

The Missouri Poll

In 1984 we got into polling. The idea was to determine public perceptions about candidates and relevant issues. It served our purposes from three angles: (1) It was both interesting and valid news; (2) As such, it was carried by other media and wire services crediting the Missouri Poll; thus securing strong promotional benefit. And (3) it sociologically was of interest, particularly when analyzing detailed breakdowns such as race; rural v. metropolitan; age; and geography.

The survey itself was credible because it was conducted by the Public Policy Extension Program of the University of Missouri-St. Louis. But it was tremendously expensive. So we sought a sponsor, securing the Centerre Bancorporation of St. Louis, changing the name to The Centerre-Missouri Poll. But in doing so we got into trouble with our own newsroom and others; journalists who didn't want to credit a bank every time the poll was referenced. The bank too had some misgivings because it couldn't appear that the bank was supporting particular positions or candidates. Of course that wasn't the case, but tell that to the bank. Eventually, Centerre pulled its money.

We got into trouble in other ways too. Former Governor Mel Carnahan went to his grave believing the Missouri Poll--and thus the Missouri Poll, and Bob Priddy and me--were to blame for an election loss he suffered. And, he may have had a point, arguing that any candidate behind in the poll has a harder time raising much-needed cash than the leader. If the electorate doesn't know who is leading, fund raising is thus easier.

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Poll has Ashcroft, Rothman leading races McNary is shown to be gaining ground against Democrats

By LES PEARSON,
Globe-Democrat Political Editor

Front-runners in the two primary races for Missouri governor continue to be Republican Attorney General John D. Ashcroft and Democratic Lt. Gov. Kenneth J. Rothman, the Centerre-Missouri Poll shows.

A trial heat between the two front-runners shows that if the general election were today, Ashcroft would defeat Rothman, 46 percent to 41 percent.

In May, Ashcroft showed a 42-33 lead over Rothman, with Rothman apparently picking up most of what had been a large undecided group at that time.

THE POLL ALSO shows that St. Louis County Executive Gene McNary would lead Rothman 46 percent to 41 percent if the election were now.

But Steve Mays, general manager of Missouri Poll, said the margin for error was regarded as too high to make public the results of polls in each of the two primary contests.

In announcing the results of a sampling of 506 Missourians during the June 14-17 period, the poll said that a relatively small percentage of people polled said they would vote and that the margin for error is somewhat larger.

The poll favors state Sen. Harriett Woods of University City for the Democratic lieutenant governor nomination, but Republicans Mel Hancock of Springfield and Tom Baldwin of Town and Country appeared tied for the GOP lead in that race, the poll says.

BUT IN THE lesser statewide races, the pollsters warn against drawing "strong conclusions" from results showing Democrat state Rep. Gary Sharpe of Hannibal ahead in the secretary of state race.

Second place goes to James Askew, a political unknown, and Jack Keane, who was a department head in the administration of former Gov. Joseph P. Teasdale and former special assistant to St. Louis Mayor Vincent C. Schoemehl, is third.

Likewise, early results show state Rep. Thomas Villa of St. Louis, the House majority leader, trailing Don Littleton of St. Louis in the Democratic treasurer race.

STATE REP. RICHARD Beard of Sedalia also is shown as leading Gordon Ankney of Sunset Hills, who is special assistant to Circuit Attorney George Peach and County Prosecutor George Westfall, for the Democratic attorney general nomination.

In the Democratic governor primary, the poll shows State Treasurer Mel Carnahan and State Sen. Norman L. Merrell in a virtual tie for second place.

There are four other political unknowns on the Aug. 7 Democratic primary ticket.

The poll also shows that Carnahan has gained nearly 13 percentage points in a matchup against Ashcroft, but the Republican attorney general gained slightly -- up to 18.5 percent -- in a trial heat against Merrell.

M McNARY GAINED ground in a matchup against any potential Democratic contender.

In May, poll results showed McNary would lose to Rothman by about 8 percentage points.

Others' 'fat bank accounts' irk him, but Carnahan says he's no also-ran

From The Globe-Democrat
Jefferson City Bureau

JEFFERSON CITY — State Treasurer Mel Carnahan insisted Friday that he is not an also-ran in the Democratic gubernatorial race, despite his badly lagging financial contributions.

At a news conference, Carnahan delivered a populist tirade against "huge special interest contributions" but conceded there is no evidence of any deals made by others to get money.

"It's tragic but true: Good government is being held hostage by those with the fat bank accounts," Carnahan said.

Reports Thursday showed Lt. Gov. Kenneth J. Rothman with more than double the combined total of Carnahan and state Sen. Norman Merrell in the Democratic contest; the two-man Republican gubernatorial race is a virtual dead heat moneywise.

The reports provided the first look at the finances of what could be the most expensive state gubernatorial contest ever.

The total of money and services contributed so far to the five chief contenders is \$2.93 million.

The two Republicans, Attorney General John D. Ashcroft and St. Louis County Executive Gene McNary, rank first and second with \$943,000 and \$891,000, respectively.

Rothman was next with \$759,000; Carnahan had \$195,000 and Merrell, \$145,000.

Carnahan said he will not borrow "in large amounts" for his campaign.

McNary shows a margin of 20 percent over Merrell, compared with 6 percent earlier, and has gained slightly over Carnahan, showing 21 percent to 15 percent.

The poll also shows that President Reagan's margin over former Vice Pres-

ident Walter F. Mondale has increased.

IF THE ELECTION were now, the poll shows, Reagan would win in Missouri by 21 percent, compared to 12 percent in May.

The poll was conducted by the Public Policy Extension Program of the University of Missouri-St. Louis.