



May 9, 2018

To: Interested Parties

From: Ben Tulchin, Corey O'Neil and Kiel Brunner; Tulchin Research

Re: **West Virginia Statewide Poll Reveals Democrats are Competitive, Have Strong Opportunities in 2018 and 2020**

With Democrats struggling in West Virginia after the 2016 election - and having recently witnessed the Governor switch to the Republican Party and being reduced to a super minority in the State Legislature - Tulchin Research conducted statewide survey research among voters in West Virginia late last year. The aim of this research was to assess how Democrats were performing statewide and measure potential for success in 2018 and beyond. The poll measured a variety of races and found Democrats are very competitive up and down the ticket and can win in West Virginia. Below are the key findings from this research.

Favorability Ratings

The survey found that the most prominent Democratic figures are more popular than the leading Republicans in the state. Specifically, Senator Bernie Sanders is the most popular public figure in West Virginia with over a majority of voters holding a positive opinion of him (53% favorable). Following closely behind Sanders is Joe Manchin, who is also viewed favorably by a majority of voters (51% favorable). (We should also note that among voters who are favorable towards Manchin, 60 percent share favorable sentiments towards Sanders.)

Favorability Ratings of Democratic Figures

<i>Here is a list of public figures and organizations. Please indicate if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable opinion of each. If you've never heard of them, please indicate that.</i>			
	<u>Favorable</u>	<u>Unfavorable</u>	<u>Fav - Unfav</u>
Bernie Sanders	53%	44%	+9
Joe Manchin	51%	43%	+8

Voters have more mixed sentiments toward leading Republican figures statewide as President Trump's ratings are more divided (52% favorable to 47% unfavorable, with 38% very unfavorable). Republican Senator Shelley Moore Capito is viewed in even more divided light (47% favorable to 45% unfavorable) while Governor Justice's standing is underwater (42% favorable to 48% unfavorable).

Republican Favorability Ratings

<i>Here is a list of public figures and organizations. Please indicate if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable opinion of each. If you've never heard of them, please indicate that.</i>			
	<u>Favorable</u>	<u>Unfavorable</u>	<u>Fav - Unfav</u>
President Donald Trump	52%	47%	+5
Shelley Moore Capito	47%	45%	+2
Jim Justice	42%	48%	-6

2018 Partisan Outlook and 2020 Presidential Matchup

In a very encouraging development for Democrats in the Mountain State, ***Democrats lead Republicans up and down the ballot and have real opportunities to be competitive and win key races in West Virginia in 2018 and beyond.*** In fact, a ***plurality of voters prefers a Democratic candidate for State Legislature over a Republican candidate (41% Democrat to 39% Republican, 19% undecided).***

2018 Generic State Legislature Vote (Democrat vs. Republican)	
Democrat	41%
Republican	39%
Undecided	19%
Dem - Rep	+2

Similarly, ***Senator Bernie Sanders leads President Donald Trump (48% Sanders to 46% Trump, 6% undecided)*** in a hypothetical 2020 general election match-up. It is important to note that this is a state Trump won by 36 points over Hillary Clinton in 2016, which means Sanders's 2-point lead represents a 38-point net shift since the November 2016 presidential election results in West Virginia. (We should also note that among the voters supporting Sanders over Trump in a head-to-head matchup, 51 percent of those voters are favorable toward Senator Manchin.)

2020 Presidential Vote (Sanders vs. Trump)	
Bernie Sanders	48%
Donald Trump	46%
Undecided	6%
Sanders - Trump	+2

Partisan Issue Preference

The Democratic brand in the state is also promising with reference to more substantive issues that concern voters. For instance, a plurality of voters statewide (38%) believes the Democrats will do a better job on ***“making health care more affordable”*** than Republicans (29%), while a third of voters (33%) are undecided on this issue or say it makes no difference.

Political Party Issue Preference

Please indicate which political party (ROTATE) Democrats or Republicans, does a better job on the following issues. If you feel there is no difference, please indicate that. (ROTATE)	
<i>“Making health care more affordable.”</i>	
Democrats	38%
Republicans	29%
No Difference	26%
Undecided	7%
Democrats - Republicans	+9

Conclusion

This poll finds that Democrats are currently very competitive in West Virginia and can win races in 2018 and beyond. Democrats have two popular figures – Bernie Sanders and Joe Manchin – and are also competitive at the State House level and on key issues like health care. The upcoming 2018 elections show real potential for Democrats if they invest in the state and make their case to voters.

Survey Methodology: *Tulchin Research conducted this online survey among 400 likely voters in West Virginia from October 6-13, 2017. The survey's margin of error is +/- 4.9% at the 95% confidence level.*