

INSIDE MICHIGAN POLITICS

Inside: Five **IMP**/MRG Poll Questions
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MICHIGAN 'WRONG TRACK' NUMBERS AT ALL-TIME HIGH; GRANHOLM APPROVAL/JOB RATING AT ALL-TIME LOWS; DO McCAIN/PALIN REALLY LEAD OBAMA/BIDEN? CHIEF JUSTICE CLIFF TAYLOR MAY BE IN TROUBLE; THE NAME 'ROMNEY' HELPS IN MSU TRUSTEE RACE; STEM CELL RESEARCH PROPOSAL HAS SLIGHT MAJORITY: POLL

Michigan voters are more pessimistic than ever about their state—a staggering 88% think "things have gotten pretty seriously off on the wrong track." That breaks the previous record of despair set just last spring, when 85% of the electorate felt Michigan was going to hell in a hand-basket.

If there's a ray of hope, it's that only 79% think the Michigan economy has "gotten worse" than a year ago. That may sound bleak, but last March 81% felt that way. And only 20% believe our economy will be worse a year from now, compared with 37% who felt that way six months ago.

How does all this translate into voting on Nov. 4? Hard to say, but voters aren't necessarily taking it out on the party of the incumbent president — at least, they weren't before last week. Somewhat surprisingly, Republican **John McCain** and his runningmate, **Sarah Palin**, hold a slight lead over the Democratic tandem of **Barack Obama** and **Joe Biden**, although the survey came out of the field just as the Wall Street financial crisis was breaking.

Here in Michigan, Obama can't hope for much help from his Democratic soulmate, Gov. **Jennifer Granholm**. She's plummeted to all-time lows in both personal approval (41% positive, 53% negative) and job rating (38% positive, 53% negative).

That's according to a statewide survey commissioned by **Inside Michigan Politics** and conducted by Lansing-based Marketing Resource Group, Inc. (MRG) between Sept. 15 and 20. The poll sampled 600 registered voters stratified by city and/or township, based on past voting history. Some 32% of the respondents are behavioral Democrats; 32%, behavioral Republicans; 32%, ticket-splitters; and about 4% refused to characterize their voting habits or had never voted before. Statistical margin of error is $\pm 4.1\%$.

Here is the **IMP**/MRG question on the presidential race, followed by the response:

If the general election for President and Vice President were being held today, and the candidates were (ROTATE: John McCain and Sarah Palin the Republicans, and Barack Obama and Joe Biden the Democrats), for whom would you vote? (IF UNDECIDED OR REFUSED, ASK: Which way do you lean as of today, toward Obama and Biden, or McCain and Palin?)

44% Vote McCain/Palin
2% Lean McCain/Palin ... **46% Total McCain/Palin**
39% Vote Obama/Biden
4% Lean Obama/Biden .. **43% Total Obama/Biden**
5% Other (Ralph Nader, etc.).. **5% Total Splinter Party**
.. **6% Undecided/Refused to Answer/Don't Know**

This survey's results vary slightly from seven others reported in the past two weeks, most of them conducted slightly earlier than the **IMP**/MRG poll. Those seven surveys had Obama with a composite average lead in Michigan of 6.0% as of Sept. 17 or, depending, 22, with about 8% U/RtA/DK.

The **IMP**/MRG poll consisted of 13 to 15-minute interviews conducted by survey staff from East Lansing. The poll's cross-tabs broke down into more than a dozen categories, i.e., gender, geography, income level, marital and housing status, education, ideology, union affiliation, age, religion, etc.

TAYLOR COULD BE RIPE FOR PICKING BY DEMOCRATS IN RE-ELECTION BID

Maybe the internecine squabbling on the Michigan Supreme Court over the past two years — not to mention the relentless campaign waged against Chief Justice **Clifford W. Taylor** by Michigan Democratic Party Chairman **Mark Brewer** — have taken their toll on the incumbent jurist as he seeks re-election.

Taylor isn't exactly setting the world on fire as the

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Republicans' nominee for the single seat on the high bench that's up for grabs this year. In fact, he trails Democratic challenger **Diane Hathaway**, 16%-14%, although a whopping 70% of the electorate says it's undecided or refuses to say whom it will vote for.

It's not unusual that a large number of voters would not have made up their minds at this point in a Supreme Court race. For example, four years ago, 88% of the electorate at this same time in the election cycle claimed it was undecided. Still, incumbents **Marilyn Kelly** and **Steve Markman** led their rivals for the court in a Sept. 20-24, 2004, **IMP/MRG** survey — and they wound up winning easily in November.

By contrast, Taylor trailed former Gov. **James Blanchard** in an imaginary match-up a year ago, 30%-15%, with 55% undecided. Blanchard isn't running this year, but the relatively unknown Hathaway, a Wayne Co. circuit court judge, is — and she's currently leading Taylor, according to another **IMP/MRG** question posed as part of the same survey that sampled the electorate about the presidential race (see above).

Taylor has amassed a record campaign war chest which he hopes will help him withstand what could be a fierce assault by Michigan Democrats who deplore what they deem far-right, pro-corporation ideological extremism by the court's 'Gang of Four' majority, led by the chief justice. A harebrained decision by the panel earlier this month to deny a challenger ballot access in the 23rd Circuit Court race (against two controversial incumbents) hasn't helped the Supremes' image as arrogant elitists who, in their own words, are content to trample 'equity' in the name of 'the letter of the law.'

Here's the **IMP/MRG** question, followed by the responses:

If the general election for Michigan Supreme Court Justice were being held today, and the candidates were (ROTATE: Incumbent Justice Cliff Taylor and Diane Hathaway), for whom would you vote? (IF UNDECIDED OR REFUSED, ASK: Which way do you lean as of today, toward Hathaway, or Taylor?)

15% Vote Hathaway
 1% Lean Hathaway **16% Total Hathaway**

13% Vote Taylor
 1% Lean Taylor **14% Total Taylor**

..... **70% U/RtA/DK**

INCUMBENT REPUBLICAN SCOTT ROMNEY LEADS NARROWLY IN RE-ELECTION BID FOR MSU BOARD OF TRUSTEES

In 2000, Birmingham attorney **George Scott Romney** — son of a famous former Michigan governor and brother of this year's presidential aspirant, ex-Massachusetts Gov. **Mitt Romney** — was the only Republican out of eight GOP nominees to win a statewide education board race.

This year, Romney seeks re-election with a running-mate who is the sister-in-law of Oakland Co. Sheriff **Mike Bouchard**. They're pitted against the former state House Minority Leader, **Dianne Byrum** (D-Onondaga), and an unknown union chief from Brownstown Twp with a good female name, **Diann Woodard**.

Two years ago, an **IMP/MRG** poll taken at this same time in the cycle showed the two Democratic nominees for the MSU board with a healthy lead over their Republican rivals. Indeed, **George Perles** and **Faylene Owen** went on to win easily over two GOP incumbents.

This year, however, Romney and his Republican cohort are leading by a slight margin at the same stage, according to still another **IMP/MRG** question:

If the general election for members of the Michigan State University Board of Trustees were being held today, and the candidates were (ROTATE: Lisa Bouchard, a Republican; George Scott Romney, a Republican; Dianne Byrum, a Democrat; and Diann Woodard, a Democrat), who would be your first choice? (IF UNDECIDED OR REFUSED, ASK: Which way do you lean as of today, toward Woodard, Byrum, Bouchard, or Romney?)

18% Vote Romney
 * Lean Romney **18% Total Romney**

11% Vote Bouchard
 1% Lean Bouchard **12% Total Bouchard**

14% Vote Byrum
 1% Lean Byrum **15% Total Byrum**

8% Vote Woodard
 1% Lean Woodard **9% Total Woodard**

..... **46% U/RtA/DK**

When asked "Who would be your second choice?" the answers came back: **13% Vote Bouchard; 10% Vote/1% Lean Romney; 9% Vote Byrum; and 14% Vote/1% Lean Woodard**, with **54% U/RtA/DK**.

So, what's the final count? Added up and rounded off, the cumulative results are **Romney, 28%; Bouchard, 25%; and Byrum and Woodard, both 24%**. However, over half of all voters (51%) claim they're U/RtA/DK about at least one of the candidates at this stage.

PROPOSAL 08-2 HAS A LEAD, BUT ATTACKS AGAINST IT HAVE BARELY BEGUN: POLL

A decade ago, a petition drive to legalize assisted suicide in Michigan qualified for the general election ballot, and early polling showed it had strong approval from voters.

But then a well-funded attack against it was launched by several powerful interest groups, including the Michigan Catholic Conference and Right to Life of Michigan. Assisted suicide wound up getting clobbered at the polls, and this year the same groups are lining up to take a whack at Proposal 08-2, which involves not the end of life, but the beginning.

Another **IMP/MRG** poll question indicates Proposal 08-2 holds a slight majority among the electorate if the election were held today. Nearly two voters in five disapprove of it, however, and the opposition noted above hasn't really gone to work yet.

Here's the **IMP/MRG** question, given to respondents

exactly as it will appear on the ballot, followed by the results:

Thinking about the state ballot proposals on the November ballot, Proposal 08-2 would amend the state constitution to address human embryo and human embryonic stem cell research in Michigan.

The proposed constitutional amendment would expand use of human embryos for any research permitted under federal law subject to the following limits:

That the embryos:

- *are created for human fertility purposes;*
- *are not suitable for implantation or are in excess of clinical needs;*
- *would be discarded unless used for research; and*
- *were donated by the person seeking fertility treatment.*

It would also provide that stem cells cannot be taken from human embryos more than 14 days after cell division begins. It would prohibit any person from selling or purchasing human embryos for stem cell research. And it would prohibit state and local laws that prevent, restrict or discourage stem cell research, future therapies or cures.

If the election were being held today, would you vote (ROTATE: Yes, to adopt this new amendment, or NO to reject it)? (IF U/RtA/DK, ASK: Would you say you are leaning toward voting yes or no?)

51% Vote Yes
 3% Lean Yes **54% Total Yes**

34% Vote No
 4% Lean No **38% Total No**

..... **8% U/RtA/DK**

U.S. HOUSE RACES IN MICHIGAN: IT'S ALL ABOUT THE 7th & 9th CDs

Michigan's delegation to the U.S. House of Representatives has consisted of nine Republicans and six Democrats since 2002. Is that likely to change as a result of the 11/4 general election?

As things stand now, probably not, even though the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) in Washington, D.C., is making a major push to knock off Republican incumbents **Joe Knollenberg** in Oakland County's 9th Congressional District and **Tim Walberg** in the 7th CD in the south-central Lower Peninsula.

Walberg and Knollenberg and Michigan's 13 other incumbents of both major parties are running for re-election. Now that Congresswoman **C.C. Kilpatrick** (D-MI 13) has narrowly dodged the bullet for renomination in the Democratic primary last month, all are heavily favored for re-election in November — except for Knollenberg and Walberg.

But the GOP duo also may escape defeat. Here's the scoop:

7th District. Incumbent Walberg, the only challenger to knock off a sitting Congressman in a GOP primary in the entire country in 2006, has been viewed by Democrats as a sitting duck for re-election defeat. An

ordained minister with strong support from the Christian right, Walberg is thought by the left to be way too conservative for his district, which has a 53.6% GOP base. And Dems feel they've got the perfect antidote to the mild-mannered, Harley-driving Walberg — state Senate Minority Leader **Mark Schauer** (D-Battle Creek). Problem is, Schauer has major baggage as a state legislator and is being depicted with some success by the Walberg campaign as a hopeless lefty tax-hiking job-killer because of a plethora of votes he's cast in the Legislature — and not all of them out of mere loyalty to his Democratic governor, **Jennifer Granholm**, whose popularity has plummeted in the past two years. If truth be told, Schauer's voting record over his dozen years in the state Senate and House has always been far more liberal than his demeanor and rhetoric would have voters believe. Now Walberg is making him pay for it, and Schauer won't be getting the top-down coattails that the previous Dem nominee, **Sharon Renier**, got in 2006 from Granholm and U.S. Senator **Debbie Stabenow**. **Barack Obama** won't help Schauer in the 7th — in fact, he's likely to hurt. So will the fact that Renier is running a write-in campaign in the general, and that a Green Party nominee is also on the ballot. At this point, at least, advantage Walberg, who's led in all the polls thus far.

9th. Eight-term incumbent **Joe Knollenberg** (R-Bloomfield Hills) was embarrassed to win by only about 5% in 2006 against a relatively unknown, underfunded talk show hostess, **Nancy Skinner**, who had just moved back to Michigan after primarying against Obama for an Illinois U.S. Senate seat in 2004. This time, the DCCC elbowed Skinner out of the race in favor of a Democrat with the strongest political track record in most of the 9th CD — former state Lottery Commissioner **Gary Peters** (D-Bloomfield Hills), who served two terms in the state Senate before losing a razor-thin, 5,200-vote race for Attorney General in 2002. Like Schauer, Peters has always presented himself as a mainstream moderate Democrat, even though his voting record in the Legislature was even more liberal than Schauer's. Still, Peters doesn't seem to have Schauer's baggage if only because he isn't serving in the present Legislature, which is reviled statewide as the worst in four decades. Also, the 9th is shifting demographically and ideologically in a Democratic direction while the 74-year-old Knollenberg tries to hang onto a seat that will evaporate through reapportionment in three years. Both Peters and Schauer are among the Top 10 fundraisers nationally among Democrats challenging GOP incumbents this year. Otherwise, though, Peters doesn't appear to be working as hard at winning this seat as Knollenberg, who has shown renewed energy since he got his 'wake-up call' in 2006. Still, if Peters can get his name ID up through aggressive TV ads, he may have a slightly better chance at victory in November than Schauer.

Following is an up-to-date table that broadly summarizes election prospects in all 15 U.S. House enclaves, followed by a similar grid for the state House.

In both tables, "solid" or "likely" or "lean" refers to the district itself, although in a few cases a particularly strong incumbent enhances his (or her) party's chances of retaining the seat. Term limits can also make a difference. Democrats are in regular type, Republicans in italics.

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SOLID DEM	LIKELY DEM	LEAN DEM	TOSS-UP	LEAN GOP	LIKELY GOP	SOLID GOP
6 Projected Democratic seats						
(6) Conyers Dingell Kildee C.C. Kilpatrick S. Levin Stupak			7 Projected Republican seats			
			(2) Knollenberg Walberg		(5) Camp McCotter Miller Rogers Upton	(2) Ehlers Hoekstra

STATE HOUSE RACES: DOES GOP HAVE ANY CHANCE AT ALL TO PICK UP SEATS?

Are majority Democrats more likely to pad their margin of control in the state House of Representatives on 11/4 than are minority Republicans to pick up seats and perhaps even regain the 'top dog' status they had for eight years prior to the '06 general election?

The conventional answer all this year has been 'yes,' simply because nearly twice as many GOP seats (29) are open in 2008 because of term limits than currently-Democratic seats (17). Moreover, at least 10 of the open Republican seats are in marginal or 'swing' districts that

the Democratic nominee could win in November, whereas only a couple of the open districts that are now held by a Democrat could conceivably be won by the GOP.

That expectation hasn't really changed, although a mild uptick in GOP approval ratings nationally and here in Michigan — along with some anxiety among Democrats that their presidential nominee, **Barack Obama**, may be a slight drag on the ticket in suburban and rural areas — give Republicans a little hope that they can 'shock the world' with an 11/4 result anticipated by no one.

Here's the state House table, subject to the same descriptive guidelines as in the U.S. House table above:

STATE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SOLID DEM	LIKELY DEM	LEAN DEM	TOSS-UP	LEAN GOP	LIKELY GOP	SOLID GOP
52 Projected Democratic seats						
(37) Bauer Bennett Clemente Constan Coulouris Cushingberry Dillon Gonzales Hammel Jackson B. Johnson Robt. Jones LeBlanc G. Leland Lemmons Lindberg Mayes Meadows Meadows Polidori B.C. Scott A.W. Smith Warren C. Young 6th (Cheeks) 7th (V. Smith) 11th (M. Hood) 12th (Tobocman) 13th (Farrah) 22nd (Hopgood) 27th (Meisner) 28th (L. Wojno) 34th (B. Clack) 35th (Condino) 42nd (F. Accavitti) 50th (Hammon) 76th (Sak)	(11) Angerer Byrnes B. Byrum Donigan Lahti McDowell F. Miller J. Sheltroun Dudley Spade 23rd (K. Law) 25th (Bieda)	(4) T. Brown Ebli Espinoza Griffin	(6) Corriveau Dean Simpson Valentine 37th (Vagnozzi) 106th (Gillard)	42 Projected Republican seats		
			(10) 1st (Gaffney) 21st (LaJoy) 24th (Brandenburg) 39th (D. Law) 51st (Robertson) 61st (Hoogendyk) 62nd (Nofs) 70th (Emmons) 101st (Palsrok) 108th (Casperson)	(8) Ball Horn Meltzer Moore 19th (Pastor) 32nd (Acciavatti) 43rd (Amos) 78th (Nitz)	(14) Calley B. Caul G. Hansen Rick Jones M. Knollenberg Opsommer Pavlov T. Rocca Schuittmaker 36th (Palmer) 63rd (Wenke) 82nd (Stahl) 98th (Moolenaar) 104th (Walker)	(20) Agema Booher Elsenheimer Green Hildenbrand Marleau Meekhof Moss Pearce Proos 38th (DeRoche) 44th (Stakoe) 45th (Garfield) 47th (Hune) 58th (Caswell) 59th (Shaffer) 66th (Ward) 72nd (Steil, Jr.) 88th (Sheen) 90th (Huizenga)