May 5, 2014

To: Morgan Holm, OPB
From: DHM Research
Re: Quarterly Omnibus Survey Summary Memo

2014 ELECTIONS

Heading into the campaign season, Gov. John Kitzhaber shows vulnerability for re-election but is starting with a lead over Rep. Dennis Richardson.

• More Oregon voters (49%) say that it is time to replace Gov. Kitzhaber than say he deserves to be re-elected (35%).
  o Concerning for the governor is that just 58% of Democrats believe he should be re-elected. He is also showing weakness with Independent voters, of which a majority (54%) would like to see him replaced. Additionally, frequent voters (those who have voted in at least 3 of the last 4 elections) were more likely to say that the governor should be replaced (47%) than re-elected (43%).
• However, in a head-to-head match-up with Rep. Dennis Richardson, Gov. Kitzhaber has an edge. When asked who they are likely to support in the general election, 48% would support Gov. Kitzhaber compared to 36% who would support Rep. Richardson.
  o Gov. Kitzhaber’s support is strongest among Democrats (78%), voters ages 55+ (59%), and those in the Willamette Valley (58%).
  o Rep. Richardson supporters are more likely to be Republican (69%) and ages 35-54 (45%).
• Another positive sign for Gov. Kitzhaber is that a majority (53%) of Oregon voters approve of his job performance compared to 36% who disapprove (+17). This is virtually unchanged in the last three years. His approval was 50% in September 2011 and 51% in January 2012.
  o Gov. Kitzhaber’s approval is highest among Democrats (77%), those ages 55+ (66%), Willamette Valley residents (63%), and frequent voters (60%).
  o Disapproval is highest among Republicans (64%), those ages 35-54 (46%), and Tri-County residents (42%).

Opinions about Sen. Jeff Merkley are generally positive, but he has yet to distinguish himself among Oregon voters.

• 42% of Oregon voters approve of Sen. Merkley’s job performance compared to 20% who disapprove (+22).
• However, despite a full term as a US Senator (and eight years in the Oregon legislature), 38% of Oregon voters had no opinion of his job performance (24%) or have not heard of him (14%). His re-election campaign, then, is an opportunity for him to re-introduce himself to Oregon voters, but he will also be vulnerable to being defined by the Republican nominee.
If it is on the ballot this November, the same-sex marriage constitutional amendment is likely to pass.

- 58% of Oregon voters support changing the Oregon constitution to allow same-sex marriage, including 44% who support it strongly.
  - Support for amending the constitution is up from 49% in April of 2013.
  - There is majority support across all areas of the state, all age groups, and genders. However, there remains a significant partisan divide, with 76% of Democrats and 61% of Independents supporting same-sex marriage versus 32% of Republicans.

Oregonians are leaning towards supporting marijuana legalization.

- 53% of Oregon voters would support the state legalizing marijuana for adults 21 and older, while 38% would oppose legalization.
  - Support is highest among males (63%), Democrats (65%) and Independents (60%).
  - Opposition is highest among Republicans (61%), rural residents (47%) and females (44%).
- Multiple organizations are gathering signatures to place legalization measures on the ballot. It remains to be seen which, if any, will be successful. With a narrow margin of support, passing a legalization measure will likely be dependent upon the details of the measures and the effectiveness of their campaigns.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Oregon voters report that they are paying attention to international affairs and are worried that the Ukrainian conflict will grow larger.

- 83% say they are interested international affairs and 75% are following Russia’s involvement in Ukraine.
- 69% are very (30%) or somewhat (39%) worried that the conflict in Ukraine will develop into a larger regional conflict that will lead to US military involvement.

ECONOMY

Oregonians remain worried about their personal financial situation, but there are some signs of growing confidence in the economy.

- 64% of voters report being very (25%) or somewhat (39%) worried about their families’ financial situation. However, this is down from 71% in September 2011 and 69% in January 2012.
- Nearly twice as many voters think the economy is improving (36%) as believe it is getting worse (19%).
  - More voters in the Tri-county (40%) and Willamette Valley (40%) areas say the economy is improving than voters in other areas of the state (28%).
  - There are strong partisan differences in attitudes. While 50% of Democrats believe the economy is improving, just 35% Independents and 21% of Republicans agree.
GUN CONTROL

Oregon voters support additional gun control measures.

• 76% would support a law that would require background checks for all gun purchases, expect those between family members.
  o A majority of all demographic groups would support such a law, including 65% of Republicans and 78% of those with a gun in the home.
• 60% would support a law that would allow school districts to prevent those with concealed weapons permits from bringing guns on school premises.
  o Support is strongest among Democrats (79%), voters ages 55+ (72%), and females (69%).
  o Republicans (50%) are the only demographic group that would oppose this law.

CIVICS EDUCATION

Oregonians are woefully uniformed about the ABC’s government.

• Just 53% of voters know how many United States senators represent the state.
• Only 50% of voters can name the three branches of government.
• When asked to name a tax that Oregon residents pay that helps fund the delivery of state government services, 36% could not identify any tax and 33% said property taxes (which pay for local government services). Just 36% named income taxes as a tax that Oregonians pay to fund state services.
• While younger voters tend to be less informed than older voters, no age group is well informed.
  o For example, voters ages 55+ were only slightly more likely to be able to name the three branches of government (53%) than those 18-34 (45%).
• Frequent voters are also poorly informed.
  o Among those who have voted in at least 3 of the last 4 elections, 35% did not know how many US Senators represent the state, 41% could not name the three branches of government, and 32% could not name a single tax that Oregonians pay for state services.
• Females are less informed than males.
  o 45% of females know the number of US Senators versus 63% of males, and 39% of females can name the three branches of government compared to males at 62%.
  o 44% of females could not name a tax that pays for state services compared to 27% of males.