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## Latest Winthrop Poll Captures Likely Voters' Views on Upcoming Election

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# Latest Winthrop Poll Captures Likely Voters' Views on Upcoming Election

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## Quick Facts

- Governor Haley leads Democratic challenger Vincent Sheheen by a 43.6-33.6 margin among likely South Carolina voters.
- With Republicans threatening to capture the control of the U.S. Senate from Democrats, both Republican incumbents are running strong races, said Scott Huffmon, director of the Winthrop Poll and professor of political science.
- Winthrop Poll callers surveyed 1,082 likely voters in South Carolina by landline and cell phones between Sept. 21-28. The poll has an approximately +/- 3% margin of error.



Scott Huffmon

ROCK HILL, SOUTH CAROLINA – **Republican Governor Nikki Haley** holds a 10-point lead over **Democratic challenger S.C. Sen. Vincent Sheheen** in the November elections, according to the latest **Winthrop Poll** released Wednesday, Oct. 1.

**Haley** leads **Sheheen** by a 43.6-33.6 margin among likely South Carolina voters. Petition candidate Tom Ervin, a self-funded attorney and former judge, has a slight effect on the race with 3.9% of voters. Undecided voters could bring the election closer as 12.4% of likely voters said they do not know who they will choose to lead the Palmetto state.

**Haley**, the state's first female and Indian-American governor, beat **Sheheen**, a Camden attorney, in 2010 by 51.4% to 47% of votes.

Her lead comes as more than half of **Winthrop Poll respondents** (57.5%) say that economic conditions in South Carolina are fairly good. More than a third of respondents (36.1%) said conditions are fairly or very bad.

Those surveyed believe that the **most important problems facing South Carolina** are: jobs/unemployment (20.1%), education (18.3%) and economy (10.9%). Sixty-two percent of likely voters are optimistic that South Carolina's economic conditions are getting better.

Winthrop Poll callers surveyed 1,082 likely voters in South Carolina by landline and cell phones between Sept. 21-28. The poll has an approximately +/- 3% margin of error. To see the questions and responses, [click here](#).

## U.S. SENATE RACES

With Republicans threatening to capture the control of the U.S. Senate from Democrats, both Republican incumbents are running strong races, said **Scott Huffmon**, director of the Winthrop Poll and professor of political science.

**U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham** is the candidate chosen by 46.3% of likely voters, while **Democratic and Working Families Party challenger Brad Hutto** of Orangeburg drew 28% support. **Petition candidate and former S.C. treasurer Tom Ravenel** of Charleston has 8% of voter support. Undecided voters are at 12.2%.

In the other Senate race, Republican **U.S. Sen. Tim Scott** holds more than a majority lead (52.4) over Democratic challenger Joyce Dickerson of Columbia (31.8%) and American Party candidate Jill Bossi

of Tega Cay (1.8%).

## PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA AND CONGRESS

**President Barack Obama's approval rating** in South Carolina continues to be low at 38.2% and lags behind national approval for Obama by several percentage points.

Meanwhile, **Congress' approval rating** also remains low at 12.7%, a figure that is nearly equal to the national opinion of Congress.

South Carolina likely voters say the **economy** is the most important problem facing the United States (17.6%), followed by politicians/government (13.8%) and jobs/unemployment (8.2%). Meanwhile, respondents see the country in a slump with 58% saying the national economy is fairly or very bad. Another 38.5% called the national economy fairly good.

Nearly half (47%) see national economic conditions getting worse, while 44% foresee conditions getting better.

## PUBLIC POLICIES AND SOCIAL ISSUES

**Freedom of Information (FOI) issues** have been a major concern in journalism circles in South Carolina as state courts have restricted information. The Winthrop Poll asked likely voters if the members of the legislature should follow the same FOI rules as other public officials. Eighty-one percent of likely voters said legislatures should have to follow the same rules, which would mean exemptions would have to be removed so that all documents and communications would be open to disclosure rules.

Poll respondents are split on **gambling casinos** in the Palmetto state: In general, 47.3% favor, while 47.3% oppose and 4.7% are unsure. However, another Winthrop Poll question asked about if gambling casinos were allowed only in or near Myrtle Beach, prompting likely voters to oppose that option by 63.7%. Yet, the opposition was reduced to half when asked about gambling casinos in the Myrtle Beach area with government revenue designated for roads and other infrastructure needs. Huffmon noted: "Attitudes on this issue are fluid depending on specific proposals; this makes it hard to pinpoint deeply held feelings with certainty."

Federal law forbids **those convicted of criminal domestic violence** from owning guns, which 79% of likely voters think should be ensured of enforcement in South Carolina through passage of a state law.

Nearly three-fourths of likely voters (72.4%) favor removing a restriction that prohibits counties from letting citizens vote on a **one-cent sales tax to fund school building projects** unless the county meets a minimum threshold of accommodations tax. Currently, only two coastal counties meet this threshold and have passed the one cent sales tax for school buildings.

South Carolina voters currently select the **state education superintendent**, and more than half of likely voters (59.8%) want to keep it that way. The next most popular option was for the superintendent to be appointed by the State Board of Education. Governor Haley has wanted to appoint the education superintendent but her initiative drew support from only 9.5% of likely voters.

## POLL FUNDING, METHODOLOGY AND CONTACT INFORMATION

The **Winthrop Poll** is paid for by Winthrop University with additional support from [The West Forum on Politics and Policy](#) at Winthrop University.

Information about the poll methodology can be found [here](#).

For additional information, or to set up an interview with **Scott Huffmon**, please contact **Judy Longshaw** at [longshawj@winthrop.edu](mailto:longshawj@winthrop.edu) or 803/323-2404 (office) or 803/984-0586 (cell).

To book uplinks/satellite interviews for **Scott Huffmon** at the Rock Hill ETV station, contact **Renee Layson** at 803/238-1615 or e-mail her at [rlayson@scetv.org](mailto:rlayson@scetv.org).

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