

Marquette poll shows Democrats with slight edge in governor's race, significant lead for Senate

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“Turnout still matters, but at the moment it doesn’t seem like results are so heavily pegged to turnout in the Senate race.” – Pollster Charles Franklin dissecting the results of the latest Marquette University Law School poll on Wednesday

MADISON - Democratic Gov. Tony Evers has the edge on Republican challenger Tim Michels, according to the [latest Marquette University Law School poll](#) , with 45% of respondents saying they plan to vote for Evers, compared with 43% for Michels.

Evers’ lead is smaller than it was in the last Marquette poll, which was taken before the primary and had Evers up 48 to 41.



While the governor’s race has tightened, in the race for the U.S. Senate the gap has widened

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between Republican incumbent Sen. Ron Johnson and his Democratic challenger, Lt. Gov. Mandela Barnes. In the June Marquette poll, Barnes led Johnson by 46 to 44. The latest poll shows Barnes up over Johnson by seven points, 51 to 44, with fewer voters saying they don't know whom they will support.

The poll of 811 Wisconsin voters took place between Aug 10-15 and the pool of respondents were 30% Republican, 29% Democratic and 41% independent, with the independents leaning about equally toward the Democrats and Republicans.

There will be three more Marquette polls before the November general election according to Charles Franklin, the poll director, who presented the results of the latest poll in a Wednesday forum.

The latest poll shows that both political parties are "extremely strongly unified behind their nominees," Franklin said, with 91% support among Democrats for Evers and 89% support for Michels among Republicans.

Evers' advantage, Franklin explained, comes from slightly better party loyalty as well as his four point better performance among independents.

"Those are the things that manufacture the two point Evers advantage in the overall race," said Franklin.

In the Senate race, while party loyalty to the two candidates is similarly high, Barnes gains an advantage over Johnson because of his considerably better performance among independents, where he has 14 points more support.

Other items in the poll include measures of voter enthusiasm, where Republicans have long enjoyed an advantage. But in the latest poll, Democratic enthusiasm has increased.

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Likely voters are evenly split, with 83% of Republican registered voters saying they are certain to vote, compared with 82% of Democrats. A smaller number of independents — 66% — say they are certain to vote, which is typical, Franklin said, of people who do not identify with either political party.

Getting out the vote

Mobilizing less reliable voters will be the key to winning the election for both parties, Franklin said. However, digging into the numbers, he noted that in the governor's race Evers keeps a narrow two-point advantage even if people who say they are less than "very likely" to vote are removed from the sample. People who describe themselves as "certain to vote" are four points more pro-Evers.

In the Senate race, Barnes' seven-point advantage is the same among both the least and most likely voters.

Despite political pundits' [focus](#) on Barnes' ability to mobilize younger voters and people of color in Milwaukee, as a youthful and charismatic lieutenant governor who would be Wisconsin's first Black senator, getting out new voters and those who don't always go to the polls does not appear to be the key to victory for him.

"Turnout still matters, but at the moment it doesn't seem like results are so heavily pegged to turnout in the Senate race," says Franklin.

Barnes has been touring the state, making stops in rural areas with Sen. Tammy Baldwin, a progressive Democrat who has upended expectations by winning in Republican areas, and racked up a big 11-point margin of victory in her last re-election race, when other Wisconsin Democrats won their statewide races by nail-biting 1-percentage point margins.

Other topics covered by the recent Marquette poll include whether voters think the candidates care about them. The Democrats score better on that measure, with 50% saying Barnes cares and 27% saying he doesn't, and 54% saying Evers cares versus 38% who say he doesn't care.

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Johnson is underwater on the question of caring, with 41% of voters saying he cares and 49% saying he doesn't care. On Michels, voters are split evenly between 38% who say he cares about them and 38% who say he does not.

But a lot of voters don't know what to think about the newer candidates, with about a quarter of poll respondents saying they don't know whether newcomers Michels and Barnes really care.

More people think Evers shares their values by 50% to 41%. Barnes' numbers are even better, with 45% saying he shares their values and 31% saying he doesn't, but 24% say they don't know. Michels is dead even with 38% saying he does share their values and 38% saying he doesn't, while 23% don't know.

Evers continues to enjoy a net positive favorability rating of 46% favorable versus 41% unfavorable. Johnson remains underwater, with 38% favorable versus 47% unfavorable.

Trump still rules

Across the country, Republican primary candidates who supported Donald Trump prevailed over the last week. Both Michels and Johnson have been outspoken Trump defenders and were endorsed by the former president.

In Wisconsin, views on Trump are sharply divided along party lines, with only 8% of Republican respondents to the Marquette poll saying the former president bears a lot of responsibility for the violence of his supporters at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, compared with 89% of Democrats. Among independents, 46% say Trump bears a lot of responsibility.

Likewise, only 13% of Wisconsin Republicans in the latest Marquette poll said they were "very confident" in the accuracy of the results of the 2020 election, compared with 90% of Democrats. Among independents the number was 46%.

Wisconsin Republicans give Trump a 77% favorability rating, compared with 3% from Democrats and 34% from independents. And a majority of Wisconsin Republicans would still like Trump to run for president in 2024.

Changing views on issues

How voters view the candidates is sure to change over the course of the campaigns, Franklin said, particularly as they get to know Barnes and Michels better. And there has been some movement on the issues. Inflation, which ranked as a big concern overall, is a much bigger deal for Republicans than Democrats. "It's a good example of partisanship structuring our views," Franklin said. But as gas prices have come down and the Consumer Price Index has remained flat at the end of summer, voters appeared to adjust their perceptions and the overall level of concern about inflation diminished in the latest Marquette poll.

Illegal immigration, which Johnson and Michels have made a centerpiece of their campaigns, is likewise a much bigger concern for Republicans than Democrats, with Republicans ranking it among their top four concerns and Democrats putting it last on a list of nine items.

Inflation is a much bigger concern for Republicans than independents or Democrats. But overall, the number of poll respondents who say it is a big concern has come down from 75% in June to 67% in August.

Likewise views of abortion policy have shifted slightly in favor of legal abortion, since the June Marquette poll, which was conducted before the Supreme Court's abortion decision. Only 10% of Republicans think abortion should be illegal in all cases, according to the latest poll, compared with 20% in June. Abortion should be allowed in cases of rape and incest according to 79% of Republicans 97% of Democrats and 87% of independents, which puts majorities of all those groups at odds with the Republican candidates, who support Wisconsin's no-exceptions 1849 felony abortion ban.

by Ruth Conniff, [Wisconsin Examiner](#)
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