

UMass Lowell-Boston Herald poll
Massachusetts Special Election Senate Race 2013
March 2-5 2013

N=589 MA registered voters, including 309 identified potential Democratic primary voters, sampling error +/- 4 percentage points for all RVs, +/- 5.6% potential Dem. primary voters

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

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HIGHLIGHTS

- ***Trial Heats:*** Ed Markey, Democrat, the longest serving member of the Massachusetts US House delegation, emerges as the front-runner in the race to fill the Massachusetts Senate seat vacated by John Kerry, which will be decided in primary elections on April 30th and a special general election on June 25th. Markey leads Democratic challenger Stephen Lynch by 29.5 percentage points among potential Democratic primary voters, 50.0% to 20.5%, with 23% unsure. Markey also leads all 3 Republican candidates in head to head matchups by double digits:
 - Markey leads former Navy SEAL officer and Cohasset businessman, Gabriel Gomez by a margin of 19.5 percentage points, 47.0% to 27.5%.
 - Markey leads former US Attorney Michael Sullivan by 17.2 percentage points, 47.5% to 30.3%.
 - Markey leads Norfolk State Representative Dan Winslow by 23.2 percentage points, 49.1% to 25.9%.
 - Stephen Lynch also leads all 3 Republicans by margins of 18.4% (Gomez), 17.0% (Sullivan), and 24.5% (Winslow)
- ***Party Advantage:*** The advantage of both Democratic candidates in head-to-head matchups is largely explained by the large party registration and identification advantage in Massachusetts. Registered Democrats outnumber registered Republicans in our sample by more than a 2 to 1 margin. While party registration refers to how a voter lists him/herself on their voter registration card, party identification can tell us even more as many Bay States register as Independent (52.3% of our sample), but identify with one of the two major parties. Consistent with previous UMass Lowell-Boston Herald polls, roughly half of all registered voters (49.4%) identify as Democrats or independents that lean towards the Democratic Party, while 28.7% identify as Republicans or lean towards the Republican Party. Party identification is the biggest predictor of voting behavior at this point.
- ***Voter Inattention:*** Part of the reason that party identification is so powerful in predicting the preferences of MA registered voters stems from the fact that there is widespread

inattention and a lack of general knowledge about the special election. The vast majority of MA Registered Voters (86%) report being aware that a special election has been called for June 25th, but most voters are unfamiliar with the candidates. Congressman Markey is favorable to 30.6% of RVs compared to 19.9% unfavorable. However, 30.6% report having no opinion of him and 18.7% report having never heard of him (combined 49.3%). Even among MA RVs who report following MA Politics “Very Closely,” 32.2% report having no opinion and 17.2% report having never heard of the Congressman. Markey fares much better in name recognition than *any of the other candidates*. The cumulative No Opinion/Never heard of rankings for the list of candidates is:

- Stephen Lynch, 41.6% no opinion + 18.7% never heard of = **60.3%**
 - Michael Sullivan, 38.9% no opinion + 40.2% never heard of = **79.1%**
 - Gabriel Gomez, 31.5% no opinion + 53.4% never heard of = **84.9%**
 - Dan Winslow, 21.9% no opinion + 69.6% never heard of = **91.5%**
 - As a comparison point, former Senator Scott Brown, who many speculated would run in this special election is viewed as favorable by 60.0% of MA RVs and Unfavorable by 24.0% of MA RVs, with 14.6% who have no opinion and less than 1% who report having “never heard of.”
- ***Distrust in Government.*** A common theme in the months following an election is that voters often drift away from paying much attention to politics and express a general distaste with politics after being inundated with advertising in a general election campaign. When asked about their level of trust in the national and state governments, MA registered voters report low marks on both accounts. The federal government is trusted ‘just about always’ or ‘most of the time’ by only 12.0% of RVs, while the state government is trusted ‘just about always’ or most of the time’ by 28.2% of RVs. Historical lows for national trust in government in national surveys have typically been at about 17% (just about always/most of the time). Trust in government in Massachusetts right now is extraordinarily low and reflects a disconnected and frustrated electorate.
 - ***Support for democracy.*** Massachusetts registered voters have strong predispositions to more purely democratic forms of decision making. When asked if they preferred Senate vacancies being filled by special election or gubernatorial appointment, 77.1% preferred special elections. Massachusetts also has a form of the indirect initiative process and voters had the chance to have the final say medical marijuana, assisted suicide and “right to repair” laws in November. Most voters report being either very satisfied (13.2%) or somewhat satisfied (56.8%) with the way the initiative process works in Massachusetts. When asked about the number of ballot initiatives, 51.5% agreed that there are “about the right amount” of initiatives, with Republicans more likely than Democrats to suggest that there are “Too Few” initiatives on the state ballot.
 - ***Concerns about cost:*** While there is widespread support for the general principle of special elections, voters were considerably more mixed when presented with the costs of the election, which state official estimate at about \$13.5 million. A plurality of voters, 42.1%, say that special elections are a good use of taxpayer money, while 37.9% say that they are a waste of taxpayer money; 19.6% are unsure. Interestingly, presumably because of the success of

Scott Brown in the 2010 Special Election, Republicans were more likely than Democrats to say that Special Elections are a good use of taxpayer money (49.3% to 40.1%).

- ***Governor Patrick's Tax/Budget Plan:*** Governor Deval Patrick is viewed as favorable by a majority of MA RVs, 50.6% favorable to 32.2% unfavorable. When asked about the Governor's plan to raise income taxes and decrease sales taxes to fund investment in transportation and education infrastructure, 47.9% somewhat or strongly support the proposal, while 45.6% somewhat or strongly oppose the plan, with 6.4% of voters unsure.
- ***Warren Viewed Favorably:*** The senior Senator from the Bay State, who won a closely contested election in November, is viewed favorably by 51.1% of MA RVs to 34.1% unfavorable (13.3% no opinion). These numbers reflect no net change from her favorability in November.
- ***Scott Brown for Governor?*** Since his decision to decline running for the open Senate seat in summer 2013, speculation has turned to the possibility that Scott Brown will run for Governor in 2014. There is considerable bi-partisan support for his candidacy, as 32.7% of MA RVs report being very likely to support Brown for Governor and 26.0% of MA RVs being somewhat likely (58.7% total). Brown pulls support from 92.2% of Republicans and 36.7% of Democrats.
 - Brown enjoys much greater general name recognition than other plausible candidates, such as:
 - Charlie Baker – 21.6% favorable, 10.6% unfavorable, 67.2% no opinion/never heard of
 - Kerry Healey – 24.2% favorable, 16.9% unfavorable, 58.4% no opinion/never heard of
 - Steve Grossman – 14.9% favorable, 5.6% unfavorable, 79.5% no opinion/never heard of