

Poll: Candidates in 'dead heat'

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Republican Arliss Sturgulewski and Democrat Steve Cowper are in a dead heat in the governor's race, according to a recent poll by the Dittman Research Corp., but the poll also shows signs giving Sturgulewski a "slight advantage."

The poll, a telephone survey, was conducted Sept. 5 to Sept. 10, and it included a random sample of 501 residents in 51 communities throughout Alaska, Dittman spokesmen said.

The error factor was plus or minus 3 to 4 percent.

Thirty-eight percent of the respondents said they would favor Sturgulewski for governor and Terry Miller for lieutenant governor, and 38 percent said they would favor Cowper for governor and Steve McAlpine for lieutenant governor. The percentage of undecided was 24 percent.

Those percentages came from the question: "Looking ahead to the General Election, if it were to be held today, who do you think you would probably vote for ... the Republican team of Arliss Sturgulewski and Terry Miller, or the Democratic team of Steve Cowper and Steve McAlpine?"

According to the poll, Cowper has a large lead in rural Alaska and Fairbanks and a smaller edge in Southeast, while Sturgulewski leads in Anchorage, the Kenai Peninsula and the Matanuska-Susitna valleys area.

Politically, Cowper's support among the more numerous registered Democrats, compared to Republicans, is offset by Sturgulewski's support among non-partisan voters, the poll shows.

And it indicates that younger people lean toward Sturgulewski, with Cowper leading among older people. Also, a summary of the poll states that Cowper leads among all levels of government employees, including federal, state and local government. Sturgulewski leads among private-sector employees.

"There was little difference noted based on the length of time the voters had lived in Alaska, although Cowper

did have a slight advantage among more recent arrivals of Alaska — residents of one to four years — while Sturgulewski had a similarly small lead among old-timers — 15 years or more," the poll summary stated.

In his summary, Dittman stated that although the campaign appears to be a dead heat, "there may be some signs that would give the Sturgulewski-Miller team a slight advantage."

For example, 50 percent of the respondents said they were "sure" they would vote for the Sturgulewski-Miller team, and 49 percent said they "might switch." On the other hand, the figures for Cowper-McAlpine team showed that 49 percent said they were "sure" and that 50 percent said they "might switch."

The poll also showed that the likelihood of actually voting in the General Election is higher among the Sturgulewski-Miller supporters.

Forty-two percent said they would definitely vote for Sturgulewski-Miller; 21 percent said they would decide later; and 18 percent said they might pass.

By contrast, 39 percent said they would definitely vote for the Cowper-McAlpine team; 34 percent said they would decide later; and 33 percent said they might pass.

The poll also showed that although Cowper finished 7 percent ahead of Sturgulewski in the Primary Election, at least 5 percent of his support appears to have been anti-Sheffield and now Cowper is only 2 percent ahead among those who voted for either him or Sturgulewski.

The summary also stated that Sturgulewski is picking up more support from voters who supported one of the losing candidates.

"Another important consideration is the partisan nature of voters who currently remain undecided," the poll results stated.

"In this case, a slight advantage may go to Sturgulewski-Miller because Republicans and non-partisans (20 percent and 27 percent respectively) are more undecided than Democrats (16 percent) — so the remaining 'pool' of voters may be tilting toward the Sturgulewski-Miller choice."