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Latest poll also shows U.S. Sen. Whitehouse 54%, GOP challenger Flanders 35%



September 20, 2018

UPDATED: Majority of Rhode Island voters against offering more taxpayer support to keep the Pawtucket Red Sox in Rhode Island

BRISTOL, R.I. – Democratic Rhode Island Gov. Gina M. Raimondo has opened a 7-percentage-point lead over her Republican challenger, Cranston Mayor Allan W. Fung -- 43 percent to 36 percent, according to a Roger Williams University/WPRI 12 poll released on Thursday, Sept. 20.

The latest poll shows that Raimondo, who secured a convincing victory in the Democratic primary, has added to her narrow lead over Fung, who was 2.2 percentage points behind the incumbent in an RWU/WPRI 12 poll in July.

Former state Rep. Joseph A. Trillo, an independent candidate who was honorary chairman of President Donald Trump's campaign in Rhode Island, received 7 percent of the vote in the latest poll, while Moderate Party candidate William Gilbert received 1.7 percent, independent candidate Ann Armstrong received 1.4 percent and independent candidate Dr. Luis-Daniel Muñoz received 0.5 percent, the poll found. With less than six weeks until the Nov. 6 general election, 9 percent of voters remain undecided.

The results set the stage for a [live one-hour WPRI 12 debate](#) between Raimondo, Fung and Trillo at RWU's Bristol campus at 7 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 27.

The poll also found that Democratic U.S. Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse holds an 18.6-percentage-point lead over Republican challenger Robert Flanders. Whitehouse received 54 percent of the vote, compared to 35 percent for Flanders, with 10 percent undecided, the poll found.

Fleming & Associates conducted the landline and cell phone interview poll of 420 Rhode Island registered, likely voters from Sept. 14-17, right after Primary Day. The survey has an overall margin of sampling error of plus or minus 4.8 percentage points.

"The governor has moved the numbers since July because her support among female voters has gone from a 10-percentage-point lead to a 20-percentage-point lead," pollster Joseph Fleming said. "Also, she could have had a bump from the primary, and she has spent close to \$2 million on advertising over the past 2-1/2 months, whereas Fung is just getting on TV after the primary."

Fung's support in matchups against Raimondo has changed little over the course of three RWU/WPRI 12 polls, and while Raimondo's support has grown, she is still well below 50 percent of the vote when pitted against Fung, Fleming noted. "So there's still time to catch her, but Fung has to find some message to convince voters to come over to him," he said. "The question is what happens in the next month and a half: Does Trillo put money in? Does (House Minority Leader) Patricia Morgan endorse Trillo or Fung?"

The poll found the exact same proportion of voters -- 49.8 percent -- have a very or somewhat favorable opinion of both Raimondo and Fung. Meanwhile, 47 percent have a very or somewhat unfavorable opinion of Raimondo, compared to 35 percent with a very or somewhat unfavorable opinion of Fung.

The poll found 20 percent have a very or somewhat favorable view of Trillo, while 36 percent have a very or somewhat unfavorable opinion of him and 44 percent don't know enough about him to form an opinion.

"For Trillo, the debate will be very big because it's the first time he's on the same stage with the two major-party candidates. He has to come across well and give a good impression of how he would handle the job of governor," Fleming said. "It's also big for Raimondo and Fung because Fung needs to find ways to move voters away from the governor and she will tout her successes while leveling criticisms at Fung at the same time."

According to the poll, 42 percent of Rhode Islanders believe the state is heading in the wrong direction, 39 percent believe it is heading in the right direction, 12 percent think it has remained the same and 7 percent aren't sure.

The Pawtucket Red Sox recently announced that the Boston Red Sox Triple-A affiliate will be moving to Worcester, Mass., and the poll found a majority of Rhode Islander voters were against offering any more public support to keep the baseball team in Rhode Island.

The poll asked, "Do you think Rhode Island leaders should have offered more taxpayer money to keep the team in Pawtucket?" A total of 51 percent said "no," 38 percent said "yes," and 11 percent were unsure.

Fleming noted that younger voters were more opposed than older voters to offering more public support to keep the team in Rhode Island. "Younger voters are not watching baseball as much anymore," he said.

In March, RWU forged a partnership with WPRI 12 to conduct polling during the 2018 campaign season, gauging public opinion on both the major races in Rhode Island and matters of significant public policy. The debate is part of that partnership, which aims to provide data and public forums to assist voters and policymakers in making their decisions.

The Sept. 27 debate will run from 7 to 8 p.m. in the Global Heritage Hall atrium. Guests must be in their seats by 6:15 p.m., and doors will close at 6:40 p.m. No backpacks, large bags, props or signs will be allowed inside.

Seating for the event will be limited. Guests will need to show a confirmation email and identification at the door. If RWU students, faculty or staff wish to attend, please send an email to events@rwu.edu by the end of the day Monday, Sept. 24.

ACADEMICS