

2014 LOUISIANA SURVEY



October 2014

UNO Survey Research Center

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Special thanks to Dr. Susan Howell and Dr. Walter Lane and to the students in Dr. Chervenak's POLI 4601 and POLI 4621 classes, Ms. Dumas' POLI 2900 class, Ms. Ballard's POLI 2600 class, Mr. Jacob's POLI 2700 class and Mr. Licciardi's POLI 2151 class

The University of New Orleans' Survey Research Center (SRC) conducted a statewide telephone poll of 590 registered voters in Louisiana. Interviews were conducted from October 11 to October 24, 2014. The overall survey has a margin of error +/- 4.1 percentage points. The response rate for the survey was 9 percent, which is in the range of what national survey organizations have reported.

This analysis covers three topics. First, we asked registered voters questions about their perceptions of the state of the state. Second, we explored for what the public has to say about health care policy. In the final section we probed for the preferences of likely voters in the Senate primary and in a potential runoff.

Summary:

- A majority of registered voters say Louisiana is headed in the wrong direction.
- The biggest problems in the state are education and the economy.
- Evaluations of the national economy are negative while most people are ambiguous about the state's economy.
- A majority of respondents express disapproval of both President Obama and Governor Jindal.
- Six-in-ten registered voters say the state should accept the Medicaid dollars from the federal government.
- Half of respondents express strong opposition to the Affordable Care Act.
- Perceptions of the Affordable Care Act improve after respondents learn details of the plan.
- Mary Landrieu is favored by likely voters in the primary.
- Bill Cassidy is favored by likely voters in a potential runoff.
- One in five likely voters is undecided in the primary election.
- One-quarter of Republican likely voters are undecided in the primary election.
- Attitudes toward President Obama and the Affordable Care Act (ACA) are influencing voter preference.

STATE OF THE STATE

Right Direction or Wrong Direction in Louisiana

	Total	Whites	Blacks	Females	Males	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Right Direction	33	36	27	30	38	29	37	36
Wrong Direction	52	49	56	53	50	55	49	50
DK	15	15	17	17	13	16	14	14
(N)	590	373	171	324	266	192	162	183

Respondents were disapproving when asked about the direction of the state with a majority of them reporting that the state was moving in the wrong direction. This sentiment was expressed across the board. **People were unhappy with the direction of the state regardless of their race, gender, or party identification.**

Respondents were asked to provide a ‘free response’ as to what they thought was the biggest problem facing the state. Education and economic issues were virtually tied as Louisiana’s biggest concerns. Combining Education and Common Core totals 21% and combining Unemployment, Economy, Finances, and Lack of Industry/Business totals 20%. Other notable mentions as to the biggest problem facing the state were crime, Governor Jindal, and healthcare.

Biggest Problem Facing Louisiana

Education	19%	Streets	3%
Unemployment	11%	Taxes	2%
Crime	8%	Common Core	2%
Don't Know	8%	Coastal Erosion	2%
Governor Jindal	7%	Senator Landrieu	2%
Health Care	7%	President Obama	2%
Politics	6%	Government	2%
Finances	4%	Lack of Industry/Business	2%
Economy	3%	No Problems	2%

Rating National Economy Over the Past Year

	Total	Whites	Blacks	Females	Males	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Better	27	19	45	25	29	43	26	10
Stayed the Same	27	22	35	28	25	31	23	26
Worse	44	58	18	45	44	22	50	63
DK	2	1	2	2	2	4	1	0
(N)	590	373	170	325	265	192	162	183

Rating Louisiana Economy Over the Past Year

	Total	Whites	Blacks	Females	Males	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Better	28	27	28	24	33	33	29	21
Stayed the Same	44	48	39	43	46	40	44	51
Worse	25	22	31	30	18	26	23	25
DK	3	3	2	4	3	1	4	3
(N)	590	373	170	324	266	191	162	183

Respondents were generally pessimistic about the state of the national economy.

However, there were differences by race and by party. Whites were extremely pessimistic about the national economy while blacks were generally positive. Democrats were also more positive while both Independents and Republicans were far more negative in their evaluations.

As for the state's economy, most people thought it had stayed the same over the past year. Equal percentages thought it had either improved or worsened. Blacks were more pessimistic than whites and women were more negative than men. One interesting note was that, even with a Republican governor, Republicans were less optimistic about Louisiana's economy than Democrats.

President Obama Approval Rating

	Total	Whites	Blacks	Females	Males	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Strongly Approve	27	12	62	30	23	56	23	2
Approve	11	6	20	11	11	18	12	3
Disapprove	9	11	5	8	11	7	11	8
Strongly Disapprove	48	67	6	44	52	13	47	85
DK	5	4	6	7	3	6	7	2
(N)	590	373	172	324	266	191	162	183

Governor Jindal Approval Rating

	Total	Whites	Blacks	Females	Males	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Strongly Approve	19	25	6	15	22	6	16	34
Approve	21	24	11	22	19	12	25	26
Disapprove	14	12	19	14	14	14	15	13
Strongly Disapprove	39	28	61	41	36	65	35	16
DK	8	11	3	7	9	3	9	10
(N)	590	372	171	324	267	191	162	183

The poll indicates that the President Obama has a 38% job approval rating in Louisiana. There were, however, huge racial and partisan divides when evaluating the president. Disapproval of Obama among white voters was unusually intense with two-thirds of them strongly disapproving of his job performance. That intensity was countered by the strong approval expressed for Obama by African-Americans. Party identification also influenced evaluations of Obama. Large numbers of Republicans were strongly disapproving while a robust majority of Democrats strongly approved of the president. Independents also exhibited a degree of intensity in their assessment of the president. They were twice as likely to strongly disapprove of Obama as they were to strongly approve of him.

Governor Jindal's job approval rating was not much better than the president's. His overall approval rating was 40%. Not only did a majority of

respondents disapprove of Jindal, 39% reported they strongly disapproved of him. Whites tended to be more supportive of the governor while a large majority of African-Americans were strongly disapproving. Two-thirds of Democrats were down on Jindal while one-third of Republicans reported strong support for his job performance. As for the Independents, they were more negative than positive in their appraisal of the governor.

HEALTHCARE IN LOUISIANA

Should State Accept or Decline Federal Medicaid Dollars

	Total	Whites	Blacks	Females	Males	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Accept	62	49	94	69	54	87	64	35
Decline	27	37	3	22	31	6	25	46
DK	12	15	3	10	16	7	11	19
(N)	590	374	171	324	266	193	162	184

Since the Affordable Care Act (ACA), also known as Obamacare, has been a central issue in Louisiana’s Senate campaign, we decided to poll registered voters about health care policy. One issue in the health care debate is whether the state should expand Medicaid, using federal money, to provide health care coverage to low-income residents. Governor Jindal has already refused to expand Medicaid and accept the federal dollars that go with it. Respondents were asked whether the state should accept or decline the federal dollars **and by a two-to-one margin they said that the state should accept the Medicaid dollars.** Only Republicans favored refusing the Medicaid funds.

Favor or Oppose the Affordable Care Act

	Total	Whites	Blacks	Females	Males	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Strongly Favor	27	12	59	29	24	55	25	1
Favor	9	6	16	7	12	15	12	1
Oppose	7	6	8	9	5	4	7	9
Strongly Oppose	49	69	9	47	52	17	48	85
DK	8	6	8	9	7	10	9	4
(N)	590	373	171	325	265	193	162	183

While Louisiana residents were fully supportive of expanding Medicaid it was quite different story when it came to the Affordable Care Act (ACA). **Fully one-half of all respondents were strongly opposed to the president’s health care reform plan.** The only sub-groups favorably disposed toward the ACA were African-Americans and Democrats. Independents were twice as likely to strongly oppose as strongly favor the ACA while Republicans were nearly unanimous in their opposition to the policy.

While a majority of registered voters in Louisiana said they opposed Obama's plan, our poll found that respondents actually supported several of the key features of the plan. They were asked whether they favored or opposed seven provisions that are contained in the ACA. **A majority of respondents supported three of those provisions by particularly large margins.** Three-fourths agreed with the creation of an insurance marketplace for individuals to compare plans and purchase health insurance at a competitive rate. Seventy-six percent thought health insurers should be required to cover anyone who applies, including those with preexisting conditions. Nearly 60% favored requiring that all Americans have health insurance, with the government providing financial help to those who can't afford it.

The provisions regarding fines and taxes were not as popular. Imposing a fine on individuals who do not purchase health insurance was the least popular provision, favored by only 25% and opposed by 68%. More people opposed than favored taxing the most expensive health care plans. Respondents were split on whether fines should be imposed on larger businesses that do not offer a health care plan.

Favor or Oppose Provisions in the Affordable Care Act

	Favor	Oppose	Undecided
	%	%	%
Creation of health insurance marketplace	76	17	7
Requiring health insurance companies to cover anyone, even if they have a pre-existing medical condition.	76	20	4
Requiring that all Americans have health insurance, with the government providing financial help to those who can't afford it.	57	37	6
Preventing insurance companies from dropping coverage when people are sick.	40	57	3
Taxing insurance companies who offer the most expensive health plans to help pay for health care reform.	41	44	15
Requiring health care coverage for everyone and imposing fines on individuals who don't obtain coverage.	25	68	7
Requiring health care coverage for everyone and imposing fines on larger businesses that don't offer it.	47	46	7

Favor or Oppose the Affordable Care Act (Post-Provisions)

	Total	Whites	Blacks	Females	Males	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Strongly Favor	30	15	62	32	27	58	32	4
Favor	14	11	22	15	14	17	17	7
Oppose	11	15	3	11	12	5	9	19
Strongly Oppose	38	53	5	34	42	10	35	68
DK	7	6	8	8	5	9	7	3
(N)	590	373	170	324	267	192	162	183

Change in Favor or Opposition to the Affordable Care Act

	Total	Whites	Blacks	Females	Males	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Strongly Favor	3	3	3	3	3	3	7	3
Favor	5	5	6	8	2	2	5	6
Oppose	4	9	-5	2	7	1	2	10
Strongly Oppose	-11	-16	-4	-13	-10	-7	-13	-17
DK	-1	0	0	-1	-2	-1	-2	-1

After being exposed to specific provisions of the Affordable Care Act, all groups of respondents became less opposed and more favorable toward it. The shift was noticeable among women as their support moved up from 36 to 47 percent. The numbers also moved in a more favorable direction among Independents. Even among Republicans, strong opposition declined from 85 to 68 percent.

These results suggest two things. One is the notion that people are unaware of what is contained in the ACA. Opposition to the ACA appears to be a visceral reaction against the actors, primarily the president, and the politics behind the policy. Second, Democrats have not done a good job of selling the health care plan while their opponents have been successful in framing the debate. The results from this poll indicate that the more people know about the legislation, the more likely they are to support major components of it. Once people are exposed to the details of the policy, they tend to be more supportive of or less oppositional to the overall plan.

Did You Try to Purchase Health Insurance Plan from a Health Insurance Marketplace?

	Total	Whites	Blacks	Females	Males	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	16	16	19	15	18	18	15	12
No	80	81	77	80	79	77	83	85
DK	4	3	4	5	3	5	2	3
(N)	590	374	171	324	266	192	163	182

Evaluation of Health Insurance Marketplace Website?

	Total	Whites	Blacks	Females	Males	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very Positive	7	10	6	6	9	6	12	9
Positive	46	33	64	49	43	63	44	27
Negative	14	14	15	20	6	11	12	18
Very Negative	22	29	3	18	26	11	20	32
DK	11	14	12	6	17	9	12	14
(N)	96	58	33	49	47	35	25	22

Finally, we asked respondents whether they tried to use a health insurance marketplace to purchase a plan. Only 16% reported trying to use a marketplace. When asked to rate their experience with the marketplace website, a majority gave it positive marks. African-Americans and Democrats rated their experience positively while whites and Republicans were more negative.

VOTE FOR THE SENATE

This section examines the preferences of likely voters in the Senate primary in November and in a potential runoff in December. While we polled registered voters in the state, in the final analysis not all registered voters will actually vote. To isolate likely voters we used the respondent's actual voting history contained in the voter files in our sample.

Respondents were coded as likely voters if they voted in the November 2010 and the November 2012 elections.¹ Using the respondent's actual voting record is a much

¹ For the purposes of this analysis anyone who voted in one of the two federal

more precise way of determining who a likely voter is compared to trying to define whether someone is a likely voter by asking them a series of questions about their interest in the election and their recall of their past voting history.

We examined likely voter preference for the eight candidates running for the Senate in the November primary. Interviewers then asked respondents who they would vote for if there was a runoff election in December between the Democratic incumbent Mary Landrieu and the Republican challenger, Bill Cassidy.

Vote for Senate in November Primary (Likely Voters)

	Total	Whites	Blacks	Females	Males
	%	%	%	%	%
Cassidy	33	44	3	34	32
Landrieu	38	21	87	39	38
Maness	7	10	0	6	9
Other	1	1	0	1	1
Undecided	21	24	10	20	21
(N)	292	206	71	167	127

Vote for Senate in December Runoff (Likely Voters)

	Total	White	Black	Females	Males
	%	%	%	%	%
Cassidy	51	69	1	50	52
Landrieu	43	23	96	44	41
Neither	2	3	0	2	2
Undecided	4	5	3	4	6
(N)	292	206	71	166	126

The race for the U.S. Senate seat in Louisiana is basically a contest between the Democratic incumbent Mary Landrieu and her Republican challenger Bill Cassidy as they were separated by only five percentage points in a cross-section of the state’s likely voters. Republican Rob Maness came in a distant third. One in five likely voters was undecided on who they prefer in the primary. As expected, Landrieu held a commanding lead among African American voters, and Cassidy was favored by a plurality of white voters. As is often the case, the outcome will

elections was categorized as an ‘occasional’ voter.

hinge on a combination of African American turnout and the percent of the white vote Landrieu is able to obtain.

While Landrieu leads in the primary vote, she was behind when it comes down to a potential runoff between her and Cassidy. Cassidy enjoyed a large measure of support from whites while blacks were almost universally behind Landrieu. There was no real gender gap in vote choice in the runoff with both men and women in the Cassidy camp. Also, while there was a sizeable undecided vote in the primary, the percentage saying they were undecided in the runoff was much smaller. Almost everyone expressed a preference when they were asked to choose between voting for Landrieu or Cassidy in a potential runoff.

Vote for Senate in November Primary by Party Identification (Likely Voters)

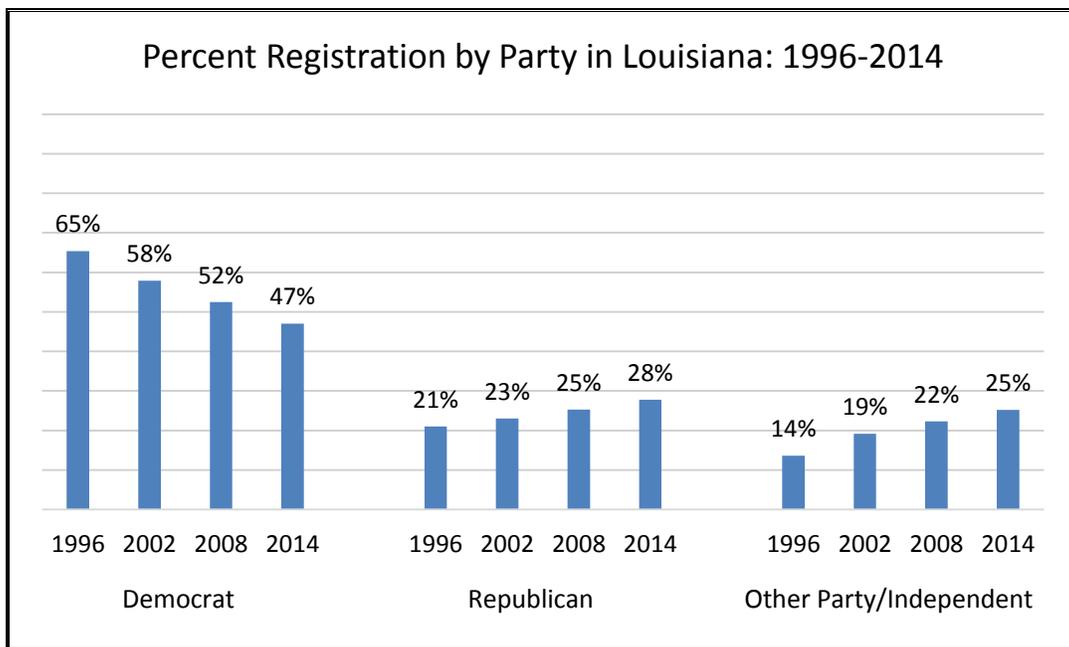
	Democrat	Independent	Republican
	%	%	%
Cassidy	8	24	62
Landrieu	75	43	3
Maness	1	13	8
Other	0	2	2
Undecided	16	19	26
(N)	96	75	105

Vote for Senate in December Runoff by Party Identification (Likely Voters)

	Democrat	Independent	Republican
	%	%	%
Cassidy	13	50	89
Landrieu	82	43	4
Neither	1	0	3
Undecided	4	7	5
(N)	96	76	104

As we can see, the runoff is characterized as a partisan contest with voting along party lines and Independents relatively split. Republicans, however, tend to express a greater level of support for Cassidy than Democrats do for Landrieu.

There are both long-term and short-term forces working in favor of the Republican candidates in this particular election. The long term force is the decline in Democratic identification in Louisiana, particularly among white voters. **Two-thirds of registered voters were registered as Democrats when Landrieu was first elected Senator. Today, less than half of all registered voters are Democrats.** The decline of Democratic registration in Louisiana is due to the large-scale defection of whites from the Democratic Party. In 1996, 58% of whites were registered Democrats. The most recent registration data reveals that 33% of whites were registered with the Democratic Party. Louisiana has been losing Democratic identifiers throughout Mary Landrieu’s term of office.



Source: Louisiana Secretary of State Voter Registration Files

The short term force working against Landrieu is the disapproval of President Barack Obama. This survey and several previous state polls indicate that the president is unpopular in Louisiana. Landrieu faces the unfortunate situation of being a Democrat who is up for re-election in an off-year election cycle where the Democrat in the White House is held in low regard in Louisiana.

Vote for Senate in November Primary by Approval of the President (Likely Voters)

	Strongly Approve of Obama	Approve of Obama	Disapprove of Obama	Strongly Disapprove of Obama
	%	%	%	%
Cassidy	4	9	33	54
Landrieu	84	74	33	8
Maness	3	0	6	11
Other	0	0	0	1
Undecided	9	17	28	25
(N)	76	23	18	159

Attitudes toward the president appear to be influencing vote choice. Over 8 in 10 people who strongly approved of Obama preferred Landrieu. Those who strongly disapproved of the president were most likely to support to Cassidy, with Maness picking up 11% of the anti-Obama vote.

The potential runoff in December shows voters coalescing into pro-Obama and anti-Obama clusters. Those who were disapproving of the president’s job performance were largely in the Cassidy camp, while those favorably disposed toward the president almost universally backed Mary Landrieu.

Vote for Senate in December Runoff by Approval of the President (Likely Voters)

	Strongly Approve of Obama	Approve of Obama	Disapprove of Obama	Strongly Disapprove of Obama
	%	%	%	%
Cassidy	7	9	44	84
Landrieu	89	83	39	10
Neither	1	9	6	3
Undecided	3	0	11	4
(N)	75	23	18	159

Ratings of the economy can also influence whom to vote for in an election. Those who rated the national economy poorly leaned toward voting for Cassidy. Rob Maness also picked up some support among those who were unhappy with the nation’s economy. One quarter of those who said the economy had worsened was

undecided as to whom to support. Conversely, Senator Landrieu received the bulk of the vote from those who perceived the economy as improving.

Likely voters sorted themselves into clusters in the runoff election. The respondents who reported that the economy did not do well were solidly in the Cassidy column. The people who rated the economy positively preferred the incumbent Senator by a large margin.

Vote for Senate in November Primary by Perception of the National Economy (Likely Voters)

	Economy Got Better	Economy Stayed the Same	Economy Got Worse
	%	%	%
Cassidy	11	30	48
Landrieu	75	49	11
Maness	1	1	15
Other	0	3	1
Undecided	13	18	26
(N)	80	74	136

Vote for Senate in December Runoff by Perception of the National Economy (Likely Voters)

	Economy Got Better	Economy Stayed the Same	Economy Got Worse
	%	%	%
Cassidy	16	38	78
Landrieu	80	53	14
Neither	0	3	4
Undecided	4	6	4
(N)	80	73	136

Issues other than the economy can be determinative when deciding whom to vote for. The dominant issue in this campaign has been the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Bill Cassidy’s campaign and outside groups have made every effort to tie Senator Landrieu to the unfavorably perceived ACA. That strategy may be paying dividends. **People were more likely to oppose the ACA than support it and the opposition**

was strongly inclined toward Cassidy. While 9 in 10 of those who approved of the ACA support Landrieu, they were only half the size of those who were opposed to it.

The influence of the ACA one one's vote choice hardens in the runoff. Those who strongly objected to the health care plan were firmly behind Cassidy while 90% of those who strongly endorsed the health care plan supported Landrieu.

Vote for Senate in November Primary by Perception of the Affordable Care Act (Likely Voters)

	Strongly Approve	Approve	Disapprove	Strongly Disapprove
	%	%	%	%
Cassidy	4	4	44	54
Landrieu	89	78	25	8
Maness	0	0	13	12
Other	0	0	0	2
Undecided	8	17	19	24
(N)	78	23	16	155

Vote for Senate in December Runoff by Perception of the Affordable Care Act (Likely Voters)

	Strongly Approve	Approve	Disapprove	Strongly Disapprove
	%	%	%	%
Cassidy	4	13	53	85
Landrieu	94	83	35	9
Neither	1	0	6	3
Undecided	1	4	6	3
(N)	78	23	17	155

TABLE 13: SAMPLE INFORMATION, 2014

	LOUISIANA
White	64%
Black	31
Other	5
Male	44%
Female	56
Median Age	45
<i>Number of Respondents, N</i>	590
Sampling Error	+/- 4.1%
Dates of Interviewing	October 11-24, 2014