

Minnesota Public Radio News and Humphrey Institute Poll

Dayton and Emmer Deadlocked

Report prepared by the Center for the Study of Politics and Governance
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As the general election campaign for Governor enters the symbolic starting point of Labor Day, the Democratic candidate Mark Dayton is deadlocked with the Republican candidate Tom Emmer, 34% for Dayton compared to 34% for Emmer. The Independence Party candidate Tom Horner is drawing 13% support.

Dayton and Emmer Deadlocked in General Election Matchup

	Dayton	Emmer	Horner	DK / Refused/Other
All Minnesotans	34%	34%	13%	19%

Some key findings:

- The toss-up results from the uncertainty of a fifth of likely voters who are undecided, defections of both Democrats and Republicans from their party's standard bearer, and splits among key voting groups.
- Neither President Barack Obama nor Governor Tim Pawlenty is exerting decisive influence on the race early on.
- Tom Horner is running a distant third place, apparently stalled in low double-digits. But the race is wide open and voters may be waiting to learn more about Horner.

The survey was conducted of 750 likely voters in Minnesota between August 25 and 29, 2010. The margin of error ranges between +/-3.6 percentage points based on the conventional calculation and +/-5.3 percentage points, which is a more cautious estimate based on professional best practices. For smaller subgroups the margin of sampling error

is larger. The section at the end of this report, “About the Survey,” discusses the statistical calculations for the margin of sampling error and how to interpret it.

Explanations for Deadlock

1. Partisan Defections

A third of partisan are defecting from the nominees of the Democratic and Republican parties, draining each of a usually large and reliable base of support. Horner is drawing a bit more Democrats than Republicans but is not yet attracting the kind of support he anticipated from his former party.

Dayton and Emmer Close in General Election Matchup

	Dayton	Emmer	Horner	DK / Refused/Other
Republican (46%)	8%	66%	9%	17%
Independent (13%)	23%	13%	26%	38%
Democrat (41%)	65%	5%	15%	16%

2. Dueling Backlashes

Both Dayton and Emmer are suffering from voter backlashes. Likely voters who are dissatisfied with the national direction, which is currently in the hands of Obama and congressional Democrats, are breaking by a 44% to 23% margin for Emmer rather than Dayton. By contrast, voters worried that Minnesota is heading off on the wrong track are breaking for Dayton 39% to 30%, presumably on the grounds that Governor Pawlenty is the State’s chief executive and responsible for its well-being.

Dueling Backlashes against bad news

	Dayton	Emmer	Horner	DK / Refused/Other
US in right direction (29%)	52%	15%	15%	18%
US on wrong track (64%)	23	44	14	19
Mn in right direction (35%)	27	41	14	18
Mn on wrong track (53%)	39	30	14	18

(Percentages here and elsewhere may not sum to 100% owing to rounding or to the omission of respondents who did not answer as in the case of right direction/wrong track questions.)

Pawlenty and Obama are hurting their party’s candidates. The 45% of likely voters who disapprove of Pawlenty’s job performance are decidedly breaking for Dayton (58% to

Emmer's 6%). The 52% who criticize Obama's performance markedly favor Emmer (56% to Dayton's 16%).

Referendums on Obama and Pawlenty

	Dayton	Emmer	Horner	DK / Refused/Other
Approval of Pawlenty (46%)	13%	62%	11%	15%
Disapproval of Pawlenty (45%)	58	6	15	21
Approval of Obama (42%)	56	8	17	19
Disapproval of Obama (52%)	16	56	12	16

Not surprising, the prospect of Obama endorsing Dayton produces a plurality of 44% who say they are less likely to support Dayton. Thirty-nine percent report that they are less likely to support Emmer because Pawlenty has endorsed him. Put simply, two of the most visible politicians in the parties exert no coattails and may actually drive away support.

	More likely to support Emmer	Less likely to support Emmer	More likely to support Dayton	Less likely to support Dayton	Neither/DK / Refused
Pawlenty endorsement of Emmer	25%	39%			36%
Obama endorsement of Dayton			30%	44%	27%

3. Divided Minnesota

Minnesota’s deadlocked gubernatorial race masks a large divide within the state. One of the sharpest splits is by income. Likely voters making more than \$50,000 per year are decidedly breaking for Emmer by a 40% to 29% margin while the less affluent are siding by similarly lopsided margins for Dayton (44% to 21%).

Class War

	Dayton	Emmer	Horner	DK / Refused/Other
Less than \$50,000	44%	21%	15%	20%
More than \$50,000	29	40	14	18

The class divide is mirrored by differences among education groups. The more educated favor Emmer while those with less than a college education prefer Dayton.

Democrats often rely on the lopsided support of women to win elections. Early in the 2010 gubernatorial race, there is not a particularly significant gender gap with 22% of women not yet signing up with a candidate.

Gender Gap? Not Clear Yet

	Dayton	Emmer	Horner	DK / Refused/Other
Men	30	37	17	16
Women	37	30	11	22

Campaign wide open

The general election for governor is wide open for all three candidates. A fifth of likely voters have not made up their minds. In addition, more than half (53%) are not very interested in the race yet. Finally, voters have not yet formed decisive views about the candidates and their personality traits – they enjoy equal ratings for leadership and Dayton is recognized for having more experience but few other sharp differences are evident early on.

Tom Horner has not yet capitalized on his GOP roots to lure substantial Republican support. Yet, there is ample room for him to build support.

About the Survey

This survey is a collaboration between Minnesota Public Radio News and the Center for the Study of Politics and Governance at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs. The survey was analyzed by the Center. The research team was Lawrence R. Jacobs (Center Director) and Joanne M. Miller (Associate Professor, Department of Political Science). Charles Gregory provided research assistance.

The survey was fielded by the Information Specialists Group (ISG) and is based on a landline random digit dial survey in Minnesota. ISG called a sample of telephone exchanges that was randomly selected by a computer from a list of active residential exchanges within Minnesota. Within each exchange, random digits were added to form a complete telephone number, thus permitting access to both listed and unlisted numbers. Within each household, one adult was selected to be the respondent for the survey.

As is common with public opinion surveys, the data were weighted. In the first stage, the data were weighted based on the number of potential survey respondents and the number of landline telephone numbers in the household. In the second stage, data were weighted according to cell phone usage, as well as gender, age, race, and Hispanic ethnicity to approximate the demographic characteristics of the population according to the Census.

Results are based on a model that accounts for the likelihood of a respondent voting based on the following factors: self-reported probability of voting in the upcoming election, voting in the 2006 gubernatorial election as reported by the respondent, interest in the 2010 election, and whether the respondent reported being registered to vote. The model estimates a turnout of 59%, which we expect to increase during the fall as the campaign heats up and interest in the election increases.

The key characteristics of the sample's likely voters in Minnesota are the following:

	Likely Voters
Republican	46%
Independent	13%
Democrat	41%
Men	49%
Women	52%
18-40	26%
41-50	24%
51-63	25%
64 and older	25%

(Percentages here and above may round to higher than 100% due to rounding.)

750 likely voters living in Minnesota were interviewed by telephone between August 25 and 29, 2010. The margin of error ranges between +/-3.6 percentage points based on the conventional calculation and +/-5.3 percentage points, which is a more cautious estimate that takes into account design effects, in accordance with professional best practices. The conventional calculation of the margin of sampling error is primarily based on the number of respondents and, critically, assumes that all respondents selected for interviewing were actually reached. No public opinion survey successfully contacts the entire sample and therefore the professional best practice is to adjust for the actual response rate and for other design effects, producing a higher margin of sampling error. In this report, we use the conventional calculation to determine the minimal level of significance and the more cautious calculation to reach a higher level of confidence in the results.

Using the design-effect calculation of the margin of sample error, in 19 cases out of 20 the results among Minneapolis voters will differ (in theory) by no more than +/-5.3 percentage points in either direction from what would have been obtained by interviewing all likely voters in the election. The response rate is 26 percent (based on AAPOR response rate calculation 4).

The results of properly conducted scientific surveys of candidate support estimate the most probable relative positions at the time of the interviewing. The margin of error indicates a range of support with unequal probabilities of accuracy. For example, assume a poll reports that Candidate A received 55% and Candidate B received 45% of support with a margin of error of +/-5 percentage points. Based on normal sampling distribution, the 55% to 45% result is the best or most probable standing at the time of the survey. Taking into account the margin of sampling error, however, we can estimate the lower boundary of support for Candidate A as 50% and the upper boundary of support for Candidate B as 50%. These results are possible but are less probable.

In addition to sampling error, the practical difficulties of conducting any survey of public opinion may introduce sources of error into the poll. Variations in the wording and order of questions, for example, may lead to somewhat different results.

This survey invested considerable resources in a set of procedures to reduce distortions. The sample of interviewees was drawn using comprehensive lists of phone exchanges. In addition, the interviewers were carefully trained and monitored to maintain consistency in implementing the questionnaire. Further, several steps were used to capture as much of the sample as possible including call backs to numbers when no one appeared to be at home or when the initial request to conduct the interview was not accepted.

Questions

Suppose that the election for Governor of Minnesota were being held today. Would you vote for:

- 1 Republican Tom Emmer
- 2 Democrat Mark Dayton
- 3 Independence Party candidate Tom Horner
- 4 Other (SPECIFY) (VOL)
- 5 Won't vote in race (vol)
- 8 Don't Know (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

Generally speaking, would you say things in Minnesota are heading in the right direction, or are they off on the wrong track?

- 1 Right Direction
- 2 Wrong Track
- 8 Don't Know (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

Generally speaking, would you say things in this country are heading in the right direction, or are they off on the wrong track?

- 1 Right Direction
- 2 Wrong Track
- 8 Don't Know (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Tim Pawlenty is handling his job as governor?

- 1 Approve
- 2 Disapprove
- 8 Don't Know (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as President?

- 1 Approve
- 2 Disapprove
- 8 Don't Know (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

Governor Tim Pawlenty endorsed Tom Emmer for Governor. Does that make you more likely to vote for Emmer or less likely to vote for him?

- 1 More likely
- 2 Less Likely
- 3 Neither (vol)
- 8 Don't know (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

26. If President Barack Obama endorsed Mark Dayton for Governor, would that make you more likely to vote for Dayton or less likely to vote for him?

- 1 More likely
- 2 Less Likely
- 3 Neither (vol)
- 8 Don't know (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)