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## UMass Lowell/Boston Globe Survey of Massachusetts Voters

October 1-7, 2018

**N=791 MA Registered Voters; N=485 MA Likely Voters**

**The sample has an adjusted margin of error +/-4.4% for RVs; +/-5.6% for LVs**

See <http://uml.edu/polls> for full questionnaire/topline results and detailed methodology disclosure.

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Do you have a question about this poll? If so, tweet @UML\_CPO and we'll get back to you.

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### HIGHLIGHTS

*Charlie Baker and Elizabeth Warren both with big leads over their opponents*

UMass Lowell and the Boston Globe have partnered to survey Massachusetts voters ahead of 2018 midterm elections. Our survey of registered voters with a likely voter sub-sample allows for comparison of the likely electorate with the plausible electorate of all registered voters in the Commonwealth.

Our survey reveals that the incumbent Governor and senior Senator from Massachusetts both hold large double-digit leads over their opponents, who are struggling to gain name recognition in the Bay State.

Charlie Baker leads Jay Gonzalez by 39 points, 66% to 27% among likely voters, with 8% undecided a little less than a month to go before the November 6<sup>th</sup> election. Baker leads Gonzalez 84% to 4% among Republicans, 77% to 17% among Independents, and is splitting the vote among Democrats. Baker takes 46% of Democrats to Gonzalez's 49%. A major hurdle for Gonzalez persists in name recognition. While 33% of likely voters view him as favorable compared to 12% who view him as unfavorable, 31% have no opinion of him and 23% have never heard of him. Baker, by contrast, has a 76% favorability rating among likely voters and just 13% view him unfavorably.



While her lead is not as large as Baker's, Elizabeth Warren is supported by 56% of likely voters in her bid for re-election against Republican challenger Geoff Diehl, who is polling at 31% support among likely voters, and independent challenger Shiva Ayyadurai, who is at 8%; 5% are undecided. Warren's favorability rating reflects that she is a more polarizing figure in Massachusetts politics: 55% of likely voters view her favorably compared to 40% of voters who view her unfavorably. Her Republican opponent Geoff Diehl has a net +9 favorability rating (29% favorable to 20% unfavorable), but 21% of likely voters have no opinion of him and 29% have never heard of him. The results are still worse for independent Ayyadurai who has a net neutral favorability rating (13% favorable; 13% unfavorable), but 23% of voters have no opinion of him and 51% have never heard of him.

Unlike the Governor's race, the Senate race is heavily polarized by party ID with 93% of Democrats supporting Warren and 80% of Republicans supporting Diehl. It's also clear that Ayyadurai has cut into Diehl's potential base as he is pulling support from 10% of self-identified Republicans likely voters and 12% of independents, but only 2% of Democrats.

### *Nurses Staffing Levels (Question 1)*

Question 1 asks Massachusetts voters if there should be limits on the number of patients assigned to nurses in hospitals and other health facilities. While some early polling from other organizations suggested a positive valence to support nurses, as the campaign has unfolded, our poll reveals that "no" has an apparent lead. Support for Question 1 among likely voters in our survey registers at 43% compared to 51% who say they will oppose the measure.

The strongest opposition to Question 1 comes from Republicans – 68% say they will vote no on the measure. However, No is also leading among Democrats (50% No to 46% Yes) and among Independents (49% No to 44% Yes). The strongest support for Question 1 comes from non-white likely voters (49% Yes to 42% No), and those with a high school degree or less (53% Yes to 44% No).

### *Transgender Rights/Gender Identity in Public Accommodation (Question 3)*

Massachusetts voters are also being asked to vote on Question 3 this Fall, a measure that is complicated by both language and process. Question 3 is a veto referendum, a process by which voters in Massachusetts can petition to have a law struck down by popular vote. To maximize confusion, on the ballot, voters looking to repeal laws by popular referendum vote "No," while voters looking to uphold the current law vote, "Yes." At issue in Question 3 is a Massachusetts state law that prohibits discrimination in places of public accommodation, resort, or amusement on the basis of gender identity. The core issue here is about whether a transgender individual has the right to use public spaces of accommodation like restrooms, fitting rooms, locker rooms, etc. that matches their gender identity, or whether



a business or local government could create policies requiring them to use the facilities associated with their birth gender.

The overall level of support for the repeal effort, or the percentage of likely voters who say they intend to vote “No” on the measure is exceedingly low – 74% of likely voters say they will vote Yes on Proposition 3 to uphold the current law, while just 22% say they will vote No, to repeal the current law. Not surprisingly, there are big differences by party ID here, with 84% of Democrats saying they will vote Yes compared to 59% of Republicans (71% of independents intend to vote Yes on Prop 3). Still, it is also quite significant that a majority of Republicans in Massachusetts support the public accommodation law for transgender individuals.

Given the complexity of the wording on this question and that nowhere does the measure mention transgender individuals or bathrooms specifically, we asked a follow-up question where we posed to voters, in terms of policies governing public restrooms, whether they think that these policies should require transgender individuals to use the restroom that corresponds to their birth gender or should these policies allow transgender individuals to use the restroom that corresponds with their gender identity. Interestingly, the results are different. A majority of likely voters (56%) said that the policies should allow transgender individuals to use the restroom that corresponds with their gender identity while 33% said transgender individuals should be required to use the restroom that corresponds to their birth gender. Consider that the gap on this question in support of transgender right is 23% in favor. However, the “yes” side on Question 3 leads by more than 50 points, suggesting a great deal of slippage between the way this issue is framed as a ballot question and the state of opinion on one part of this issue that is likely to become quite prevalent during the campaign.

### *Kavanaugh Nomination*

Our survey was fielded October 1-7, just days after the September 27<sup>th</sup> testimony by Dr. Christine Blasey Ford and Judge Brett Kavanaugh. The Senate vote to confirm Kavanaugh was on October 6, just as we were wrapping up calls. We asked respondents in our survey if they would have voted to confirm Kavanaugh if they had been given a vote. Nearly twice as many Massachusetts registered voters said they would not confirm Kavanaugh (61%) as said they would confirm him (33%). Asked who they believed was telling the truth about the sexual assault alleged by Ford, 60% said they believed Dr. Ford compared to 30% who said they believed Judge Kavanaugh.

The latter question in particular revealed a particularly large 21-point gender gap. Among women, 70% said they believed Ford compared to 24% who said they believed Kavanaugh, while among men, 49% said they believed Ford compared to 37% who said they believed Kavanaugh. There are also particularly large differences by age: 71% of 18-39-year-olds believe Ford, while only 45% of those over 65 believe Ford.



### *Response to Pipeline Explosion in Lawrence, Andover, and North Andover*

On September 13, 2018, fires erupted across the Merrimack Valley in the towns of Lawrence, Andover, and North Andover due to pressurized pipelines owned by Columbia Gas. We asked registered voters in Massachusetts if they are satisfied with the response from Columbia Gas to this incident. The response is overwhelmingly negative. Just 27% of respondents reported being satisfied with the response of Columbia Gas to the pipeline incident (5% very satisfied; 22% somewhat satisfied), while 60% said they are dissatisfied (23% somewhat dissatisfied; 37% very dissatisfied). Another 13% of registered voters said “don’t know.”

Responses were most negative in Essex County, where all of the explosions happened. In Essex County, 78% of respondents are dissatisfied by the response from Columbia Gas -- 50% of said they are very dissatisfied with response of Columbia Gas and 28% said they are somewhat dissatisfied. Only 2% said they are very satisfied and 14% said they are somewhat satisfied.

Governor Baker gets comparatively good marks for his response to the pipeline crisis in the Merrimack Valley. Among registered voters, 26% said they are very satisfied with his response, 42% are somewhat satisfied with his response, 10% are somewhat dissatisfied, and 7% are very dissatisfied. In Essex County, 27% are very satisfied, 50% are somewhat satisfied, while only 6% are somewhat dissatisfied and 8% are very dissatisfied.

### *Other Findings in the Poll*

- With the recent success of Ranked Choice Voting reform in Maine, an organized movement to adopt the reform in Massachusetts, and several high profile endorsements, we posed the question to voters if they would like to see elections conducted in Massachusetts under the conditions of (1) where voters select the single candidate they most prefer and the winner is the candidate with the most votes, or (2) where voters rank all the candidates on the ballot in their order of preference and the winner is the most popular candidate overall, taking into account voters’ second, third, and other choices.<sup>1</sup> Registered voters in Massachusetts support option 1, which is a typical first-past-the-post majority/plurality system at 61% compared to option 2 at 35%, which is a description of ranked-choice voting. Presumably, any move towards ranked-choice voting in Massachusetts would come via a ballot measure; this survey shows that there is an uphill battle here as many voters prefer the system that they are familiar with. There are, however, some interesting points in the cross-tabs. Notably, voters under the age of 40 support ranked-choice voting, and Democrats are more supportive than Republicans or Independents of the reform. In addition, there appears to be strong support for ranked-choice voting in and around Boston, with the strongest

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<sup>1</sup> We adapted this question from the Voter Study Group report by Drutman, Galston, and Lindberg (2018) here: <https://www.voterstudygroup.org/publications/2018-voter-survey/spoiler-alert>



regional support coming from Suffolk County. Support, however, is lacking in the rest of the Commonwealth.

- Question 2 will also appear on the Massachusetts ballot. If it passes, it will create a commission to advance an amendment to the US Constitution to limit the influence of money in elections and establish that corporations are not people. Among likely voters, 72% indicated that they would vote yes, compared to 24% who would vote no.
- Donald Trump continues to be extremely unpopular in Massachusetts. His net favorability rating among Massachusetts likely voters is -37; he is viewed favorably by 30% of Bay State voters compared to 67% who view him unfavorably.