

Roundup of Polls on the 2004 Elections

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Recent polls in the Upper Midwest show early signs that the 2004 elections may follow the electoral map of past elections – reelection of Senate incumbents in Iowa and Wisconsin and a presidential race that produces South Dakota for the Republicans and Iowa and possibly Minnesota for the Democrats. One early surprise is that Democrats appear poised to pick up the U.S. House of Representative seat vacated by the recently convicted Republican Bill Jenklow. These poll results, however, provide only a partial picture of the electoral map in the Upper Midwest and may well change over the coming months.

Here are some of the important results that emerge from recent polls:

South Dakota Political Map

- In South Dakota, reliably Republican in presidential elections, President Bush enjoys an 11-point lead over presumed Democratic nominee and sitting U.S. Senator John Kerry according to February polling numbers. The President's approval rating has dipped to 47%, which may require attention from the White House if it falls lower and Kerry attempts to capitalize on it.
- Tom Daschle is in the midst of a hotly contested campaign for his Senate seat. Daschle's approval rating stabilized at 57% through late 2003, but his lead over Republican contender and former Congressman John Thune now stands at 6 to 7 points in a February poll.
- A special election will be held on June 1st for the seat vacated by Bill William Jenklow. Democrat Stephanie Herseth, who lost to Jenklow by 7 points in 2002, is handily leading her Republican opponent Larry Diedrich by a 2:1 margin in a poll from last month.

Iowan Political Map

- In Iowa, Bush trails Kerry 49-42 in the latest state poll released about a month ago. Bush hopes to capture this battleground state that he narrowly lost to Al Gore by only 4,130 votes in 2000.
- Incumbent Republican Senator Charles Grassley maintains his secure standing in his quest for a 5th term, with a solid 7 out of 10 Iowans approving of his job performance in February.
- Health care and financial security in retirement are deep concerns for Iowans, with 52% insecure or only somewhat secure in their ability to pay for these expenses in polling numbers from late last year. However, an equal number of Iowans say their personal financial situation is better off now as worse off now than compared to four years ago.

Wisconsin Political Map

- In Wisconsin, February polling numbers show that Senator Russ Feingold fares well against a nameless competitor, with 52% wishing him reelected and 26% preferring 'someone else.' Those

who rate his job performance as 'excellent' or 'good' outnumber those who rate it as 'fair' or 'poor' by a margin of 46% to 38%.

Minnesotan Political Map

- The only poll on the presidential race in Minnesota dates from January 26-28, around the time of the New Hampshire Caucus. This poll showed Kerry holding a narrow two-point advantage over Bush, with a substantial 16% of Minnesotans still undecided.

The Poll Roundup – an initiative of the non-partisan 2004 Elections Project at the Humphrey Institute, University of Minnesota -- assembles the latest results in the Upper Midwest on pairings of candidates, policy issues, and other important political attitudes. This is the most comprehensive regional compilation of polling results on the 2004 elections in Upper Midwest that is available on line. The results have been assembled from leading regional and national polling organizations including the Argus Leader, Des Moines Register, Pioneer Press, Star Tribune (Minnesota Poll), the University of Wisconsin Survey Center (Badger Poll), SurveyUSA, and the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press.