

**ANALYSIS: UMass Lowell-Boston Herald Poll
Mass. Congressional District 4
Feb. 2-4 and 6-8, 2012**

N=408 registered voters in newly redrawn MA CD 4 reached by landline and cell phone; sampling error +/- 6.4 percentage points. Additional methodology information at the bottom of this report; see <http://uml.edu/polls> for complete questionnaire with topline results and a detailed methodology report.

The Kennedy family hiatus from Capitol Hill may turn out to be brief if Joseph Kennedy III decides to run for U.S. House in the newly redrawn Fourth Congressional District in Massachusetts: In a new University of Massachusetts Lowell-Boston Herald poll, the first “fourth-generation” Kennedy to consider running for Congress leads by 2-to-1 – 60% to 28% - in a trial heat against Sean Bielat, the Republican who lost to Democrat Barney Frank in the old CD4 by 54 to 43% in 2010.

Being a Kennedy doesn’t hurt: 73% in the new district view the Kennedy family favorably overall. That includes 42% of self-described Republicans and Republican-leaning independents. Being a Kennedy also could net Joseph Kennedy III some votes – 28% say it makes them more likely to vote for him compared to 15% less likely; 56% say that wouldn’t really make a difference.

Meanwhile, Bielat (pronounced BEE-lot) struggles with low name recognition – 55% haven’t heard of him – despite his 2010 campaign and announced bid for the seat again this year. Other Fourth District Democratic and Republican hopefuls tested in this poll are known even less.

And the new Fourth Congressional District is inherently friendly turf for a Democrat. Redrawn after the 2010 Census cost Massachusetts one of its 10 House seats but largely overlapping the old district, it’s predominantly Democratic, liberal on social issues and liberal-to-moderate on fiscal issues. In fact the Fourth District is almost identical to Massachusetts overall in terms of partisanship and ideology, according to this survey and recent UMass Lowell polling statewide – the only statistically significant difference is the Fourth District is a little more socially liberal.

	Fourth District Feb. 2012	Statewide Dec. 2011
PARTY IDENTIFICATION		
Dem and Dem-leaning Ind	55%	56%
Rep and Rep-leaning Ind	31%	32%
VIEWS ON SOCIAL ISSUES such as gay marriage and abortion		
Liberal	52%	43%
Moderate or conservative	41%	50%
VIEWS ON FISCAL ISSUES such as taxes and spending		
Liberal or moderate	56%	60%
Conservative	37%	34%

Source: UMass Lowell/Boston Herald polls

KENNEDY FAMILY LEGACY: Joseph Kennedy III – son of former Rep. Joseph Kennedy II and grandson of Robert F. Kennedy – recently resigned as an assistant district attorney in Middlesex County to explore a congressional bid in the Fourth District (mostly Bristol and Norfolk counties) after Frank, the 16-term incumbent, decided to retire. There had been a Kennedy in Congress from 1947, when future President John F. Kennedy entered the House, until 2011, when Rep. Patrick Kennedy of Rhode Island, son of the late longtime Sen. Ted Kennedy, left it.

Some voters in the new Fourth District have conflicted feelings about that political history. As noted, 73% have an overall positive view of the Kennedy family. At the same time, 34% say they think the Kennedy family has too much influence on Massachusetts politics. But more, 49%, say the family has about the right amount of influence while 8% say the family doesn't have enough influence. And 23% of those who say the Kennedy family has too much influence would vote for Joseph Kennedy III anyway; these are mostly Democrats, apparently voting the party line.

LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON? The poll checked for and did find some evidence of voter confusion between Joseph Kennedy III and his father, who represented the Eighth Congressional District in Massachusetts for 12 years and founded and leads the non-profit company Citizens Energy.

When asking about overall views of a list of political figures, interviewers were instructed to read background about Joseph Kennedy III – that he is a former assistant district attorney and son of the businessman and former congressman – if a respondent mentioned his father, or vice-versa. This happened with at least one in four respondents. Interviewers also were asked for their own assessments after each survey and nearly a fifth of the time they said the respondent seemed to confuse father and son.

But the poll found no indication that any confusion hurt views or vote preference for Joseph Kennedy III – perhaps not surprising, given the overall warm feelings for his family and Democratic leanings of the district. (There also was no statistically significant difference in vote preference or favorability rating for Joseph Kennedy III between respondents who were read background information about him and those who weren't; in other words, there's no evidence that getting that additional information made a respondent more favorably disposed toward the candidate.)

OVERALL VIEWS OF CANDIDATES: The younger Joseph Kennedy was viewed favorably by 51% and unfavorably by 17%; 26% said they'd heard of him and were undecided, while 7% never heard of him. His father's ratings were similar: 55% favorable, 17% unfavorable, 18% heard of/undecided and 10% never heard of.

Though Joseph Kennedy III is only 31, among those who have heard of him, 48% said he has the kind of experience to serve effectively in Congress and 22% said he does not. Among the smaller number, 45%, who had heard of Bielat - a businessman and major in the Marine Corps reserve – 35% said he has the requisite experience and 29% said he does not.

The poll found even lower name recognition for Elizabeth Childs, who is running against Bielat for the Republican nomination, and Paul Heroux, one of the announced Democratic hopefuls in the district; fewer than 10 percent of voters knew enough about those candidates to offer an opinion about them.

The poll also tested overall views toward other political figures and found these favorable/unfavorable splits - all within range statistically of results in a UMass Lowell poll in Decmeber of registered voters across Massachusetts:

- Barack Obama 59% favorable/38% unfavorable
- U.S. Senate hopefuls Scott Brown, Republican (and formerly a state lawmaker from the same area as the Fourth District), 53/33, and Elizabeth Warren, Democrat, 36/19 (29 percent hadn't heard of her)
- Barney Frank, the Fourth District incumbent, 53/35

HOUSE RACE DEMOGRAPHICS: There's a gender gap in the Bielat-Kennedy trial heat, with Kennedy winning 67-21% among women but by a narrower 52-36% among men. Some other highlights:

	Sample		Party ID- leaned		Party ID unleaned	SOCIAL IDEOLOGY issues such as gay marriage, abortion			FISCAL IDEOLOGY issues such as taxes and spending		
	Land- line	Cell	Dem	Rep	Ind	Lib	Mod	Cons	Lib	Mod	Cons
ALL	66	34	55	31	49	52	22	19	19	37	37
Kennedy	63	56	92	77	47	73	46		77		34
Bielat	28	28	2	11	33	15	44		15		48

Categories were collapsed for the social and fiscal ideology questions because there were too few respondents in the individual categories for statistical reliability.

POLL METHODOLOGY

This UMass Lowell-Boston Herald poll was conducted Feb. 2-4 and 6-8 (excluding Feb. 7, Super Bowl Sunday) among 408 Massachusetts registered voters reached in random digit dial samples of landlines and cell phones. Survey estimates for the full sample are subject to sampling error of plus or minus 6.4 percentage points; sampling error is higher for subgroups. Polls are subject to additional, unquantifiable but potentially larger error related to question wording and order, non-response and other factors. Fieldwork by SSRS / Social Science Research Solutions of Media, Pennsylvania; the poll was produced for UMass Lowell and these highlights written by Mike Mokrzycki, an independent, non-partisan survey research consultant based in Massachusetts.