

To: Interested Parties
From: Shira Angert, Benenson Strategy Group and Tony Fabrizio, Fabrizio, Lee & Associates
Date: January 24, 2018
Re: Tennessee Primary Voter Poll Results

- In an era of intense political polarization, Democratic and Republican 2018 primary voters in Tennessee show remarkable agreement regarding the importance of education and the substantial role they want education to play in this year’s gubernatorial campaign.
- Primary voters in both parties say education will be the most important issue in deciding who gets their vote for governor.
 - ✓ Education is the most named issue in deciding their vote for governor, with about one in five primary voters from each party (22% of Democratic primary voters and 17% of Republican primary voters) saying education is their top issue, outpacing all other issues.
 - ✓ These numbers are even higher among parents of both parties, with 26% of Democratic primary voter (DPV) parents and 22% of Republican primary voter (RPV) parents saying education is the most important issue in deciding their vote for governor.
- The fact that education is a priority is not surprising given that voters don’t believe students are adequately prepared for the future.
 - ✓ A majority of both Democratic and Republican primary voter believe Tennessee’s high school graduates are *not* properly prepared for a job or college (56% of DPV’s and 61% of RPV’s).
- As a result, primary voters in both parties would be significantly more likely to support a candidate for governor who demonstrates support for specific education policies.
 - ✓ It’s notable that a majority of primary voters from both parties would be more likely to support a candidate who supports each of these reforms, indicating that education could serve to galvanize some of each parties’ respective bases.

<i>If you knew the following were true about a candidate for Governor, would it make you MORE LIKELY or LESS LIKELY to support that candidate?</i>	Dem Primary Voters		GOP Primary Voters	
	Much more likely	Total more likely	Much more likely	Total more likely
Supports increasing teacher pay	66	91	42	73
Supports expanding efforts to ensure more Tennesseans have some kind of post-high school education	57	90	42	74
Supports expanding quality early learning opportunities, specifically prior to kindergarten	53	82	30	57
Favors making early grade literacy the state's top priority	50	83	37	72
Favors improving training for school principals	48	88	36	76
Favors fewer, better tests for K through 12th grade students	39	72	27	64
Favors workforce certificates for high school students	33	69	25	58
Supports giving parents a choice in where they send their child to school	30	58	44	70

- Testing is another area of broad agreement between Republican and Democratic primary voters. While a plurality of voters in both parties believe that students in Tennessee’s public schools are given too many tests (41% of both Republican and Democratic primary voters say this), voters understand that testing is important.
 - ✓ 86% of DPV’s and 88% of RPV’s say it’s important to test students in grades three through eleven to know if they’re meeting state standards, and a majority in each party say it’s “very important.”
- For example, TN Ready, the end of year test administered in the state, receives resounding support, with two-thirds of voters in both parties saying that they support TN Ready after they hear a brief description of the test.
- The results of the survey clearly indicate that education is a critical issue for the 2018 gubernatorial election in Tennessee, and voters from both parties are looking for candidates that will propose initiatives to strengthen public education throughout the state.

Methodology

Benenson Strategy Group conducted 501 telephone interviews with likely 2018 Democratic primary voters in Tennessee on behalf of TN Score. Fabrizio, Lee & Associates conducted 500 telephone interviews with likely 2018 Republican primary voters in Tennessee on behalf of TN Score. All interviews were conducted from December 14, 2017 to December 17, 2017 and 40% of interviews were conducted by cell phone. The margin of error for both datasets is +/- 4.3%. It is higher among subgroups.