



The Perricone Group



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Contact: Kelly Rossman-McKinney

Cell: 517-749-0529

Dennis Denno, Denno-Noor Research President

Cell: 517-402-2453

Chuck Perricone, Perricone Group President

Office: 269 758-3480

Mark Pischea, Rossman Group President

Cell: 517-927-1089

Michigan Voters Favor Cobo Expansion Over Rock Financial Showplace

Only 9 percent more Oakland County voters support moving Auto Show to their own county

LANSING, Mich. — One day after the Michigan Senate approved a package of bills to either fund the renovation of Cobo or allow Oakland County to prepare the Rock Financial Showplace to keep the North American International Auto Show (NAIAS) in the region, a Rossman Group/Denno-Noor Research/Perricone Group survey finds that more Michigan voters want to see Cobo expanded than Rock Financial.

A total of 600 Michigan voters were asked which facility they thought the state should use tax payer dollars to expand. Forty percent were in support of Cobo Hall compared to 18 percent who favored Oakland County's Rock Financial Showplace. Thirty-three percent of voters remain undecided on the issue and 9 percent named another facility.

"The expansion of Cobo has been a sticky issue in Southeast Michigan for years," said Kelly Rossman-McKinney, CEO of The Rossman Group. "But more voters across the state are saying they want the show to stay in the Motor City than anywhere else."

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.

Surprisingly, the poll found that Oakland County voters were not overwhelmingly supportive of bringing the NAIAS to Rock Financial Showplace – only 43 percent indicated support for their home-county facility compared to 34 percent who wanted to keep it at Cobo. Detroit voters, on the other hand, were strongly supportive of a Cobo Hall expansion with 86 percent in favor compared to only 6 percent who supported the NAIAS move to Oakland County.

"With only a 9 percent difference between support for the Rock and Cobo, it doesn't seem like Oakland County is all that geared up about becoming the new home of the Auto Show," said former Speaker of the Michigan House and Perricone Group CEO Chuck Perricone.

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In another key issue for Detroit, voters across the state of Michigan revealed their support for newly-elected Detroit Mayor Dave Bing taking responsibility of Detroit Public Schools (DPS). The survey found that 41 percent support Bing taking over DPS compared to 28 percent who oppose Bing's control. Thirty-one percent remain undecided.

The city of Detroit is evenly divided on the issue with 44 percent both in support and opposed to the mayor's control over DPS. Eleven percent were undecided. Young voters – those between 18 to 35 years – were among the strongest supporters of the issue, with 63 percent in favor. That support, however, faded to 33 percent among voters 65 and older.

“Control of Detroit Public Schools continues to be a contentious issue,” said Dennis Denno. “What to do with Detroit Schools has been an issue for years, and unfortunately, there is still no consensus.”

Voters were also asked their thoughts on whether Bing will adopt and implement openness and a new code of ethics in the mayor's office or continue with business as usual. Thirty-six percent believe Bing will adopt ethics and openness, while 26 percent believe ethics in the mayor's office will remain unchanged. Another 36 percent remain undecided.

Within Detroit, voters were somewhat more optimistic than the rest of the state. Forty-four percent are confident Bing will bring more ethics and openness compared to 33 percent who disagreed, and 22 percent undecided.

“With less than half of Detroit voters convinced that Bing can bring anything but politics as usual to the city, the mayor still has quite a lot of room to prove himself,” said Perricone. “I'm sure he'll be looking to do just that before the next election.”

While Michigan may be hopeful of Bing's potential for creating a more ethical city government, it was Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson who won the most confidence from voters. Patterson yielded support from 21 percent of Michigan respondents compared to 12 percent for Bing. They were followed by Wayne County Executive Robert Ficano, who garnished 6 percent, and Macomb County Executive Paul Gielegem with 2 percent. Fifty-five percent were undecided. Sixty-four percent of Oakland County voters and 51 percent of Wayne County voters trust Patterson the most. 42 percent of Detroit voters gave their trust to Bing.

The final question asked in the survey sought voters' opinion of foreign control of Michigan infrastructure projects as a means of raising revenue. Seventy-two percent of voters indicated that they oppose foreign control of Michigan infrastructure compared to 18 percent who support the measure. Ten percent were undecided.

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“Given the state’s continually declining tax revenue, and infrastructure that ranks among the most neglected in the country, one might think that nearly any revenue enhancement idea would be considered a good one,” said Rossman-McKinney. “But it seems that voters want no part of this one.”

Younger voters, age 18-35, were among the most supportive with 37 percent in favor of foreign control. The strongest opposition came from Central Michigan voters with 80 percent and opposed Upper Lower Peninsula voters with 88 percent opposed.

“It’s not too surprising that the Upper Peninsula was the least supportive of foreign control of Michigan assets, with only 9 percent in favor of the idea,” said Denno. “This likely has to do with the critical importance of the Mackinac Bridge to the livelihood of U.P. residents.”

Those who identified as “strong Democrats” were twice as supportive as “strong Republicans,” with “strong Democrats” giving 22 percent support compared to 13 percent support for “strong Republicans.” Women were also found to be more supportive than males with 29 percent of females supporting foreign control of infrastructure compared to 16 percent of males.

“With so little support from every region of the state, it’s hard to imagine this issue going far in the state legislature,” said Perricone.

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%.

Please credit all partners – The Rossman Group, Denno-Noor Research, and The Perricone Group – when citing this survey.

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