

THE COMMONWEALTH POLL
Virginia Commonwealth University
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Robb-Allen in a Tight Race for Senate Seat

Richmond, VA-- Virginia incumbent Senator Chuck Robb faces a tough re-election fight this fall against former Governor George Allen. A survey released today by The Commonwealth Poll of Virginia Commonwealth University shows Robb and Allen in a tight race with Allen having a razor-thin edge. 41% of likely voters favor Allen while 40% favor Robb. 18% are still undecided.

| Vote Choice for U.S. Senate | | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------|-------------|------------------|--------------|
| | Allen | Robb | Undecided | Other |
| Likely Voters | 41% | 40% | 18% | 1% |

The Commonwealth Poll was conducted May 1-9, 2000 with 555 likely voters in Virginia. The margin of error is +/- 5%. Details on the question wording and methodology can be found below.

Allen's lead over Robb is clearly within the margin of sampling error. The balance of support for the two candidates could easily shift as the campaign heats up and more people make up their minds.

For the most part, Democrats are backing Robb (by 61 to 22%) while Republicans are backing Allen (68 to 16%). Both candidates receive a strong endorsement from their party's supporters. Independents are slightly more likely to favor Allen with 40% expressing support for Allen compared to 38% for Robb and 21% undecided.

Gender, Racial, and Regional Differences

Allen is running considerably ahead of Robb among men. 48% of men favor Allen while 36% favor Robb and 16% are undecided. On the other hand, Robb has an almost identical lead among women. Robb is leading Allen by a 45% to 34% margin among women with 21% undecided.

Allen leads among whites by 44 to 39%. Among blacks, Robb is ahead by 48 to 31%. Robb has traditionally had extremely strong support in the African-American community. Dr. Cary Funk, director of the Commonwealth Poll, noted that “the African-American vote could be crucial in this campaign; Robb would have to expand considerably upon his current lead to reach the level of support that he has historically enjoyed among African-Americans.”

In terms of region, Robb’s support is strongest among those living in Northern Virginia where he leads by a margin of 43 to 35%. Robb is also favored in the Western region of the state by 52 to 35%. Residents of south central Virginia support Allen by 48 to 38% and Allen holds a 45 to 34% lead in the Tidewater area.

| | Support Allen | Support Robb | Undecided |
|---------------|----------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Men | 48% | 36% | 16% |
| Women | 34% | 45% | 21% |
| Whites | 44% | 39% | 17% |
| Blacks | 31% | 48% | 19% |
| Northwest | 46% | 29% | 25% |
| Northern VA | 35% | 43% | 22% |
| West | 35% | 52% | 11% |
| South Central | 48% | 38% | 14% |
| Tidewater | 45% | 34% | 20% |

Specifics on Candidates Show the Toss-Up

Asked whether 6 statements applied to each candidate or not, likely voters tended to see both candidates in an equally favorable light. On average, 45 and 46% respectively said that either Allen or Robb “cares about people like you”, “shares your views on important issues”, “is honest and truthful”, “has new ideas”, “gets things done” or “has the right kind of experience for the job”.

A full two-thirds of the likely voters agreed that the Senate incumbent, Robb, “has the right kind of experience for the job.” That position holds little advantage for Robb, however; 56% thought Allen has the right kind of experience as well.

Likely voters were somewhat more willing to see Allen as having “new ideas”; 43% saw Allen that way while 35% said that applied to Robb. In addition, 46% of likely voters see Allen as “honest and truthful” while 41% believe that phrase applies to Robb. Robb was more likely to be seen as caring about people like you; 46% saw Robb as caring while 40% saw Allen as caring.

| | Applies to Allen Likely Voters | Applies to Robb Likely Voters |
|----------------------------------|---|--|
| Has right experience for the job | 54% | 67% |
| Has new ideas | 43% | 35% |
| Cares about people like you | 40% | 46% |
| Shares views on important issues | 38% | 42% |
| Is honest and truthful | 46% | 41% |
| Gets things done | 49% | 47% |
| Average for the Candidate | 45% | 46% |

Those supporting Robb and Allen were most likely to see differences between the candidates on whether he “shares your views on important issues” with 72% of Allen supporters and only 15% of Robb supporters saying that Allen shares their views on important issues. Likewise, 79% of Robb supporters and 23% of Allen supporters said that Robb shared their views on issues. This finding suggest that issue differences, more so than other character differences, distinguish the candidates in most voters minds. Dr. Cary Funk noted that “this could well be the kind of campaign where issues and ideas determine the outcome.”

METHODOLOGY OF THE COMMONWEALTH POLL

Interviewing for the Commonwealth Poll was conducted from the facilities of the Survey and Evaluation Research Laboratory at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond May 1-9, 2000 with a randomly-selected sample of 791 adult Virginians. The results reported above were asked of 555 likely voters, that is those who said they are registered to vote at their current address and are either “definitely” or “probably” going to vote in the November elections.

The sample of telephone numbers was prepared by Genesys Sampling Systems of Ft. Washington, Pennsylvania, and was designed so that all residential telephones, including new and unlisted numbers, had a known chance of inclusion. Interviews were obtained with respondents in 43% of the known or assumed residential households in the sample. The data were weighted to adjust for unequal probabilities of selection due to multiple

telephone lines and multiple adults living in the household. In addition, the data were weighted on sex, race, age, and region of residence to reflect the demographic composition of the Virginia adult population. Percentages reported in the text and tables are weighted, while the number of cases shown in the tables for various subgroups is the actual number of respondents. Questions answered by the sample of 555 likely voters are subject to a sampling error of plus or minus approximately 5 percentage points at the 95 percent level of confidence. This means that in 95 out of 100 samples like the one used here, the results obtained should be no more than 5 percentage points above or below the figure that would be obtained by interviewing all Virginia likely voters with telephones. Where the answers of subgroups are reported, the sampling error would be higher. Because of nonresponse (refusals to participate, etc.), standard calculations of sampling error are apt to understate the actual extent to which survey results are at variance with the true population values. Surveys are also subject to errors from sources other than sampling. While every effort is made to identify such errors, they are often difficult or impossible to measure. Readers making use of the results are urged to be mindful of the limitations inherent in survey research.

Further information is available on request from the Director of the Commonwealth Poll, Dr. Cary Funk, at 804 827 1430 or clfunk@vcu.edu.