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## Big Red Poll: Kentuckians generally dissatisfied with politicians

By WES SWIETEK wswietek@bgdailynews.com 3 hrs ago

President Donald Trump answers questions with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., in the Rose Garden after their meeting Monday at the White House.

Evan Vucci/AP/

Kentuckians do not have the highest opinion of politicians and how they are doing their jobs, according to the latest statewide Big Red Poll.

The poll was released Tuesday by the Western Kentucky University Social Science Research Center. The poll of 562 Kentuckians has a margin of error of plus or minus 4.13 percent and was conducted by WKU students enrolled in center Director Joel Turner's classes. The poll was conducted from Oct. 16-27.

"Pretty much everybody's approval is down," said Turner, pointing to the meager 24 percent favorability rating for Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell as "the thing that grabs people."

"That's significant – that's lower than it has been in Kentucky," Turner said.

McConnell, a Republican from Louisville, had the lowest individual favorability rating in the poll, and 62 percent of respondents viewed him unfavorably.

“The saving grace is that there’s a difference between favorability and winning an election,” Turner said. McConnell “has never won an election running as being everyone’s best friend,” he said of the state’s senior senator, who was first elected in 1984.

Respondents to the Big Red Poll were asked if they approved or disapproved of the job performance of several elected officials. President Donald Trump has the highest job approval rating despite earning only 50 percent approval, while 42 percent disapproved and 8 percent were not sure. The poll was conducted before Monday’s announcement of a federal indictment against former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort.

Respondents were divided on the job performance of Gov. Matt Bevin, with 43 percent approving and 42 percent disapproving. Turner said that rating could be different today as there has been a recent backlash against his pension plan – “I would not expect to see a higher number” now, Turner said. The good news for Bevin “is he is above water with independents,” Turner said. The poll found 50 percent of independents approved of the governor’s job performance.

Congress had a dismal 18 percent job-approval rating, with 72 percent indicating they disapproved of the job Congress was doing.

Respondents were also asked if they had a favorable or unfavorable view of several politicians. Trump had a favorability rating of 50 percent with 46 percent viewing him unfavorably. The second highest favorability rating was for U.S. Sen. Rand Paul; the Bowling Green Republican had a 46 percent favorability rating, with 39 percent viewing him unfavorably. Bevin was viewed favorably by 43 percent (41 percent unfavorable). Democratic Kentucky Attorney General Andy Beshear, seen as a potential Bevin election opponent, was seen favorably by 32 percent and 35 percent unfavorably, with a third of respondents – 33 percent – not sure.



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Among other poll findings:

- A majority of respondents – 68 percent – said they felt the country is on the wrong track.
- Most Kentuckians support increasing the minimum wage (58 percent); oppose building a wall to control immigration (55 percent); believe community college should be free for anyone who wants to attend (55 percent); think recreational use of marijuana should be decriminalized (54 percent); and think the Affordable Care Act should be repealed and replaced (60 percent).
- On the protests of NFL players during the playing of the national anthem at games, 59 percent believe the players are being disrespectful by kneeling during the national anthem and 58 percent believe the protests are unpatriotic. A small majority – 51 percent – disagreed with Trump's call for NFL owners to fire any players who do not stand for the anthem.

And with the poll coming out on Halloween, some seasonal questions were also asked of respondents:

In a ranking of favorite chocolate-based candy, Reese's Peanut Butter Cups (25 percent) came out on top, followed by Hershey bars (18 percent) and Snickers (13 percent). The favorite non-chocolate based candy was Skittles (13 percent), followed by Payday at 6 percent.

Finally, "with regard to perhaps the most controversial Halloween-related candy," as the poll deemed it, 22 percent of respondents believe candy corn is an excellent candy, 36 percent believe it is an average candy and 40 percent believe it is a terrible candy.

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