



MIKE DOWNS CENTER FOR INDIANA POLITICS

NEWS RELEASE

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2011 Fort Wayne Mayoral Election By the Numbers¹

The Mike Downs Center for Indiana Politics polled likely voters immediately before the 2011 Municipal Election in Fort Wayne. The poll showed Democratic incumbent Thomas Henry with a slim lead over Republican Paula Hughes (40.1% to 38.5%) that was within the margin of error (+/- 4.89 points). Independent Haley Ahrendt had 2.8% of the vote. Perhaps most surprising was the fact that 18.6% of the likely voters were undecided with only days to go before the election. That high percentage of undecided voters so close to Election Day was proof that the candidates were wise to be campaigning right up to the end.

If the election for mayor were held today, would you vote for....	
Henry	40.1%
Hughes	38.5%
Ahrendt	2.8%
Undecided	18.6%
Total	100.0%

Elections often are won by the campaign that is able to win the independent vote. Shortly before the election, 49.6% of the respondents identifying themselves as independents were saying they would vote for Henry while 31.4% said they would support Hughes. In Fort Wayne, Democrats need to do well among Republicans in order to win citywide. Just over one-fifth of the respondents who identified themselves as Republicans (21.0%) said they were going to vote for Henry. Hughes did not do nearly as well among Democrats. Seven percent of the Democrats said they were going to vote for Hughes. It could be argued that Henry's relative success with Republican voters was more important than his success among independent voters. Ahrendt was doing best among independents (5.0%) followed closely by Democrats (3.5%). He was doing worst among Republicans (1.2%).

¹ Some of the columns or rows in the tables in this release may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

	Republican	Independent	Democrat
Henry	21.0%	49.6%	72.0%
Hughes	62.3%	31.4%	7.0%
Ahrendt	1.2%	5.0%	3.5%
Undecided	15.6%	14.0%	17.4%
Total	100.1%	100.0%	99.9%

Another interesting finding comes from looking at the partisan composition of the supporters of the Henry and Hughes campaigns. Henry had balanced support with 38.8% of his support coming from Democrats, 37.5% from independents, and 21.9% from Republicans. Hughes' support leaned more heavily on her party with 66.7% of her support coming from Republicans. Almost one quarter (24.4%) of her support was coming from independents and only 3.8% from Democrats.

	Republican	Independent	Democrat	Other	Don't Know	Total
Henry	21.9%	37.5%	38.8%	0.6%	1.3%	100.1%
Hughes	66.7%	24.4%	3.8%	2.6%	2.6%	100.1%

The partisan composition of the undecided voters showed that Hughes had the potential to win this election. Republicans made up over one-third (34.7%) of the undecided voters. Independents made up 22.7% and Democrats made up 20.0% of the undecided voters.

	Republican	Independent	Democrat	Other	Don't Know	Total
Undecided	34.7%	22.7%	20.0%	16.0%	6.7%	100.1%

On election night, speculation began that independent Haley Ahrendt may have cost Hughes the election. The unofficial results show Ahrendt receiving 1,781 votes and that Hughes lost by 1,634. This poll suggests Ahrendt was not responsible for Hughes' loss. Shortly before the election, over half of Ahrendt's support was coming from independents and over one-quarter of his support (27.3%) was coming from Democrats. Given Henry's lead among independents and Democrats, this data suggests that Ahrendt took more votes from Henry than from Hughes.

	Republican	Independent	Democrat	Other	Don't Know	Total
Ahrendt	18.2%	54.5%	27.3%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%

Where Are We Going

Respondents were asked whether they thought things in Fort Wayne were headed in the right direction or if things had gotten off on the wrong track. This question is often used as a measure of how happy voters are with incumbents. Low scores are a sign that incumbents can be defeated in an upcoming election. In this poll, 59.1% of the respondents said that things were headed in the right direction and only 30.6% said things had gotten off on the wrong track.

Do you think things in Fort Wayne are heading in the right direction or have they gotten off on the wrong track?	
Right direction	59.1%
Wrong track	30.6%
Undecided	10.3%
Total	100.0%

Henry had support from 60.7% of the respondents who said things were heading in the right direction. Hughes had 19.7% of those respondents supporting her. Almost one-sixth (15.9%) of the respondents who said that things were headed in the right direction were undecided.

Not surprisingly, Hughes had a great deal of support among the respondents who said that things had gotten off on the wrong track (68.5%). Henry had only 10.5%. One-fifth (20.2%) of the respondents who thought things had gotten off on the wrong track were undecided.

Do you think things in Fort Wayne are heading in the right direction or have they gotten off on the wrong track?			
	Right Direction	Wrong Track	Don't Know
Henry	60.7%	10.5%	12.2%
Hughes	19.7%	68.5%	53.7%
Ahrendt	3.8%	0.8%	2.4%
Undecided	15.9%	20.2%	31.7%
Total	100.1%	100.0%	100.0%

What Is Important To Voters

Respondents were asked what they thought was the most important issue facing Fort Wayne. Respondents identified creating jobs as the top issue (64.5%). The number two issue was municipal debt (10.6%). Downtown development was number three (7.7%) and condition of roads and streets was number four (5.3%). Given the large percentage of respondents who cited creating jobs as the most important issue, it is not surprising that it was the number one issue for virtually all categories analyzed for this report. Hughes enjoyed a slight lead among respondents who identified creating jobs as the most important issue (Hughes = 41.9%; Henry = 39.6%). Not surprisingly, she had a commanding lead among those who identified municipal debt as the most important issue (Hughes = 64.3%; Henry = 14.3%).

What is the most important issue facing Fort Wayne?	
Creating jobs	64.5%
Municipal debt	10.6%
Downtown development	7.7%
Condition of roads and streets	5.3%
Condition of neighborhoods	1.5%
Public safety	2.8%
Vacant houses and businesses	2.3%
Some other issue	5.3%

Negative Campaigning

There were numerous stories in the local media about the negative tone of the campaign. Respondents were asked if political campaigns in this area were more positive, more negative, or about the same as before. A very small percentage (1.4%) said that campaigns were more positive. Almost half of the respondents (49.0%) said that campaigns were more negative. Almost half of the respondents (47.0%) said that campaigns were no more positive or negative than in the past.

Are political campaigns in your area...	
More positive	1.4%
More negative	49.0%
About the same	47.0%
Don't know	2.6%
Total	100.0%

There is a concern that negative campaigns depress interest in elections. Respondents were asked if the tone of political campaigns made them more or less interested in getting involved with elections. Almost one in five of the respondents (18.3%) said they were more interested in participating in elections because of the tone of the political campaigns. Just over one-quarter (25.8%) of the respondents were less interested. Over half (53.8%) of the respondents said the tone of campaigns made no difference in their interest in participating in elections.

Does the tone of political campaigns make you...	
More interested	18.3%
Less interested	25.8%
No difference at all	53.8%
Don't know	2.1%
Total	100.0%

Source of Information About Local Politics and Elections

Respondents were asked which source of political information had the highest quality information for local politics and elections. Two sources of information were close to a tie for the source with the highest quality. Newspapers (31.9%) were the source of the highest quality and television news reports (28.8%) came in a close second. People with whom the respondents discuss politics were the third highest quality source of information. Web sites were the only other source in double digits (10.2%).

Which source of political information has the highest quality information?	
Television news reports	28.8%
Newspapers	31.9%
Magazines	0.6%
Radio	7.1%
Web sites	10.2%
Blogs	0.9%
Social networking sites	0.7%
People with whom I discuss politics	15.0%
Political experts quoted in news stories	4.9%
Total	100.1%

Talking Politics

When asked about talking politics with other people, just over 6% of the respondents (6.1%) said they did not discuss local politics and elections with anyone². This is higher than what was found from a similar question in a Mike Downs Center statewide poll of likely voters in the 2008 presidential election. The 2008 poll asked the respondents with whom they discuss politics and elections generally, not specifically local politics or elections. In that poll only 1.0% of the respondents said they did not discuss politics or elections.

The most common discussion partner for likely voters in the Fort Wayne Municipal Election was the spouse or partner of the respondent (54.0%). This was very similar to what was found in the 2008 statewide poll (53.0%). The second and third most common discussion partners were a relative other than spouse or partner (14.6%) and a friend (13.8%).

² The 2011 Indiana Civic Health Index found that 21% of Hoosiers talk about politics at least a few times a week. <http://www.in.gov/judiciary/pubs/2011-indiana-civic-health-index.pdf>

Who do you discuss local politics and elections with most often?	
Your spouse or partner	54.0%
A relative other than your spouse or partner	14.6%
A co-worker	4.5%
A neighbor	2.5%
Someone from church	1.5%
A member of a social group	1.8%
A friend	13.8%
Someone else	1.0%
Does not talk about local politics with others	6.1%
Don't know	0.4%

Likely voters in the Fort Wayne Municipal Election did not talk politics with people with divergent points of view. Almost two-thirds (64.9%) of the respondents said they agreed often with the person with whom they discuss local politics most often. Almost one-third (31.2%) of the respondents said they agree sometimes with the person with whom they discuss local politics most often. Less than 5% of the respondents discuss politics most often with someone with whom they agree rarely or never.

Agreement of local politics and elections, person most often	
Never	1.8%
Rarely	2.0%
Sometimes	31.2%
Often	64.9%
Don't know	0.1%
Total	100.0%

When people are talking about politics, they are doing so face-to-face. Over 90 percent (92.4%) of the respondents said that the primary method of communicating with the person they discuss politics with most often was face-to-face.

Most often method of discussing local politics with most often person	
Telephone	3.9%
E-mail	1.0%
Social networking site	1.1%
Face-to-face	92.4%
Twitter	0.8%
Other	0.8%

Mike Downs Center for Indiana Politics

The Mike Downs Center for Indiana Politics is a non-partisan organization that helps the people of Indiana understand the role of politics and government in their daily lives. By doing this the Mike Downs Center hopes to encourage participation in political and public processes the same way its namesake, Dr. Michael C. Downs, did for more than 34 years. The Mike Downs Center is located on the campus of Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne (IPFW).

Statement of Methodology

The Center for Social Research at Indiana University - Purdue University Fort Wayne (IPFW) completed interviews with a random sample of 401 registered voters who said they were very likely to vote in the Fort Wayne 2011 Municipal Election. The names of the registered voters were obtained from a sampling frame that was purchased from AmericaList, Inc.

The margin of error associated with the 401 completed interviews of likely voters is 4.89 percent at the 95 percent level of confidence. This means that with a sample of 401 valid surveys of registered voters, it can be said that if the survey was repeated 100 times, in 95 out of the 100 times, the research findings would, at most, vary by plus or minus 4.89 points.

Where necessary, responses were weighted according to the voter registration database. Weights were calculated by the Mike Downs Center for Indiana Politics.

It should be noted that there are several possible sources of error that may influence the results of this survey beyond the aforementioned sampling error. These include self-selection out of the survey (i.e., refusing to be interviewed, refusing to answer a call from an unknown phone number), question phrasing, question ordering, the tone conveyed by a questioner, alteration of the data via weighting procedures, and the manner in which respondents were filtered out (for example, determining who is a likely voter). Error that may result from these factors should be kept in mind when reviewing the results of this survey.

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