

PRESS RELEASE: Harwich High School Exit Poll Favors Brown

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In an exit poll conducted today by Harwich High School government students, Scott Brown was supported over Martha Coakley, 57% to 42%, with independent Joseph Kennedy receiving 1%. The poll of 430 voters was conducted at the Harwich Community Center between 8:30 AM and 1:00 PM. One poll at one polling place cannot be expected to predict the statewide result, however there were many additional details in the poll that would seem to favor Brown.

By gender, Brown did better among men (61% to 38%), but also won the majority among the women we polled (54% to 45%). By age, all groups supported Brown, with young people (18-39) supporting him the most (60% to 36%).

By party, Brown got 12% support among Democrats, compared to 3% of Republicans for Coakley. Most importantly, independents broke strongly for Brown, 58% to 40%.

We asked voters to identify one or two issues that were most important to them in deciding how to vote. The top issue was health care, which 69% cited as important. Among these voters, Coakley did better than overall, though Brown still got a majority (53% to 47%), this despite the fact that only 40% think we should pass the health care bill pending in Congress. Other issues broke more strongly for Brown. The economy was cited by 38% of voters, and these voted for Brown, 65% to 35%. Candidates' character and integrity were cited by 19% and these went for Brown, 66% to 33%. And foreign policy/security was cited by 13%, supporting Brown, 66% to 32%. Only abortion broke for Coakley, 70% to 30%, but this was mentioned by only 10%.

One group that did support Coakley were those that decided in the last few days who to vote for. This group favored her 56% to 40%, but represented only 11% of the poll. Those that decided in the last few weeks supported Brown 66% to 31%, and those that decided before then supported him 56% to 44%.

Another bad sign for Coakley was that a slim majority (51%) actually approve of the job Obama is doing as president. But a significant part of this group (21%) voted for Brown, compared to only 7% of those who disapprove of the president supporting Coakley.

We asked voters whether they were influenced by debates, ads, and calls. The 26% that were influenced by the debates heavily supported Brown (75% to 25%), as did the 28% influenced by ads (76% to 22%). Only 10% said they were influenced by calls, and these also supported Brown (60% to 40%). These numbers would suggest that Brown ran a better campaign than Coakley, since the specific efforts to influence voters favored him so strongly. Also interesting was the number of calls received – an average of 14.4 in our poll, and a median of 10.

Anecdotally, the students reported a greater enthusiasm among Brown voters. Voters also often discussed their negative reaction to the ads and calls. Many who said they were influenced said it was in reaction against a candidate's ads and calls, particularly Coakley's attack ads.

Again, one poll cannot be expected to predict to statewide result, but the results we see in our analysis would seem to bode well for Scott Brown. We would like to thank all the voters who took the time to discuss their vote with the students. For them, the poll was very educational, giving them a window into how different people make political decisions.

For complete results of the poll, please visit our website:
<http://www.harwich.edu/depts/history/dickson/gov.html>

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