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Vanderbilt Poll: Tennessee Senate race a toss-up; GOP's Lee in lead for governor

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NASHVILLE, Tenn.—A new horse-race poll from Vanderbilt University suggests a dead heat between Tennessee's U.S. Senate candidates, Rep. Marsha Blackburn (R) and former Gov. Phil Bredesen (D), who leads Blackburn by 1 percent. In the gubernatorial race, businessman Bill Lee (R) leads former Nashville Gov. Karl Dean (D) by 11 percent. President Trump remains popular in the state, with 55 percent approving of his job performance.

The statewide survey of 800 likely voters was conducted Oct. 8-13 via landline and cell phone. The margin of error is ± 4.9 . **Full topline results and methodology are available by request and will become publicly available at vu.edu/poll soon.**

"The bottom line is that Tennessee's Senate race will be determined by which candidate is better able to turn out their base, as well as any national waves that occur—blue or otherwise," said [John Geer](#), Gertrude Conaway Vanderbilt Professor of Political Science, who co-directs the Vanderbilt Poll with [Josh Clinton](#), Abby and Jon Winkelried Professor of Political Science.

Bredesen popular among women, some Republicans

When asked who they would vote for if the election were held that day, 43 percent of voters said they would vote for Blackburn, while 44 percent would vote for Bredesen.

Women prefer Bredesen 49-37, while men prefer Blackburn 50-37. Women vote at a higher rate than men, giving Bredesen his narrow lead in the poll.

Bredesen is also more popular among Republicans than Blackburn is among Democrats—13 percent of Republicans say they plan to vote for him, while just 5 percent of Democrats say they prefer Blackburn. Independent voters are evenly split.

"Our poll results show that this race is still very much a toss-up," Clinton said. "Eight percent of voters are still undecided, and depending on who those voters choose, and who turns out to vote, this race could easily go either way."

Undecideds high in governor's race

For governor, 48 percent said they would choose Lee and 37 percent said they would choose Dean. However, the percentage of undecideds in the governor's race is still

high, 12 percent, suggesting that there could be a lot of movement between the candidates between now and Election Day.

Neither gubernatorial candidate seems to be attracting many votes from the other party. Independents, who were highly favorable about Dean when the field was more crowded in May, now gravitate toward Lee 46 percent to 35 percent.

Women are evenly split on the two candidates. Men prefer Lee 56 percent to 31 percent.

“Lee is in control now, but Dean could cut into his lead and make it much closer in the final days, especially if his base turns out,” said Geer.

About the Vanderbilt Poll

The Vanderbilt Poll is supported by the [Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions](#) at Vanderbilt University. The statewide poll is typically conducted just before the start of each legislative session and at the end of each session, in part to determine how closely the results of the session align with voters’ expectations and priorities. CSDI also conducts a yearly Nashville poll, as well as additional special polls. In 2015, the Vanderbilt Poll became a charter member of the [American Association for Public Opinion Research’s Transparency Initiative](#).

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