----ALL RESIDENTS----->						<----REGISTERED VOTERS ONLY---->							
	TOT	M	F	D	I	R	TOT	M	F	D	I	R	GWB	JK
EXCELLENT	8%	11%	5%	1%	3%	21%	8%	11%	5%	1%	3%	20%	16%	--%
GOOD	29	27	31	2	24	56	30	28	32	3	24	57	53	3
FAIR	28	26	29	30	29	19	27	25	29	29	28	19	25	23
POOR	35	36	33	66	44	4	34	35	33	67	44	4	5	74
DON'T KNOW	*	--	*	*	--	--	*	--	*	*	--	--	--	--
REFUSED	*	--	1	--	1	--	*	--	1	--	1	--	--	--

ADS01. How much attention have you been paying to campaign ads on television this year? A lot, some, only a little, or none at all?

	<----ALL RESIDENTS----->						<----REGISTERED VOTERS ONLY---->							
	TOT	M	F	D	I	R	TOT	M	F	D	I	R	GWB	JK
A LOT	29%	28%	30%	28%	27%	32%	30%	29%	31%	28%	28%	32%	33%	27%
SOME	39	41	37	38	41	43	39	41	38	39	40	43	43	40
ONLY A LITTLE	22	23	21	23	23	17	21	22	20	22	23	18	18	25
NONE AT ALL	10	8	12	10	9	8	10	8	11	11	9	7	7	8
DON'T KNOW	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
REFUSED	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

ADS02. As best you can say, do you think there have been more ads backing President Bush, more backing Senator Kerry, or about an equal number backing each candidate?

	<----ALL RESIDENTS----->						<----REGISTERED VOTERS ONLY---->							
	TOT	M	F	D	I	R	TOT	M	F	D	I	R	GWB	JK
MORE BACK BUSH	19%	22%	16%	30%	19%	11%	19%	21%	16%	30%	19%	10%	11%	30%
MORE BACK KERRY	10	10	11	5	4	18	10	10	10	6	3	18	16	5
ABOUT EQUAL FOR EACH	66	65	66	58	75	67	66	65	66	57	75	68	68	60
DON'T KNOW	5	4	7	7	3	5	6	4	7	7	3	5	5	5
REFUSED	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

ADS03. As you may know, the official campaigns get money from the federal government but in return there are limits on how much they can spend, and on how much individuals, companies and groups can contribute. In general do you think this system is a good idea or a bad idea?

	<----ALL RESIDENTS----->						<----REGISTERED VOTERS ONLY---->							
	TOT	M	F	D	I	R	TOT	M	F	D	I	R	GWB	JK
GOOD IDEA	68%	67%	68%	69%	70%	68%	68%	67%	69%	70%	70%	68%	70%	68%
BAD IDEA	25	28	22	25	27	22	25	28	22	24	27	22	22	26
DON'T KNOW	7	5	9	6	3	9	7	5	9	6	3	9	7	6
REFUSED	1	1	1	--	--	1	1	1	1	--	--	1	1	--

ADS04. Besides ads paid for by the campaigns, this year other groups which may favor one candidate but are not controlled by them have spent lots of money on so-called independent ads, which are NOT subject to spending limits. In general, do you favor or oppose allowing them to do this?

	<----ALL RESIDENTS----->						<----REGISTERED VOTERS ONLY---->							
	TOT	M	F	D	I	R	TOT	M	F	D	I	R	GWB	JK
FAVOR	34%	32%	37%	34%	34%	36%	35%	32%	38%	33%	36%	36%	36%	34%
OPPOSE	59	66	52	58	61	57	58	66	51	58	59	57	56	60
DON'T KNOW	6	2	10	7	5	6	7	2	11	8	5	6	7	5
REFUSED	1	1	1	1	--	1	1	1	1	1	--	1	*	1

ADS05. In general do you think these independent ads have raised the quality of this campaign a lot, raised it some, lowered it some, lowered it a lot, or not made much difference?

	<----ALL RESIDENTS----->						<----REGISTERED VOTERS ONLY---->							
	TOT	M	F	D	I	R	TOT	M	F	D	I	R	GWB	JK
RAISED QUALITY A LOT	2%	2%	3%	1%	2%	3%	2%	2%	3%	1%	2%	3%	3%	2%
RAISED IT SOME	13	10	16	13	12	14	13	10	16	13	13	14	15	10
LOWERED IT SOME	27	29	26	29	25	29	28	30	26	30	26	29	26	34
LOWERED IT A LOT	26	34	18	25	32	21	25	33	18	24	31	22	23	29
NOT MUCH DIFFERENCE	28	24	32	27	27	29	28	24	32	28	26	28	30	22
DON'T KNOW	3	2	4	4	2	4	3	2	4	4	2	3	3	2
REFUSED	*	*	*	*	--	*	*	*	*	*	--	*	*	*

ADS06. Do you think it is fair or not fair to blame candidates for ads put on by groups that support them but are not directly controlled by the candidates?

	<----ALL RESIDENTS----->						<----REGISTERED VOTERS ONLY---->							
	TOT	M	F	D	I	R	TOT	M	F	D	I	R	GWB	JK
FAIR TO BLAME CANDS.	29%	31%	27%	31%	33%	25%	29%	30%	27%	30%	33%	26%	26%	35%
NOT FAIR TO BLAME	65	65	65	62	61	71	66	66	66	62	63	71	70	58
UNFAIR IF DISAVOW (VOL)	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	2
DON'T KNOW	4	2	6	6	4	2	3	2	4	6	2	2	2	4
REFUSED	1	1	1	1	--	1	1	1	1	1	--	1	1	2

ADS07. Recently, some ads have questioned what Senator Kerry did in Vietnam and what President Bush did when he was in the National Guard. Do you think this is an appropriate issue to raise or is it a distraction from the real issues?

	<----ALL RESIDENTS----->						<----REGISTERED VOTERS ONLY---->							
	TOT	M	F	D	I	R	TOT	M	F	D	I	R	GWB	JK
APPROPRIATE ISSUE	15%	14%	16%	18%	16%	13%	15%	15%	16%	18%	16%	12%	14%	20%
DISTRACT FROM ISSUES	82	83	82	81	80	84	82	82	82	81	79	84	82	79
TOO MUCH ATTN (VOL)	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	1
DON'T KNOW	1	2	1	--	2	2	1	2	1	--	2	2	2	--
REFUSED	*	*	*	--	--	*	*	*	*	--	--	*	*	--

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

	<----ALL RESIDENTS----->						<----REGISTERED VOTERS ONLY---->							
	TOT	M	F	D	I	R	TOT	M	F	D	I	R	GWB	JK
DEMOCRAT	29%	24%	33%	100%	--%	--%	29%	24%	33%	100%	--%	--%	5%	60%
REPUBLICAN	35	35	35	--	--	100	36	36	36	--	--	100	63	5
INDEPENDENT	25	32	19	--	100	--	25	32	19	--	100	--	23	26
OTHER	9	9	9	--	--	--	8	8	8	--	--	--	7	8
NONE	1	1	2	--	--	--	1	1	2	--	--	--	2	1
DON'T KNOW	1	--	1	--	--	--	*	--	1	--	--	--	--	--
REFUSED	1	--	2	--	--	--	1	--	2	--	--	--	*	*

* 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. 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 508 randomly chosen state residents were interviewed for this survey by telephone between September 15, the day after the Senatorial primary, and September 21, inclusive, of these 485 either were registered to vote or said they had definite plans to register so they could vote in the election on November 2. 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 potential 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".