

# MARIST POLL™

## **POLL MUST BE SOURCED:** **NBC News/Marist Poll**

### TENNESSEE:

**Republicans Favored on Congressional Generic Ballot Question...  
Blackburn Leads Bredesen by 5 Points...  
Lee with 17-Point Lead over Dean in Gov Race**

**For Immediate Release: October 2018**

Contact: Lee M. Miringoff  
Barbara L. Carvalho  
Mary E. Griffith  
Marist College  
845.575.5050

### **This NBC News/Marist Poll Reports:**

The Republicans have a 14-point advantage on the generic congressional ballot question and receive majority support on the question of congressional control. In the race for U.S. Senate in Tennessee, Republican Marsha Blackburn has made inroads among likely voters. Blackburn leads her Democratic opponent Phil Bredesen by 5 points. The Republican candidate for governor, Bill Lee, has a healthy 17-point lead over his Democratic opponent Karl Dean.

The Republican advantage on the generic congressional ballot question has grown. 54% of Tennessee registered voters support the Republican candidate in their district, and 40% back the Democratic one. The Republicans previously had an 8-point advantage over the Democrats on this question. A 32-point gender gap exists comparable to the 28 point difference in September.

52% of registered voters prefer a Congress controlled by the Republicans while 39% prefer a Congress controlled by Democrats. Eight percent are unsure. Previously, voters favored a Republican controlled legislature by 11 points.

The gender gap on this question has inched up from 32 points in September to 37 points currently. With more than six in ten men saying they favor the Republicans in control (61%), the Republicans are +33 points among men, up from the 28-point margin they previously held. Women divide (49% for the Democrat to 45% for the Republican). In September, Democratic control was similarly preferred by a 4-point margin among women.

“If you’re looking for a red state this November, you need not go any farther than Tennessee,” says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion.

“Republicans enjoy a double-digit advantage over Democrats both on the generic congressional ballot question and on voters’ preferences for control of Congress.”

Enthusiasm for the midterm elections has notched up among Tennessee registered voters. 77% of voters, compared with 72% previously, think the midterm elections are very important. Similar proportions of Democrats (85%) and Republicans (82%) report a high level of enthusiasm about the elections. 66% of independents say the same.

65% of Tennessee voters say the nomination of Brett Kavanaugh to the U.S. Supreme Court is a voting issue. This includes 39% who say they are more likely to vote for a candidate in their district who supported President Donald Trump’s nomination of Kavanaugh and 26% who say they are more likely to back a candidate who opposed the appointment. 31% say it makes no difference to their vote.

In the contest for U.S. Senate in Tennessee, Blackburn has majority support (51%) against Bredesen (46%) among likely voters statewide including those who are undecided yet leaning toward a candidate or who have already voted. One percent support someone else, and 3% are undecided. 35% of these voters indicate they have already cast a ballot including 55% who say they have voted for Blackburn and 44% who have backed Bredesen. Seven percent of likely voters are persuadable, that is, they are either undecided or indicate they may change their mind before they vote. There has been a 7-point swing in this contest. In the previous NBC News/Marist Poll of Tennessee, Bredesen (48%) was +2 points against Blackburn (46%) among likely voters.

Three points separate Blackburn (49%) and Bredesen (46%) among Tennessee registered voters. Bredesen (48%) previously edged Blackburn (44%) by four points among the overall Tennessee electorate.

66% of likely voters with a candidate preference for U.S. Senate, identical to the previous NBC News/Marist Poll, strongly support their choice. 69% of Bredesen’s backers, compared with 64% of Blackburn’s supporters, express a firm commitment to their candidate.

Likely voters divide about Blackburn’s favorability. 45% have a positive opinion of Blackburn, and 46% have an unfavorable one. Nine percent have either never heard of Blackburn or are unsure how to rate her. Blackburn has become better known to the likely electorate and not for the better. While her favorable score is little changed from the 46% rating she received in September, her unfavorable rating is up from 36%. At that time, 17% of likely voters had either never heard of Blackburn or were unsure how to rate her, nearly double the proportion who

currently do not have an opinion.

While a majority of likely voters have a favorable opinion of Bredesen (52%), his score has declined from 61%. 39% of likely voters, a jump from 22%, have an unfavorable opinion of Bredesen. Nine percent have either never heard of Bredesen or are unsure how to rate him. That proportion has been nearly halved since September (17%).

“The Senate contest in Tennessee presents an unusual picture in that the Democrat, Bredesen, is better liked than his Republican opponent Blackburn, yet trails in the head-to-head matchup,” says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion. “Shaping this contest is the popularity of President Trump and the desire of Tennessee voters to keep the GOP in control of Congress.”

In the Tennessee governor’s race, Lee (57%) leads Dean (40%) by 17 points among likely voters statewide including those who are undecided yet leaning toward a candidate or who have already voted. One percent support another candidate, and 3% are undecided. Among those who say they have voted early, 56% support Lee and 42% back Dean. 11% of likely voters remain persuadable. Lee (53%) previously held a 13-point lead over Dean (40%) among likely voters. Among registered voters, Lee (56%) has a 17-point advantage against Dean (39%).

69% of likely voters with a candidate preference for governor strongly support their choice. This compares with 62% who previously had this opinion. 74% of Lee’s supporters, compared with 63% of Dean’s backers, are firmly committed to their candidate.

Six in ten likely voters (60%) have a favorable impression of Lee. 25% have an unfavorable opinion of him, and 15% have either never heard of Lee or are unsure how to rate him. Previously, 53% of the likely electorate thought well of Lee. 21% had an unfavorable opinion of the candidate, and 26% had either never heard of Lee or were unsure how to rate him.

Dean’s unfavorable rating has increased. While Dean’s favorable score remains unchanged (42%), 39% of likely voters, up from 25%, have a negative opinion of him. 19% have either never heard of Dean or are unsure how to rate him, down from 32% in September.

President Trump’s standing has improved in Tennessee. 53% of residents now approve of the job the president is doing in office including 56% of likely voters. This compares with 45% of residents who had this view in September. 39% of residents disapprove, little changed from 40%. Eight percent are unsure, down from 15% last time. More residents (35% up from 28% previously) who approve of the president’s job performance strongly do so. In contrast, there has been a decline in those who strongly disapprove (27% from 32% in September).