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The University of Montana

NEWS RELEASE

University Communications
Missoula, MT 59812
(406) 243-2522
(406) 243-4520 FAX

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Oct. 18, 1996

INCUMBENTS FARE WELL IN MONTANA POLL

MISSOULA --

The most recent Montana Poll shows Gov. Marc Racicot cruising to re-election, President Clinton maintaining a safe lead and Sen. Max Baucus holding a comfortable edge.

But as the campaigns intensify in the home stretch for the Nov. 5 general election, and the polling mania continues in Montana as well as nationally, the race for Montana's lone U.S. House seat remains tight.

For this edition of the Montana Poll, 380 adult Montanans were polled statewide Sept. 26 to Oct. 3. Of that number, 327 said they were registered to vote in the state. The Montana Poll is conducted by The University of Montana Bureau of Business and Economic Research.

U.S. President: Although many national "electoral vote scorekeepers" list Montana as a must-win for Bob Dole, President Clinton appears likely to take the state again as he did in 1992. Less than four weeks away from the November election, political oddsmakers gave President Clinton a 70 percent or better chance of winning re-election, and the latest Montana Poll results suggest he will gain Montana's three electoral votes in the process, said Susan Selig Wallwork, the poll's director.

National analysts have considered Montana up for grabs, but among the registered voters polled, 47 percent said they would vote for Clinton if they were voting now, while 27 percent preferred Dole. Six percent said they would vote for Perot, and 19 percent were still undecided.

-more-

Clinton appears to have polled stronger with his political base -- Democrats and those who usually vote Democratic -- than Dole has among his traditional base by about eight to 10 points, Wallwork said.

Much has been made of voters' sentiments on the abortion issue affecting their vote for president. The Montana Poll results appear to mirror that national pattern, Wallwork said. Among those who describe themselves as pro-choice, 54 percent said they support Clinton, with the sentiments somewhat stronger among the women in that group (59 percent, compared with 50 percent for the men). Nineteen percent of the pro-choice Montanans supported Dole. Those labeling themselves as pro-life preferred Dole, but the support was much less pronounced: 42 percent supported Dole, while 33 percent still supported Clinton.

U.S. Senate: Although Democratic Sen. Max Baucus initially was at the top of the Republicans' target list of vulnerable incumbents, some political oddsmakers have more recently tagged him as a favorite in his race against Lt. Gov. Dennis Rehberg and two other lesser-known candidates, the Reform Party's Becky Shaw and the Natural Law Party's Stephen Heaton, Wallwork said. The Montana Poll results suggest the incumbent's position may be a bit more solid right now -- among registered voters polled, 55 percent said they would vote for Baucus, and 26 percent preferred Rehberg, roughly a two-to-one margin for Baucus. About 2 percent supported the other candidates, with another 16 percent undecided.

Like Clinton, Baucus polled noticeably stronger among his traditional base than did Rehberg, by about 18 to 20 points, Wallwork said. Of those who usually vote Democratic and who call themselves Democrats, a solid eight in 10 supported Baucus. Of those in the traditional

Republican base, noticeably fewer -- about six or seven in 10 -- supported Rehberg. Gov. Marc Racicot's considerable popularity does not appear to benefit Rehberg as some observers had expected, Wallwork said. Except for these political differences, the response patterns were relatively consistent throughout the state.

U.S. House: Several recent state political polls, this one included, show a pretty tight race for Montana's U.S. House seat -- primarily between Republican Rick Hill and Democrat Bill Yellowtail. The latest Montana Poll results showed a mere seven-point margin between the two -- 36 percent for Yellowtail and 29 percent for Hill. That small margin for Yellowtail falls within the total possible error range for a sample this size, making any predictions risky, Wallwork said. Additionally, another three in 10 (31 percent) were undecided at the time, clearly enough to impact the final vote if the undecideds do vote, and if they don't fall out relatively evenly between the two. About 3 percent said they would vote for Natural Law Party candidate Jim Brooks.

Governor: Political oddsmakers have declared Gov. Marc Racicot a prohibitive favorite for victory in his re-election bid, and one would be hard-pressed to challenge that assessment based on the latest Montana Poll results, Wallwork said. Seventy-five percent of the registered voters polled said they would vote for Racicot. Only about 12 percent preferred Democrat Chet Blaylock, and only about 12 percent were still undecided.

Support for Racicot's re-election was strong across the board -- no gender gap, no significant pockets of dissent. Even among those making up the traditional Democratic power base, the majority said they would vote for Racicot -- about six or seven in 10 (64 percent and 72 percent, respectively) -- over Blaylock.

The Montana Poll's statewide sample was drawn using the bureau's two-stage random sampling process that generates a representative cross-section of Montana's adult population. Its random digit telephone sampling program generates a statewide sample of telephone numbers, proportionate with the distribution of households in the state. A second random sampling procedure is then used to select one adult respondent in each household, taking into account the number and gender of adults in the household. The procedure generates a representative cross-section of Montana's adult population.

The sample of registered voters has a possible maximum error margin of plus or minus 5.5 percentage points. The possible error margins for the various subgroups are larger, ranging from about plus or minus 8 to 10 percentage points because of smaller subgroup sizes.

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Contact: Susan Selig Wallwork, (406) 243-5113.

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State
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MONTANA POLL

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Bureau of Business and Economic Research, The University of Montana (Missoula, Montana 59812)

Sample: Adult Montanans (n=380) and Montanans registered to vote (n=327) statewide

Interview dates: Sept 26-Oct 3, 1996

Topic: Election Outlook 1996 -- Major Races

		Registered to Vote (n=327)	Registered to Vote and Usually Vote		Registered to Vote and Describe Self as		
			Democrat (n=140)	Republican (n=106)	Democrat (n=122)	Republican (n=86)	Independent (n=101)
President:	Bill Clinton (D)	47%	79%	5%	84%	9%	37%
	Bob Dole (R)	27%	2%	71%	3%	71%	23%
	Ross Perot (I)	6%	5%	7%	4%	5%	8%
	Other candidates	--- ^a	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Undecided	19%	14%	16%	8%	14%	31%
	Not voting ^b	1%	0%	2%	--- ^a	1%	1%
U.S.Senate:	Max Baucus (D)	55%	84%	22%	84%	21%	52%
	Dennis Rehberg (R)	26%	4%	63%	7%	67%	18%
	Other candidates	2%	1%	4%	2%	2%	4%
	Undecided	16%	10%	11%	7%	9%	26%
	Not voting ^b	--- ^a	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%
U.S. House:	Bill Yellowtail (D)	36%	58%	11%	62%	13%	25%
	Rick Hill (R)	29%	12%	62%	12%	65%	23%
	Jim Brooks (Nat Law)	3%	3%	3%	3%	1%	5%
	Undecided	31%	26%	22%	22%	20%	46%
	Not voting ^b	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%

Continued —————>

MONTANA POLL *(continued)*

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		<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Independent</u>
	(n=327)	(n=140)	(n=106)	(n=122)	(n=86)	(n=101)
Governor: Marc Racicot (R)	75%	64%	89%	72%	91%	67%
Chet Blaylock (D)	12%	23%	4%	18%	5%	10%
Undecided	12%	11%	7%	8%	5%	22%
Not voting ^b	1%	1%	1%	2%	0%	1%

NOTE: Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding.

^aLess than 1%.

^bDo not vote, or not voting this time.

For further information: Susan Selig Wallwork
BBER/The University of Montana
Missoula, MT 59812

(406) 243-5113
FAX (406) 243-2086

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