



TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Brock McCleary, Harper Polling
Date: February 2, 2015
RE: Key Poll Findings – Kentucky Governor Republican Primary Poll

Our survey of likely Republican primary voters in Kentucky shows state Agriculture Commissioner James Comer (25%) with a 6 point lead over his closest competitor, former Louisville Metro Councilman Hal Heiner (19%), in the race for the Republican nomination for Governor.

Election Environment

Sixty-two percent of Republican primary voters say things in Kentucky are on the wrong track (28% right direction). Voters in the Lexington (27% right direction, 61% wrong track) and Louisville (27% right direction, 65% wrong track) media markets mirror the sentiment of the overall survey.

The Economy and Jobs (44%) is the most important issue to Republican primary voters when it comes to choosing a candidate for Governor this year, followed by tax reform, spending and debt issues (19%), Obamacare and KYNECT (16%), education and schools (11%) and roads and bridges (6%).

Candidate Images

James Comer has the strongest image rating among likely Republican voters, at 57% favorable to 13% unfavorable (31% not sure). This support holds across all age groups (18-39: 57% favorable, 40-54: 57% favorable, 55-65: 59% favorable, 66+: 55% favorable). Notably, 43% of 18-39 year olds have a *very* favorable opinion of Comer.

Heiner also has a very strong image at 48% favorable to 16% unfavorable (36% not sure). His support is strongest in the Louisville media market (72% favorable, 14% unfavorable, 15% not sure), where he is very well known. Former state Supreme Court Justice Will Scott has the weakest image of the primary candidates, but still earns a +8% net favorability rating (31% favorable, 23% unfavorable, 46% not sure). Businessman and 2014 tea party candidate Matt Bevin has the strongest hard name identification, as 71% of voters have an opinion about him (47% favorable, 24% unfavorable). However, women (40% favorable, 21% unfavorable, 40% not sure) are less sure of him than men (55% favorable, 28% unfavorable, 18% not sure).

Republican Primary Ballot

James Comer currently leads on the Republican primary ballot for Kentucky Governor with 25%, followed by Heiner (19%), Bevin (18%) and Scott (9%). Almost a third (30%) of likely Republican primary voters are undecided. Comer's lead is partly driven by 18-39 year old voters where he leads his closest competitor Matt Bevin by 11% (Comer: 34%, Bevin: 23%). He also earns the support of 30% of men (Heiner: 21%). Among women, however, Comer, Heiner and Bevin are all tied with 18% of the vote. There is significant regional variation early in the race. The Lexington media market shows a tossup between Heiner and Comer. In the Louisville market, Heiner holds a significant advantage at 35% followed by Bevin at 16% and Comer at 14%. However, in the Cincinnati market Bevin leads Comer, 33-21% (Scott: 7%, Heiner: 5%). Support for Scott is in the single digits in all three major media markets.

Summary

Despite some regional boosts for Heiner, Bevin, and Scott, Agriculture Commissioner James Comer currently leads the pack early in the 2015 GOP primary for Governor. Comer is able to earn the front runner position through the enthusiasm of younger voters and men for his candidacy.

METHODOLOGY:

The sample size for the survey is 261 likely voters and the margin of error is +/-6.07%. The Interactive Voice Response (IVR) automated telephone survey was conducted January 28–31, 2015 by Harper Polling. The total percentages for responses may not equal 100% due to rounding.