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NBC News/Marist Poll

**FLORIDA: Democrats Over GOP in Congressional Preference,
Enthusiasm Surges for Both Parties
Nelson and Scott in Tight Senate Race...
Gillum Edges DeSantis in Governor's Contest**

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This NBC News/Marist Poll Reports:

Amid growing enthusiasm about the midterm elections, Democrats still retain a lead on the generic congressional ballot question in Florida. A majority of voters also say their vote will signal that President Trump's power needs to be balanced by electing more Democrats to Congress.

78% of Florida registered voters, up from 73% in June, consider this year's midterm elections to be very important. More than eight in ten Democrats (84%) and Republicans (84%) have this view. Both parties have experienced a bump in enthusiasm since the summer when 79% of Democrats and 77% of Republicans placed significant importance on this year's elections. 69% of independents consider the midterm elections to be of utmost importance.

A majority of Florida voters (53%), including one in ten Republicans, say their ballot will send a message that more Democrats are needed to be a check and balance on President Donald Trump's power. In contrast, 37% report their vote will indicate more Republicans are needed to help advance the Trump agenda. Independents, by two to one, 56% to 28%, believe more Democrats are needed to balance the power of the president. Overall, the Democrats have widened their advantage on this question in Florida to a net +16 points from a net +9 points in June.

Women (58%) and voters under the age of 45 (61%), including 67% of those under the age of 30, say the power of the Trump White House needs to be checked. A plurality of men (47%) agree. Of note, voters age 45 or older divide. 48% think more Democrats are needed to balance Trump's power while 46% say more Republicans are needed to pass the Trump agenda.

Florida Democrats maintain their lead in the generic congressional ballot question. 49% of registered voters in the state support the Democratic candidate in their district while 41% back the Republican. In June, the Democrats (46%) had a six-point advantage over the Republicans (40%).

"The political environment in Florida, overall, is tipping in the Democrats favor," says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion. "In close statewide contests, GOP candidates need to carefully measure how much they want to embrace President Trump in November and if they want him to campaign for them."

Independents buoy the Democrats. 51% of independents, up from 43% three months ago, favor the Democratic candidate on the generic congressional ballot question. Age and gender also factor into the equation. Majorities of voters under the age of 45 (54%), including 61% of those under 30, and women (55%), including 52% of white women with a college degree, say they support the Democrat in their district. A majority of white voters (52%) and a plurality of men (47%) favor the Republican. Voters 45 or older divide, 46% for the Republican and 46% for the Democrat.

By a 6-point margin, Florida voters prefer a Congress controlled by Democrats (49% up from 42% in June) as opposed to the Republicans (43% up from 39% previously). Nearly half of independents (49%) favor a Democratic controlled Congress. This is a 14-point increase from 35% in June.

A sharp racial divide exists. 76% of African Americans and 59% of Latinos want the Democrats in control. A majority of white voters (53%) want the Republicans in charge. Age and gender also play roles. 53% of those under 45, including 57% of those under 30, prefer the Democrats. Those 45 or older divide. 48% prefer a Congress controlled by Republicans while 47% favor one controlled by Democrats. By an eight-point margin, voters 45 or older preferred a GOP Congress in the previous NBC News/Marist Poll of Florida.

The gender gap on this question has also grown from 15 points to 27 points with a majority of women (55%) now reporting they prefer a Democratic Congress and half of men (50%) saying they prefer a Republican one.

In the race for U.S. Senate in Florida, Democrat Bill Nelson (48%) and Republican Rick Scott

(45%) are in a tight battle among likely voters statewide including those who are undecided yet leaning toward a candidate. 16% of likely voters in this contest are persuadable, that is, are either undecided or may vote differently in November. Among registered voters, Nelson (48%) narrowly leads Scott (43%) by five points. Nelson was up four points against Scott in June.

60% of likely voters with a candidate preference for U.S. Senate say they strongly support their choice. 63% of Scott supporters and 58% of Nelson's backers report they are firmly committed to their candidate.

"Florida voters could very well determine the majority in the next Senate," says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion. "For the Democrats to gain majority status they would be well advised to hold this seat, whereas, the GOP could put a bow around their hopes for a majority if they topple Nelson here."

A plurality of likely voters (44%) have a favorable impression of Nelson. 36% have an unfavorable one, and 20% have either never heard of Nelson or are unsure how to rate him. Likely voters divide about Scott. 46% have a positive opinion of him, and 45% have an unfavorable one. Nine percent have either never heard of Scott or are unsure how to rate him.

The number one voting issue among registered voters in Florida is health care (24%) closely followed by the economy and jobs (23%). More than one in three Democrats (34%) say health care is the most important issue in deciding their vote for Congress. The economy and jobs tops the list for Republicans (28%) and independents (29%).

CNGVTISSIR. NBC News/Marist Poll Florida Tables September 16th through September 20th, 2018

Florida Registered Voters											
Now, let me list some issues that may factor into deciding your vote for Congress in November. Please tell me which one of these items you think will be the most important factor in deciding your vote.											
	The economy and jobs	Immigration	Guns	Federal taxes and spending	Foreign policy and terrorism	Abortion	Vol. All equally	Vol. None	Other	Unsure	
	Row %	Row %	Row %	Row %	Row %	Row %	Row %	Row %	Row %	Row %	Row %
Florida Registered Voters	24%	23%	16%	10%	6%	5%	4%	9%	1%	1%	1%

NBC News/Marist Poll Florida Registered Voters. Interviews conducted September 16th through September 20th, 2018, n=829 MOE +/- 4.0 percentage points. Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

In the contest for Florida governor, Democrat Andrew Gillum (48%) narrowly leads Republican Ron DeSantis (43%) among likely voters in the state including those who are undecided yet leaning toward a candidate. 16% of likely voters are still persuadable. Gillum is +8 points against DeSantis among Florida registered voters.

Among likely voters with a candidate preference for governor, 67% say they strongly support their choice. 70% of Gillum's supporters say they strongly back him while 64% of DeSantis' supporters say they are firmly behind him.

Pluralities of likely voters have favorable opinions of both Gillum and DeSantis. 46% have a favorable impression of Gillum, 27% have an unfavorable one, and 27% have either never

heard of Gillum or are unsure how to rate him. DeSantis' favorable rating is 42%. 37% of likely voters have an unfavorable view of the candidate, and 22% have either never heard of DeSantis or are unsure how to rate him.

President Trump's job approval rating in Florida is at 43% among residents, including 27% who strongly approve. 48% disapprove, including 38% who strongly do so. There has been little overall change in the president's job score in Florida since last reported in June although the difference between those who strongly approve and those who strongly disapprove has gone from a net -5 points to a net -11.