



MEMORANDUM

TO: INTERESTED PARTIES
FROM: GLEN BOLGER
RE: KEY FINDINGS – NORTH CAROLINA STATEWIDE SURVEY
DATE: SEPTEMBER 8, 2014

Methodology

Public Opinion Strategies completed a telephone survey of likely voters in North Carolina for the Thom Tillis Committee and the National Republican Senatorial Committee (NRSC). The survey was conducted September 2-4, 2014 among 600 likely voters, including 180 cell phone only respondents, and has a margin of error of $\pm 4.0\%$ in 95 out of 100 cases.

The sample is 72% white, 21% African American, and 7% other minorities, compared to 2012 when the exit polls showed 70% white and 23% African American. By party, 32% are Republicans and 41% are Democrats. In the 2012 exit polls, it was 33% GOP and 39% Democratic voters.

Key Findings

1. ***The political environment is pretty grim for Kay Hagan.***

President Obama's approval rating is very weak – only 41% approve while 56% disapprove. Intensity is strongly against him – only 20% strongly approve, while 48% strongly disapprove.

He's even up to a 37% disapproval level among white Democrats; that's a problematic number among a group Hagan needs to run very well with. White women are disappointed by Obama, as they give him just a 35% approve/64% disapprove rating.

2. ***While Democrat special interest groups are angry with Republican leadership in North Carolina, the voters are not.***

North Carolina voters give mixed ratings to their General Assembly; 44% approve and 46% disapprove. State legislatures often have negative ratings, so a mixed rating is pretty good. It certainly is a much better rating than the hysterical attacks by the left-wing interest groups on the legislature would imply.

3. ***Senator Kay Hagan’s benefactor, Harry Reid, is strongly disliked. Meanwhile, the highest profile Republican in the state has a positive image.***

Reid’s image is a poor 19% favorable/39% unfavorable. Given how close Hagan votes with Reid, that partnership is not a positive for her. Meanwhile, Governor Pat McCrory has a 45% favorable/38% unfavorable image, a net seven point positive.

4. ***Both candidates have polarized images, but Hagan has serious troubles with some key groups.***

In the tradition of North Carolina Senate races of yore, both candidates have higher negatives than positives. Hagan has a 41% favorable/47% unfavorable image, while Tillis has a 33% favorable/37% unfavorable image.

However, among Hagan’s key target group, white women, she has a 35% favorable/53% unfavorable image. Overall with women she’s just at 44% favorable/42% unfavorable.

5. ***Thom Tillis has closed the gap on the ballot test since our May survey. The race is now tied, and Hagan remains mired below 45% of the vote.***

In May, after the primary, Tillis trailed Hagan 41%-44% with 9% supporting the Libertarian Sean Haugh. The race is now tied at 44%-44% with 8% for Haugh and just 4% undecided.

Tillis is winning many key groups. He is winning among white women by twelve points, married white women by 25 points, among Independents by four points, and seniors by ten points. Tillis’s strength with white women is offset by his 5%-91% deficit among African American women.

If or when Haugh’s vote drops, that’s problematic for Hagan. Fully 60% of Haugh’s voters disapprove of Obama.

6. ***The messaging arc of the campaign does not work well for Hagan.***

We tested two questions focused on the broader messaging of the campaign. For the first one, we asked:

Who would you prefer represent you in the U.S. Senate (ROTATE)...

A Republican Senator who will be a check and balance to Barack Obama and the Congressional Democrats

...OR...

A Democratic Senator who will help Barack Obama and Congressional Democrats pass their agenda?

Voters opt for the Republican check and balance by a 53%-43% over the Democrat.

For the second question, we asked:

Would you rather North Carolina's next Senator be a (**ROTATE**) conservative or liberal?

Fully 57% opted for a conservative, 33% wanted a liberal, and 7% volunteered that they prefer a moderate.

The Bottom Line

After being badly outspent this summer, Thom Tillis has moved into a tie on the ballot. This is happening just as his campaign is beginning to advertise. This is going to remain a close race, but it is difficult for Hagan to make gains. If Tillis can raise the money to be competitive, he is in the driver's seat to win.