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Contact: **Kelly Rossman-McKinney**
Office: 517-487-9320
Cell: 517-749-0529
Dennis Denno
517-402-2453
John T. Reurink
517-482-2125

Democratic Interests Take Slight Lead in State House Races

LANSING, Mich. — With Michigan's economy in a continual tailspin and the increasing popularity of Democratic Presidential candidate Barack Obama, political insiders anticipate a good year for Democrats. A recent poll of likely statewide voters, however, suggests Republican candidates may be better off than once thought.

The latest poll from Denno Noor Research, The Rossman Group and MIRS indicated that 41 percent of Michigan voters would vote for a Democratic candidate if the election for the Michigan House of Representatives were held today. This compares to 39 percent of voters who said they would support a Republican State Representative, and 18 percent who remain undecided.

“Given all the external factors favoring Democrats – the rising popularity of Obama, the struggling economy and the anti-Bush settlements – these numbers show a pretty close race,” said Kelly Rossman-McKinney, CEO of The Rossman Group.

The question was worded as follows:

If the election for your Michigan State Representative was held today, would you be voting for the (ROTATE) Democrat or Republican?

The race between the Democratic and Republican parties is tight; however, independent voters will be crucial to the outcome of many state house races. Among Independents, 29 percent would vote for a Republican State House candidate, while 27 percent would vote for the Democratic candidate in the election. The weight of the election rests in the 44 percent of Independent voters who said they would remain undecided.

“It's not over yet,” said Denno Noor Research President Dennis Denno. “Capturing the independent vote is crucial to the state house races.”

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In another recent poll, constituents were asked how they believe lawmakers make decisions. Forty-three percent of state lawmakers cast votes with the interest of their constituency in mind, while 42 percent of likely voters believe state lawmakers cast votes with the interest of their political agenda in mind.

The second question was worded as follows:

Which of the following statements come closest to your personal view: (ROTATE) “State lawmakers cast votes in the State Capitol with the interests of their constituency in mind” or “State lawmakers cast votes in the State Capitol with the best interests of their political agenda in mind.”

Among age groups, voters’ skepticism of their lawmaker’s intentions decrease with age. Fifty percent of voters, between the ages of 18 and 35, support the political agenda, but only 34 percent remain loyal to the agenda from the age of 65 and up.

“It appears Republican voters are more cynical,” said MIRS President John T. Reurink. “It will be interesting to see if voters transfer this cynicism to voting the incumbent out of office.”

Out of those who said they would vote for political agenda, 48 percent said they would vote Republican and 39 percent said they would vote Democrat. Of those who said they would vote for constituency, 46 percent said they would vote Democrat and 42 percent said they would vote Republican.

Denno Noor Research conducted the survey in partnership with The Rossman Group and Michigan Information & Research Services (MIRS). The Rossman Group was recently named Lansing’s Most Effective Public Relations Firm by a survey of political insiders, and MIRS is Michigan’s leading daily legislative and state government newsletter.

Methodology:

This survey was part of the Rossman Group/MIRS/Denno Noor Research Quarterly Survey of the Michigan electorate. 600 respondents were surveyed between October 1 and October 4, and the participation was stratified based on census data and past voter behavior. A screen was employed to include only those participants who said they intended on voting, either at the polls or by absentee ballot, in the November 2008 Election. The margin of error is plus/minus four percent.

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