

UMass Lowell/7News  
Poll of Massachusetts Voters

October 21-25, 2014

**N=1001 Massachusetts Registered Voters with a subsample of 601 Likely Voters.**

**The RV sample has an adjusted margin of error of +/-3.6%; the LV sample has an adjusted margin of error of +/-4.5%**

See <http://uml.edu/polls> for full questionnaire/topline results and detailed methodology disclosure.

Survey design and analysis by Joshua J. Dyck, Ph.D., Co-Director of the Center for Public Opinion and Acting Chair/Associate Professor of Political Science, University of Massachusetts Lowell

---

## HIGHLIGHTS

### *Baker +4; within the margin of error; has momentum*

In the race to elect the next Governor of Massachusetts, our survey of 601 likely voters (LVs) shows Republican Charlie Baker polling at 45% compared to 41% for Attorney General Martha Coakley, the Democratic nominee for Governor. Three independent candidates (Evan Falchuk-3%, Jeff McCormick-2% and Scott Lively-1%) collectively are receiving 6% of the vote, while 8% of LVs are undecided. Among all 1001 registered voters (RVs) surveyed, Coakley is actually ahead, 42% to Baker's 38%. With just one week before election day, the race is extraordinarily close.

The momentum, however, is clearly with Baker. Compared to our August 2014 survey of Massachusetts RVs, Baker has gained 5 points on Coakley. Baker is also bolstered by the fact that Republicans are more likely to be classified as LVs (57%) than Democrats (51%). Furthermore, Baker wins unleaned Independents by 23 points (50%-27%) and those who identify as ideologically moderate by 17 points (48% to 31%). In addition, among those who are the most likely to vote, Baker's margin increases to +5% over Coakley.

There is still a large gender gap in this race, with Baker leading Coakley 51% to 36% among LVs who are men. However, Coakley's lead among women LVs is now just 8 points (46%-38%). Coakley leads Baker by a larger margin -- 14 points (47%-33%) among women RVs, a decrease of 8 points from our August survey, when Coakley led among women by 22 points (48%-26%).

### *Issues, Likeability and the Campaign*

In a state where Democratic party identifiers (54%) nearly double the number of Republican identifiers (31%), Republican candidates must run towards the center and be viewed as likeable by voters. Baker appears to be bridging this gap. He not only leads by a sizeable margin among independents, but he also is supported by 16% of leaned Democrats. His favorability rating among all LVs is also better than Coakley's; Baker has a net favorability rating of +17 (52% favorable, 35% unfavorable) compared to Martha Coakley's +7 net favorability (50% favorable, 43% unfavorable). Furthermore, asked which candidate is personally more likeable, 50% answered Baker compared to 32% for Coakley; asked which candidate is more "independent-minded," 47% chose Baker, compared to 32% Coakley. All of these metrics suggest that Baker is doing exactly what a Republican must do to be elected to statewide office in Massachusetts.

Baker is also seen as stronger on economic issues, besting Coakley by 20 points (53% to 33%) on who will do a better job when it comes to the economy. Coakley's strength is on education, where she is preferred to Baker by 13 points, 48% to 35%, on who will do a better job when it comes to education.

Finally, LVs think that Charlie Baker has run the better campaign, with 42% saying Baker to 29% for Coakley. The race itself is seen by voters as very competitive, with 43% saying that they think Charlie Baker will be the next Governor of the Bay State and 45% saying Martha Coakley.

### *Ballot Measures*

Massachusetts voters will also decide on 4 ballot propositions on November 4<sup>th</sup>. The NO side is favored in 3 of the 4 contests.

On Question 1, which would repeal the part of the gas tax which sets increases to the rate of inflation (measured by the Consumer Price Index), 40% of LVs intend to vote YES compared to 54% NO, with 6% undecided. The measure gains the bulk of its support from Republicans (58% yes to 40% no) and conservatives (53% yes to 46% no). However, the margins among these groups are not large enough to pass a bill that ostensibly seeks to cut taxes.

Question 2, the so-called "Bottle Bill," which would require a deposit for all non-alcoholic, non-carbonated beverage containers (with a few exceptions), appears headed for defeat, with only 1 in 4 (26% of LVs) supporting passage, compared to 72% who oppose the measure. The measure fails to reach majority support in any demographic or political category, which includes opposition by liberals (54% NO) and leaned Democrats (61% NO).

Question 3 is the casino gaming repeal initiative, which has received much attention in the state over the last year. Opponents of the measure (which would keep the present casino gaming law) continue to lead -- 60% NO to 39% YES. The only sub-group of voters who oppose casinos (and therefore would vote yes) are those with a post-graduate degree, 55% of whom support the repeal effort. The numbers are virtually unchanged from our August 2014 poll when the YES side trailed the NO side by 19 points. The NO campaign is vastly outspending the YES campaign, but the YES side did receive a boost from the Boston Globe's endorsement of the repeal measure on October 26<sup>th</sup>. It remains to be seen if this will have any effect on the outcome of this election.

On Question 4, which would change the rules about earned sick time in the state for any employee who works over 11 hours a week, there is strong support for passage of this measure, with 60% of LVs stating that they will vote YES, compared to 35% who say they will vote NO; the lead is outside the margin of error. Democrats (leaned party id) support the measure 80%-17%, while Republicans oppose it, 37%-57%. In addition, women support the measure 66%-26%.

Overall, the ballot initiative campaigns highlight the difficulty to pass measures and in particular to pass a measure that repeals a law. Both Questions 1 and 3 appear to be failing as they must convince voters that a vote of 'YES' is actually a vote of 'NO' against current policy. Furthermore, as arguments grow more complex in ballot initiative campaigns, it becomes more difficult to sway voters.

### *Other Highlights from the Poll*

- The current status of the Governor's race does not appear to be significantly impacted by the current Governor. Deval Patrick is leaving office with a net favorability rating of +19 among registered voters in Massachusetts and +10 among likely voters.
- Massachusetts may be one of the only states in the nation where President Obama is still viewed favorably – 53% favorable to 41% unfavorable among Registered Voters. However, considering that the President won Massachusetts over former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney by 23 percentage points in 2012, this is a pretty strong indicator of how Obama's favorability has dipped across the nation.
- Almost 1 in 10 MA LVs intend to vote NO on all 4 ballot measures. The make-up of this group is interesting. The modal NO voter is an Independent leaning Republican (44% of NO voters using the 7 point party ID scale). However, 14% of NO voters are also strong Democrats, while 16% are Strong Republicans.