



Spring 4-26-1995

IWU Poll Results

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Recommended Citation

Aaron, Bob, "IWU Poll Results" (1995). *News and Events*. 6170.
<https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/news/6170>

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April 26, 1995

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IWU Poll Results:

**Voters Give Mayor Jesse Smart 52% Approval Rating--
Up 5% from October Poll;
Gov. Jim Edgar Leads the Field with 76% Rating;
57% of Voters Give Thumbs Up to Rep. Tom Ewing;
Dole Beats Clinton in Presidential Match Up;
Clinton Swamps Gingrich in White House Race**

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.--Bloomington Mayor Jesse Smart won a 52 percent approval rating--up from 47 percent last October--from city voters in a poll conducted by IWU students this month.

Gov. Jim Edgar won a whopping 76 percent approval rating in the poll.

At the national level, only 38 percent of Bloomington city voters approve of the way President Bill Clinton and House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) are handling their jobs. Rep. Thomas Ewing (R-Ill.) was given a thumbs up by 57 percent of those responding to the poll.

If the presidential election set for November, 1996, was held now, Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole (R-Kan.) would beat President Clinton 45 percent to 35 percent in Bloomington. Twenty percent of respondents were undecided about this match up.

However, Bloomington voters see the presidential sweepstakes very differently if Clinton was running against Gingrich, with the president trouncing Gingrich 49 percent to 26 percent in Bloomington. Twenty-six percent were undecided about this race.

The poll of 532 voters was taken April 10-11. The survey, stratified by precinct, has an error margin of plus or minus 4.5 percent.

The canvass is the second IWU Bloomington Voters' Survey. The first survey was taken last October on the eve of the 1994 congressional elections. The telephone survey was fashioned and administered by IWU students enrolled in "Parties, Interests, and Elections," a course taught by Tari Renner, associate professor, chair of the political science department, and a veteran pollster.

Locally, 31 percent of Bloomington voters disapproved of the way

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Smart was handling his mayoral responsibilities--the same as in last October's IWU poll. However, this time 17 percent of respondents were undecided about Smart's performance, while last October the figure was 23 percent.

The poll also revealed that 50 percent of respondents believe the pace of Bloomington's physical growth is about right, while 45 percent think it is growing too fast. Only 2 percent opined that the city's growth rate was too slow, while 3 percent were undecided.

On the state level, only 12 percent of poll respondents had a negative view of Gov. Edgar, while 12 percent were undecided.

The poll revealed that 42 percent of Bloomington voters disapprove of the way President Clinton is handling his job, while 19 percent are undecided. It also revealed that 38 percent of respondents dislike Gingrich's approach to serving as Speaker of the House of Representatives, while 24 percent have not made up their minds.

Only 12 percent of canvass respondents had a negative view of Rep. Ewing. However, 31 percent were undecided about the lawmaker's performance.

IWU students drafted the poll's questions, conducted the poll by telephone, and analyzed the results.

Demographically, poll respondents had this profile:

- **Political Inclination**--Forty-four percent viewed themselves as moderates; 36 percent classified themselves as conservatives; and 12 percent said they were liberals.

- **Party Affiliation**--Forty-two percent were Republicans; 34 percent were Independents; and 23 percent were Democrats.

- **Length of Residence**--Seventy-eight percent of respondents have lived in Bloomington more than five years; 14 percent were Bloomington residents between two and five years; and eight percent lived in the city two years or less.

- **Religion**--Fifty-five percent described their religious preference as Protestant; 24 percent were Catholic; 13 percent were unaffiliated; 7 percent were "other;" and 1 percent was Jewish.

- **Age**--Fifty-two percent of respondents were between the ages of 31-50;
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18 percent were 51-65; 18 percent were over 65; 11 percent were 18-30.

- **Education**--Thirty percent of respondents were four-year college graduates; 25 percent had some college; 21 percent were high school graduates; 19 percent held graduate degrees; 4 percent had less than a high school diploma.

- **Income**--Forty-one percent of those responding to the poll had annual family household earnings of more than \$50,000; 31 percent earned \$25,000-\$50,000; 16 percent earned less than \$25,000; and 12 percent offered no response.

- **Gender**--Fifty-seven percent of respondents were women and 43 percent were men.

"Conducting this poll," Renner said, "gives students experience dealing with real issues in a real world setting. The techniques and problems they experienced are the same as market researchers and professional pollsters would experience."

Renner was surprised by how unpopular Speaker Gingrich is in Bloomington. "Gingrich really did poorly in a head-to-head race with President Clinton," Renner observed. He also noted that Clinton has rebounded somewhat from the numbers he posted last October, when 48 percent of Bloomington voters disapproved of the president's performance, compared to 42 percent now. Looking at local politics, Renner pointed out that Mayor Smart has improved his popularity by 5 percent in six months.

Renner, who joined the IWU faculty last fall, was a member of the political science faculty at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh since 1988. Among courses he taught at Duquesne were American government, American political parties, budgetary process, state and local government, urban public policy, research methods, and elections and voting behavior.

He also has taught political science at Washington College in Chestertown, Md., and at American University in Washington, D.C.

From 1986-88, Renner was Director of Survey Research-Senior Statistical Analyst at the International City Management Association in Washington, D.C. He also served for two years as a management analyst with

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the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in Washington, D.C.

Since 1988, Renner has developed and supervised more than 20 public policy and public opinion surveys, including a 1992 statewide Pennsylvania canvass for the presidential election and a 1991 survey of Allegheny County, Pa., for a U.S. Senate election. Other surveys conducted by Renner have focused on the salaries of city and county officials; municipal labor-management relations; finances of police, fire, and refuse collection; and local government personnel practices.

He is the author of 14 publications and has delivered more than 15 papers at various professional conferences on subjects ranging from competition in congressional primary elections to structural diversity in the formal authority of mayors and city managers.

Renner is a member of the American Political Science Association, Midwestern Political Science Association, Urban Affairs Association, and other professional groups.

He earned a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of South Florida, and a master's degree and doctorate from the School of Government and Public Administration at American University.

IWU, founded in 1850, enrolls about 1,800 students in a College of Liberal Arts, College of Fine Arts, and a four-year professional School of Nursing. In recent years, the university's endowment has grown to more than \$90 million; a \$15 million athletics and recreation center opened in the fall of 1994; and a \$24 million science building will open in 1995. The Carnegie Commission for the Advancement of Teaching promoted Illinois Wesleyan to a "Baccalaureate I" institution in 1994, a classification that places it among 164 highly selective National Liberal Arts Colleges in the annual *U.S. News & World Report* rankings. *Barron's Profiles of American Colleges*, another respected college guide, rated IWU "highly competitive (+)" in its latest edition. *101 of the Best Values in America's Colleges and Universities* calls IWU "undoubtedly one of the finest small colleges in the country," adding, "Illinois Wesleyan has surged to national prominence on the basis of its reputation as a school with a rock-solid academic program."

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Editor's Note: Inquiries about the poll--including its administration and analysis--should be directed to Tari Renner, associate professor and chair of political science, at 309/556-3039 (work) or 309/828-0791 (home).

Additional polling breakdowns are attached to this news release: Newt Gingrich's Approval Rating, President Clinton's Approval Rating; Presidential Trial Heat--Clinton vs. Dole; Presidential Trial Heat--Clinton vs. Gingrich; Mayor Jesse Smart's Approval Rating.