



MEMORANDUM

TO: INTERESTED PARTIES
FROM: ROBERT BLIZZARD
RE: TENNESSEE STATEWIDE POLL RESULTS

On behalf of SCORE, Public Opinion Strategies conducted a Tennessee statewide survey of 500 registered voters (moe + 4.4%), September 23-25, 2019. The purpose of this memo is to review the key findings from the survey.

KEY FINDINGS

Overall

- There is clear support among all voter groups for robust accountability in K-12 education.
- Voters see the need for education beyond high school with strong support for various forms of postsecondary education.
- Public school choice is a popular concept among all voters in all regions of the state.

There's optimism in Tennessee as both the Governor and the Legislature enjoy high marks.

- Fully 58% of Tennesseans believe things in the state are headed in the right direction versus just 32% who say they are off on the wrong track.
- Voters across the state strongly approve of the job Lee is doing as Governor, as fully 61% approve of his job performance versus just 22% who disapprove.
- And, a strong majority of voters approve of the job the State Legislature is doing in Nashville by a 53%-31% margin.

Education continues to be near the top of the issue agenda for voters, and voters are looking for more accountability in the school system.

- Voters say health care (18%) and education (15%) should be the top priorities for the Governor and State Legislature, followed by jobs and the economy (12%), gun rights and the Second Amendment (9%), immigration (8%), the opioid crisis (7%), and several other important issues.
- By a 79%-17% margin, voters favor more accountability in schools – including assigning letter grades to schools, state intervention, teacher evaluation, and transparency.
- By a 53%-22% margin, voters are less likely to support a State Legislator who “voted to reduce accountability in schools.”

There's significant support for more public school choice in Tennessee.

- Public charter schools are viewed positively by a two-to-one margin (44% favorable-24% unfavorable).
- And, by a 75%-20% margin, Tennessee voters support public school choice that gives parents more choices in where their child can attend school.

Not only is student testing viewed as very important, but Tennessee voters are strongly supportive of using year-to-year academic growth of students as part of evaluating teacher and school performance.

- Fully 85% of Tennessee voters believe it is important to test students from grades three through eleven each year to know if they are meeting state standards.
- More than three-quarters (77%) support using student academic growth for accountability so parents and communities know how well schools are performing, and 54% support the policy of using student academic growth in part to measure teacher achievement.
- By a 49%-30% margin, voters are more likely to support a State Legislator who “voted in support of measuring the academic progress of students through annual testing.” And, by a 38%-27% margin, voters are more likely to support a State Legislator who “voted in support of Tennessee’s current teacher evaluation system.”

Tennessee voters have very positive views of various forms of postsecondary education to prepare the next generation for a career.

- Most voters believe colleges and universities in Tennessee properly prepare students for success in the workforce (58% yes-34% no), and most voters (52%) say the purpose of college or postsecondary education is to prepare students for a career.
- There’s a very strong sentiment that a degree from a community college is valuable (93% yes-6% no), and voters view vocational training (89% favorable-3% unfavorable), community college (91% favorable-3% unfavorable), and career and technical education (82% favorable-3% unfavorable) all positively.
- The Tennessee Promise is also viewed favorably by voters by a 46%-6% margin.
- By an 87%-7% margin, voters are more likely to support a State Legislator who “voted to make college more affordable for Tennessee students.” And, by an 82%-7% margin, voters are more likely to support a State Legislator who “voted to make college more accessible and affordable for all students.”