The Elway Poll

An independent nonpartisan analysis of public opinion trends in Washington and the Northwest

21 APRIL 2016

Presidential Campaigns Not Helping Local Candidates

Washington voters won't see much of the Presidential candidates this year. Not that they come here anyway. The state hasn't voted for a Republican for President since 1984, so there is no need to campaign here. This year they are unlikely even to be invited.

The down-ballot effects of presidential politics is a more immediate question than who will get Washington's 12 electoral votes.

For the record, in an open-ended question of who survey respondents were inclined to support for President (candidates' names were not read), the 2 Democrats out-polled the 3 Republicans by 45% to 28%. Hillary Clinton led the field with 24% to 21% for Sanders, followed by Donald Trump and Ted Cruz at 11% each and John Kasich with 6%. Some 22% did not name a candidate, 2% named someone else and 4% said they were inclined to not vote.

Local candidates can't control who gets their party's nomination for President. But they do control their response to the nominee. Should they embrace the nominee? Try to ignore the national race? Every congressional candidate in the country is doing this calculation about now.

To test the potential impact of the national candidates on local races, *The Elway Poll* asked voters if they would be likely to vote *for* or *against* a congressional candidate if that candidate endorsed each of the 5 remaining presidential contenders. It is not an inspiring picture: 4 of the 5 had a net negative effect.

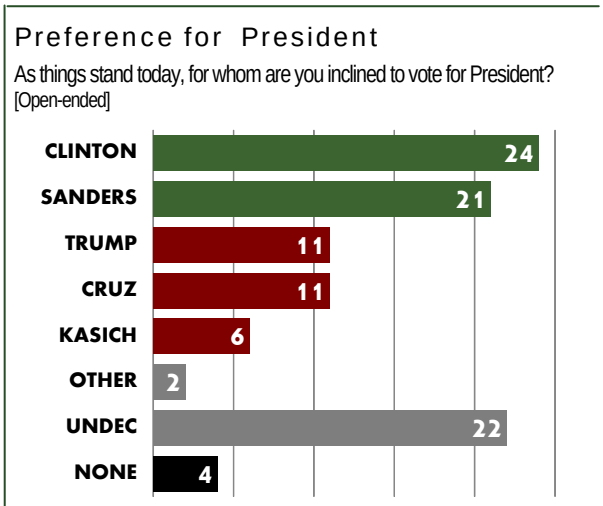
- Bernie Sanders was the lone exception, but barely. If a congressional candidate endorsed Sanders, 33% said they would be more likely to vote for that candidate vs. 31% who would be more likely to vote against—for a net impact of +2%.
- A Hillary Clinton endorsement would net you –9% (29% for vs. 38% against).
- Donald Trump scored a net –36%, with 55% saying they would vote against a congressional candidate who endorsed him.
- Ted Cruz was at net –24% (44% against; 20% for).
- John Kasich was a net –10%, with just over half having any opinion one way or the other.

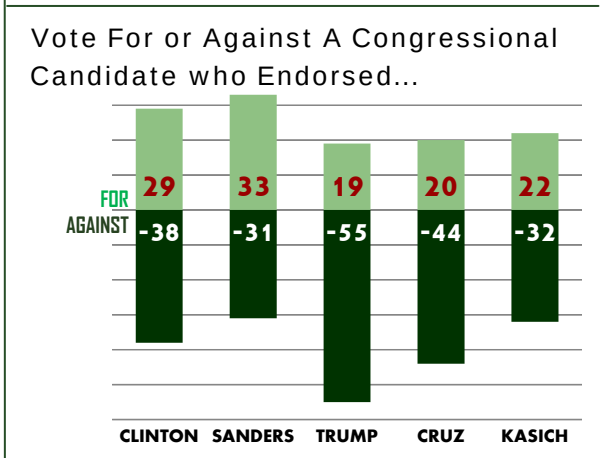
Of course, a generic statewide preference doesn't mean much when it comes to electing representatives to Congress.

The sample for this survey is too small to examine individual congressional districts, but they can be aggregated. The results are more ominous for the Republicans than the Democrats.

Cumulatively, in the 6 congressional districts currently represented by a Democrat:

- Sanders had a net "impact score" of +6%; while
- Clinton's net impact was –7%.





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The Democrats' problem, of course, is that Clinton is almost certain to be the nominee.

In the 4 districts with a Republican incumbent:
- Trump's net impact was –31%;
- Cruz was –18%;
- Kasich was –8%.

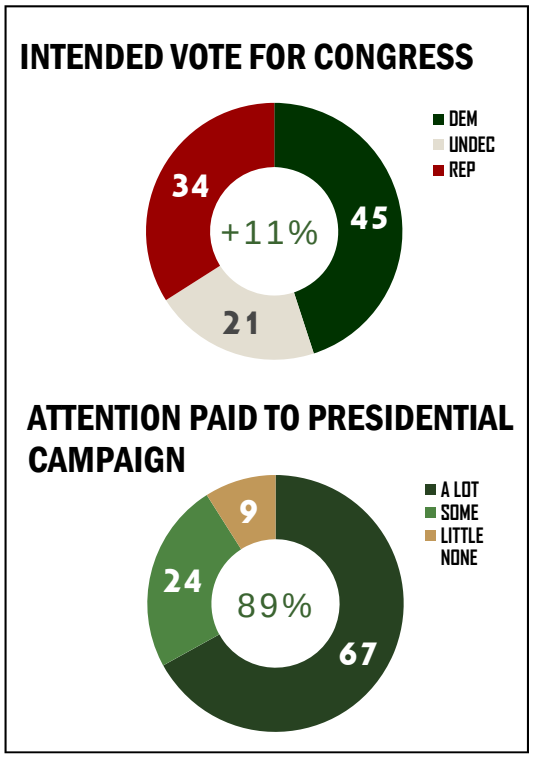
There was a discernable enthusiasm gap between partisan voters.

In this survey, 45% statewide said they were inclined to vote for a Democrat for Congress in their district, 34% were planning to vote for a Republican and 21% were undecided.

Among those planning to vote for a Democrat for Congress:
- Sanders' net impact was +45%, with 57% of Democrat voters more inclined to vote for a candidate who endorsed him.
- Clinton's net impact was +44%, with 58%.

Among those planning to vote for a Republican for Congress:
- Trump's net impact was –1%; while
- Cruz had a net impact of +23%; and
- Kasich was at +12%.

Even among Republican voters Trump was divisive at best. Cruz and Kasich were a net positive, but at a much lower ratio than either Sanders or Clinton among Democrats.



This is Washington state, however, where almost no one gets elected with just the votes from their own party. Voters currently undecided will determine most of the outcomes, and they don't like anybody very much. Among those undecided for Congress in this survey, none of the presidential candidates was a help to local candidates.

- Sanders had a net was 0, with 25% likely to vote *for* and 25% likely to vote *against* a congressional candidate who endorsed him;
- Clinton was at –25%;
- Trump was at –37%;
- Cruz was at –23%;
- Kasich was at –3%.

What all this means is that candidates here will be talking a lot about how independent they are from their party's national ticket. Republicans will be telling themselves about 1964, when Dan Evans was elected governor in the face of the Goldwater landslide. Washington Democrats, meanwhile, are lighting candles for Donald Trump.

Net Effect on Congressional Candidate if S/he Endorses a Presidential Candidate
By Party Identification and by Intended Vote for Congress

	PARTY ID			CONGRESS VOTE		
	Dems	Reps	Indep	Vote Dem	Vote Rep	Undec
Clinton	+52%	-68%	-32%	+44%	-67%	-25%
Sanders	+43%	-53%	0	+45%	-50%	0
Trump	-75%	+5%	-38%	-73%	-1%	-37%
Cruz	-62%	+19%	-21%	-66%	+23%	-23%
Kasich	-33%	-14%	-8%	-34%	+12%	-3%

If a candidate for Congress in your district endorsed [NAME] for president, would you be more likely to vote FOR or AGAINST that candidate?
Cell entry = percent who would vote FOR the congressional candidate minus the percent who would vote AGAINST.

Sample Profile

503 registered voters, selected at random from registered voter lists in Washington state, were interviewed April 14-17 by live, professional interviewers. 20% of the interviews were conducted on cell phones. The margin of sampling error is ±4.5% at the 95% level of confidence. This means, in theory, had this same survey been conducted 100 times, the results would be within ±4.5% of the results reported here at least 95 times.

REGION
- King County 30%
- Pierce + Kitsap 15%
- North Sound (Snohomish to Whatcom) 17%
- Western Washington (Clallam to Clark) 17%
- Eastern Washington 20%

GENDER
- Male 48%
- Female 52%

AGE
- 18-35 ..... 8%
- 36-50 ..... 20%
- 51-64 ..... 40%
- 65+ 29%

PARTY IDENTIFICATION
- Democrat 39%
- Republican 27%
- Independent 34%

VOTE HISTORY
- 0-2 Votes in Last 4 Elections 46%
- 3 Votes in Last 4 Elections 19%
- 4 Votes in Last 4 Elections 35%

EDUCATION
- High School 18%
- Some College 28%
- College Graduate 35%
- Post Graduate 17%

HOUSEHOLD INCOME
- <$50,000 ..... 23%
- $50 - 74,000 ..... 16%
- $75 - 99,000 ..... 15%
- $100,000+ 24%
- No Answer 21%

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PROPRIETARY QUESTIONS: Each quarter, space is reserved in the questionnaire to allow for proprietary questions. The fee for proprietary questions is $1000 per question. You will receive the results of your question(s) with full crosstabulations within three days after the interviews are completed.

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Washington Primary Attracting Attention

Given the state of the races, Washington's May 14 presidential primary may actually get some attention, even though it is largely a beauty contest with no Democratic delegates and only a portion of the Republican delegates at stake.

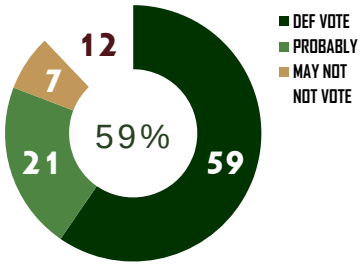
The primary does appear to have the attention of a significant number of voters:

59% of respondents said they will "definitely" vote in the primary; and

89% said they had been paying attention to the presidential race, including

67% who said they were paying "a lot" of attention.

PLAN TO VOTE IN PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY



One has to presume that these voting intentions are exaggerated, since 59% would be higher than the turnout in 11 of the last 14 statewide elections going back to 2008.

Further, among those saying they will "definitely" vote in the primary were 55% of respondents who had voted less than half the time in the last 4 years.

Nevertheless, there is clearly interest in this presidential race: a combined total of 44% of survey respondents said they would "definitely" vote and were paying "a lot" of attention to the presidential race.

And lest this interest be attributed just to "Bernie Bros," both races were virtual ties among those who said they will "definitely" vote:

- Clinton led Sanders 24% to 23%;
- Cruz led Trump 14% to 13%; with Kasich at 5%.