

MEASURE 2

NORTH DAKOTA
STATEWIDE SURVEY

SEPTEMBER 2020
M2 BALLOT TEST

Prepared by:

DFM Research

Saint Paul, Minnesota

Executive Summary:

North Dakota Voters First (NDVF) commissioned two polls to better understand how North Dakotans view the upcoming 2020 election and the constitutional ballot measure process. The research was conducted by DFM Research – a polling firm that has polled extensively in North Dakota for two decades.

The first poll – summary below – focused on the 2020 ballot and the constitutional measures on the 2020 ballot.

North Dakota Statewide Ballot, Candidates:

Over the last twenty years or so, North Dakota has moved from a fairly competitive state on state constitutional offices, federal offices and the state legislature, to where we are in 2020 where the Republican Party dominates every office, including a super-majority in the legislature, and routinely winning statewide offices with margins in excess of 30 percentage points. The 2020 election in North Dakota is shaping up to be a tad more competitive compared to recent election, but generally follows recent form.

Polling data suggest that Joe Biden on Election Day is likely to garner around 40 percent of the vote, narrowing Donald Trump's victory to the 20-percentage point range from his 2016 32-point win over Hillary Clinton. This relative narrowing from the top of the ticket, will allow the Democratic-NPL Party (Dem-NPL) to make noticeable legislative gains in Cass and Grand Fork County, while holding vulnerable rural east seats. This election will really show the divide between Fargo and Grand Forks, and the remaining 70 percent of the state.

Other statewide races are more problematic for the Dem-NPL – watch for a possible upset in the State Treasurer's race, where the Republican candidate is underwater (even though still mostly unknown, most state candidates carry a favorable rating, Thomas Beadle is the rare exception). Something is brewing in this race. Other races such as the Governor's race are a tough climb for the Dem-NPL, although it is also notable the Governor Burgum's favorable rating and ballot support have declined to all-time lows. The auditor's race is a good measure of a generic ballot.

Measure 1 Ballot Test:

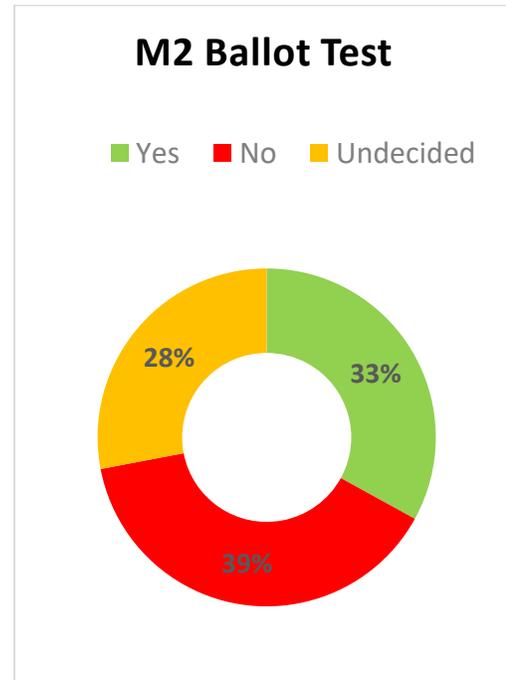
With the removal of Measure 3 from the ballot, North Dakotans will have two measures to consider (both of which were placed on the ballot by the North Dakota Legislature for voter's consideration). Measure 1, which deals with Board of Higher Education, is poised to go down in defeat. The statewide survey of 500 respondents show that only 32 percent favor approving Measure 1 with a YES vote. The NO vote is 46 percent, with another 22 percent undecided.

Measure 2 Ballot Test:

The initial ballot test of Measure 2 (M2) shows the race right now to be roughly split with the YES, NO and undecided garnering roughly one-third each; the YES vote starts at just 33 percent. This is fairly low territory for a YES campaign to find election success. Of a curious note, both Measure 1 and M2 begin with roughly the same amount of YES votes (32 and 33 percent respectively), with Measure 1 at a higher NO vote, likely due to being more straight-forward in ballot test language.

A few details about M2:

- When it comes to YES support, there is no real difference in initial support of basic demographic grouping of gender, age or education level. There is a noticeable uptick based on region, with west rural getting to 39 percent YES.
- Where we start to see some crosstab variation is on self-identification of party, with Republicans initially favoring M2 37-28 percent. Independents show the largest negative gap, with M2 initial numbers at 27-47, a 20-percentage point gap.
- One of the key numbers that come out of the research on the initial ballot test is M2 ‘understandability’ as a significant factor. For voters who understand the issue (34% of respondents), M2 initial test is 43-52, with 5 percent undecided. Not fully understanding the issue, M2 is 28-32, with 40 percent undecided.



Measure 2 Messaging Test:

After the initial ballot test, poll respondents were asked to rate arguments of opponents and proponents of Measure 2 to find how convincing they are when it came to their vote.

We looked at messages surfaced by opponents including:

- 1) M2 is a power grab by the legislature.
- 2) M2 is an insult to North Dakotan traditions of citizen led government
- 3) M2 is a trojan horse by the legislature to prevent systemic political system change (term limits, finance restrictions)
- 4) M2 will bring about more government, red tape, bureaucracy to our elections

We asked respondents a four point “convincing scale” (very convincing, convincing, just somewhat convincing, not convincing). All opponent messages were impactful with voters (especially those undecided voters) with very convincing/convincing being above 50 percent in all examples.

We also asked respondents as well about key M2 proponent messages. The YES statement tested themes and language from a recent column by Mr. Rob Port - which was focused on extra scrutiny and much needed checks and balances in the ballot process to minimize the influence in the ballot process by billionaires and out-of-state activists. In general, the proponent messages were found to be not very convincing for respondents, with voters rating the highest proponent argument at 32 percent very convincing/convincing.

After messaging for and against on M2, the post-test shows the initial 6-point gap in favor of a NO vote, increased to a 34-point gap. We also see a significant decline in the YES vote, moving down to 20 percent from 33 percent.

Methodology:

The results presented are based on a stratified random sample of 500 North Dakota residents over the age of 18. Survey uses a likely voter screen to determine likelihood of voting in the 2020 November Election, with only certain and very likely to vote continuing. Sample was stratified by five distinct North Dakota regions to ensure a statewide representative sample; random sample provided by KGS Research. All calls were conducted by live callers using landline and cell phones, supplemented by text-to-web.

After the numbers were stratified into the appropriate region, telephone numbers were selected at random using a skip pattern to guarantee interviews were distributed throughout the region. Each number in the stratified sample had the same non-zero chance of being selected for an interview.

Telephone interviews were conducted by trained staff of KGS Research of Las Vegas, Nevada, using a computer-assisted telephone interview (CATI) system for landline phones. Cell phone interviews are dialed manually to comply with the 1991 Telemarketing Consumer Protection Act. Callers asked to interview the respondent on the voter file.

Final results are weighted based on gender, age, and education to closely conform to the 2020 expected voter composition.

<u>Gender</u>		<u>Age</u>		<u>Education</u>	
Male	48%	18-39	27%	Non College	61%
Female	52%	40-64	44%	College Degree	39%
		65 plus	29%		

The final results are subject to sampling error, which is the difference between results obtained from the survey and those that would be obtained if every adult was interviewed in the district. The margin of error is +/- 4.5 percentage points with a 95 percent confidence level; meaning that in 19 out of 20 times, the individual responses would be within the margin of error. For example, if a question produced a final result of 50 percent, the likely range would be between 45.5 to 54.5 percent had the entire population been surveyed. Where appropriate in the survey, question and answer choices are randomized to help reduce bias and due to rounding the results may not equal 100 percent.

Project management and final analysis of the data was completed by Dean Mitchell of DFM Research based in Saint Paul, Minnesota. In addition to his 29 years of political experience, Dean has completed course work in survey techniques and statistics as part of his Master in Public Policy (MPP) degree from the University of Minnesota's Humphrey School of Public Affairs.

Topline:

<u>Interviews:</u>	500 North Dakotan likely voters by live caller and text-to-web
<u>Margin of Error:</u>	± 4.5 percentage points with a 95 percent level of confidence
<u>Interview Dates:</u>	September 12-16, 2020
<u>Sample:</u>	Landline, cell phone and text-to-web sample. Phone numbers stratified into five distinct North Dakota geographical regions to ensure urban/rural balance.
<u>Survey Sponsor:</u>	North Dakota Voters First

Qy: And which way are you likely to cast your ballot?

Vote-by-Mail	40%
Early vote, in-person	15
Day of Election, in-person	37
Not sure yet	9

Q1: Do you think North Dakota is moving in the right direction or is North Dakota off on the wrong track?

Right direction	54%
Wrong track	29
(VOL) Unsure	17

Q2: I'm now going to read you some names of public figures and organizations, for each one, please tell me if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion, and if you never heard of them before, just let me know:

	<u>Favorable</u>	<u>Unfavorable</u>	<u>Neutral (VOL)</u>	<u>Never Heard Of</u>
a: Donald Trump	58%	40	2	0
b: Joe Biden	37	59	3	1
c: Doug Burgum	61	32	4	3
d: Mark Haugen	20	8	29	43
e: Thomas Beadle	16	18	28	39
f: Al Jaeger	47	26	15	12
g: Wayne Stenehjem	59	24	9	8
h: Kirsten Baesler	42	32	13	14
i: Brandt Dick	14	10	26	50
j: North Dakota Legislature	52	35	10	4
k: North Dakota Supreme Court	59	15	22	3
l: Bismarck Tribune	34	22	31	12
m: Fargo Forum	38	32	19	10

Q3: Now let's take a look at a few upcoming elections. If the election was being held today for President of the United States, would you vote for Donald Trump the Republican or Joe Biden the Democrat?

Donald Trump	56%
Joe Biden	37
(VOL) Other candidate	3
(VOL) Undecided	4

Q4: In the election for North Dakota Governor, for whom would you vote: Doug Burgum the Republican candidate, Shelley Lenz the Democrat-NPL candidate or DuWayne Hendrickson the Libertarian candidate?

Doug Burgum	56%
Shelley Lenz	24
DuWayne Hendrickson	6
(VOL) Undecided	14

Q5: In the race for North Dakota State Auditor, for whom would you vote: Josh Gallion the Republican candidate or Patrick Hart the Democrat-NPL candidate?

Josh Gallion	42%
Patrick Hart	26
(VOL) Undecided	32

North Dakotans will also be voting on two constitutional ballot measures, which are at the end of the ballot.

Q6: One constitutional ballot measure on the 2020 ballot is Measure 1. This measure would increase the Board of Higher Education from 8 to 15 members, increase term length from four to six years, and prohibit state employees, officers and legislators from being members of the Board.

If the election was held today, would you vote YES, which means you approve Measure 1, or NO which means you reject Measure 1?

Yes, approve Measure 1	32%
No, reject Measure 1	46
(VOL) Undecided	22

Q7: The other measure on the 2020 ballot is Measure 2. Measure 2 requires an initiated constitution measure approved by voters to be submitted to the subsequent legislative assembly. Under this measure, if the legislative assembly does not approve the constitutional measure, the measure will be placed on the ballot again. If approved by voters again, it will become effective. The measure also requires constitutional amendments to be submitted to voters only at general elections.

If the election was held today, would you vote YES, which means you approve Measure 2, or NO which means you reject Measure 2?

Yes, approve Measure 2	33%
No, reject Measure 2	39
(VOL) Undecided	28

Q8: Based on what you just read/heard about Measure 2, did you find the concept of the measure to be understandable, somewhat understandable or I didn't really understand it?

Understandable	34%
Somewhat understandable	36
I didn't really understand it	24
(VOL) Unsure	6

Q15: You've heard arguments for Measure 2. You've heard arguments against Measure 2. As a quick reminder, Measure 2 would subject citizen passed constitutional ballot measures to a vote of the legislature. If the legislature disapproves, the measure goes back before voters again in the next general election.

If the election was held today, would you vote YES and approve Measure 2, or NO and reject Measure 2.

Yes, approve Measure2	20%
No, reject Measure 2	54
(VOL) Undecided	26