



The Perricone Group



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Hoekstra, Cox Lead Pack of GOP Contenders for Gov *Cherry holds solid lead among Dems, but half remain undecided*

LANSING, Mich. — The most recent Rossman Group/Denno-Noor/Perricone Group statewide survey shows U.S. Congressman Pete Hoekstra and Michigan Attorney General Mike Cox as GOP candidate front runners to be Michigan's next governor. Among Democratic candidates, Lieutenant Governor John Cherry holds a double-digit lead over his nearest contender, with half of Democratic voters still undecided.

With former Gubernatorial Candidate Dick Devos out of the race, both Hoekstra and Cox were able to more than double their lead from one year ago, the last time the survey was taken. Hoekstra saw his support increase from 7 percent to 23 percent, and Cox increased his support from 10 percent to 20 percent. Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land and Oakland County Sheriff Michael Bouchard increased their support among GOP voters as well, with both seeing their support rise from 4 percent up to 11 percent. Businessman Rick Snyder received 2 percent support, and 31 percent of Michigan GOP voters remain undecided.

"Hoekstra and Cox have really started to pull ahead of the pack," said Kelly Rossman-McKinney, CEO of The Rossman Group. "The other GOP candidates have some real work to do if they want to be considered legitimate contenders."

Denno-Noor Research conducted the survey in partnership with The Rossman Group – recently named Lansing's Most Effective Public Relations Firm by a survey of more than 1,000 political insiders – and The Perricone Group.

Among Democratic gubernatorial candidates, Cherry was able to increase his lead from 6 percent one year ago to 20 percent this year. Detroit Mayor Dave Bing and Wayne County Executive Robert Ficano were in a statistical dead heat for second place with 9 percent and 8 percent respectively. State Representative Alma Wheeler Smith and Speaker of the House Andy Dillon each received 2 percent. Lansing Mayor Virg Bernero and former State Representative John Freeman rounded out the bottom of Democratic gubernatorial contenders, each with 1 percent. Fifty-one percent of Democratic voters remain undecided.

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“Cherry will be happy to be in the lead, but 51 percent is a fairly large number of Democratic voters who still need to be convinced,” said former Michigan Speaker of the House and Perricone Group CEO Chuck Perricone. “He is widely considered the most qualified candidate in terms of understanding the legislative process. But some could interpret these results to mean the field is still open for another candidate to step up – if they’re up to the challenge.”

Cherry’s greatest demographic strengths were among Central Michigan and Tri City/Thumb region voters, while Cox did best among young voters between 18 and 35 years with 41 percent support and among Oakland County voters with 32 percent support. Hoekstra fared best among those who identified as “strong Republicans” with 28 percent support and among Upper Lower Peninsula and West Michigan voters who gave him 58 and 53 percent support respectively.

In another question, voters were asked whether they would be more or less likely to vote for a female governor after eight years of Gov. Jennifer Granholm. Twenty-eight percent indicated they would be more likely to vote for a female candidate, and 22 percent said they would be less likely to vote for a female for governor. Those who were neither more nor less likely to vote for a female candidate after Granholm were the largest percentage of respondents with 34 percent. Thirteen percent were undecided.

“Interestingly, 42 percent of those who identified as ‘strong Republicans’ and 33 percent of ‘not strong Republicans’ said they would be less likely to vote for a female candidate,” noted Denno-Noor President Dennis Denno. “When you add that to the fact that both Cox and Hoekstra scored better among female voters than Land – each with 16 and 21 percent female support respectively compared to Land’s 12 percent – it could mean an uphill climb for Terri Lynn Land.”

Michigan voters were also asked when they thought the Republican Party would regain power. Only 18 percent believe the GOP will regain power in the 2010 elections, 44 percent believe they will regain power in the next presidential election, and 21 percent believe they will not see the GOP return to power in their lifetime. Seventeen percent were unsure or provided a different answer.

“Even though Republicans have been losing power at the national and state level for a number of years, they remain optimistic for the future,” said Rossman-McKinney. “Seventy percent of those who identified themselves as a ‘strong or not strong Republican’ said the GOP would return to power by 2010. Only time will tell if their wishes hold true.”

Methodology:

This survey was part of the Rossman Group/Perricone Group/Denno Noor Research Quarterly Survey of the Michigan electorate. 600 respondents were surveyed between May 18 and May 21, 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 voted, either at the polls or by absentee ballot, in the November 2008 Election. The margin of error is plus/minus 4 percent. All numbers are rounded and may exceed 100%.

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