



October 9, 2017

Northam leads Gillespie by 7% in race for governor; Democrats Fairfax and Herring also lead down ballot

Summary of Key Findings

1. For Governor, Democrat Ralph Northam leads Republican Ed Gillespie, 49%-42%.
2. For Lieutenant Governor, Democrat Justin Fairfax leads Republican Jill Vogel, 48%-40%.
3. For Attorney General, Democrat Mark Herring leads Republican John Adams, 51%-40%.
4. Changes since the last survey favor all three Democrats, but only Herring, the incumbent Attorney General, has crossed the 50% mark.
5. Crime and gang-related crime don't appear to move most Gillespie or Northam voters, but far more Gillespie voters are concerned about illegal immigration.

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Analysis

With barely a month to go before Virginians choose their next governor, lieutenant governor, and attorney general, all three Democratic candidates maintain statistically significant leads over their Republican rivals, according to a Wason Center survey of likely voters. At the top of the ticket, current Democratic Lieutenant Governor Ralph Northam leads former Republican National Committee Chair Ed Gillespie, 49% to 42%, with Libertarian Cliff Hyra taking 3% of the vote and another 6% still undecided.

Democrat Justin Fairfax, a former federal prosecutor, leads Republican state Senator Jill Vogel in the Lieutenant Governor's race, 48% to 40%, while current Democratic Attorney General Mark Herring breaks the 50% mark in leading former federal prosecutor and White House aide John Adams, 51% to 40%. In a generic House of Delegates test ballot, Democratic candidates lead Republican candidates, 49% to 38%.

The Wason Center surveyed 928 registered voters, including 616 who were determined to be likely voters, October 2-6. The margin of error for the likely voter model is +/- 4.3% at the 95% level of confidence. Likely voters are registered voters with a history of voting in recent statewide elections, who also say they definitely or probably will vote in the upcoming election.

In the Wason Center's benchmark poll in this election, released September 25, Northam led Gillespie, 47% to 41%, and Fairfax and Herring similarly led Vogel and Adams.

"The movement we see in this tracking poll runs in the Democrats' favor, and all three continue to hold their advantage," said Quentin Kidd, director of the Wason Center.

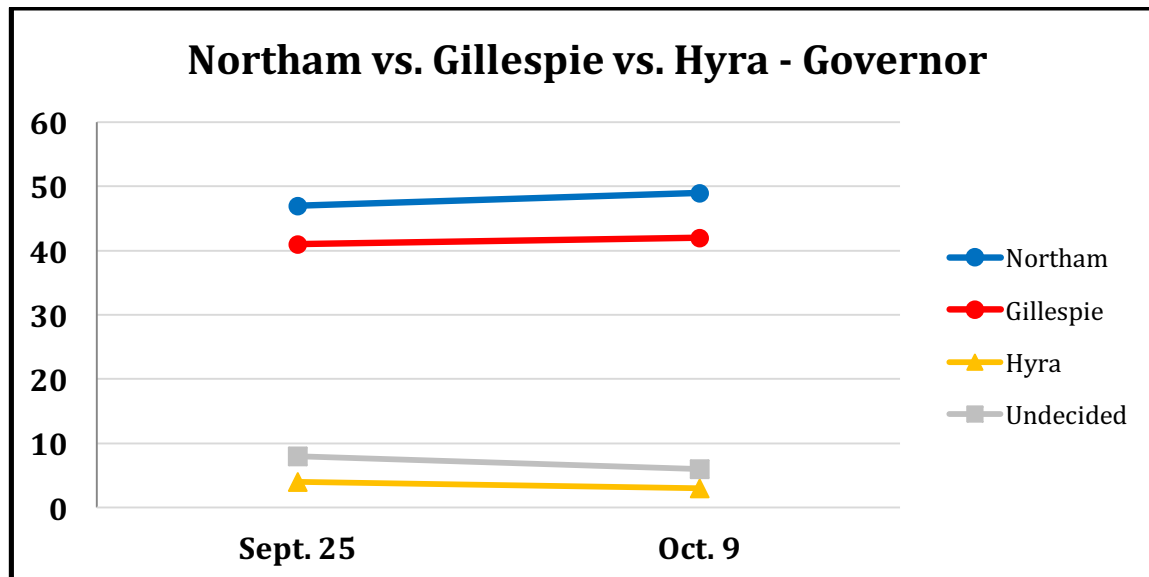
In recent weeks the Gillespie campaign has opened up a line of attack against Northam centered on gangs, crime, and illegal immigrants. Gillespie voters appear to be no more concerned than Northam voters about crime generally or gang-related crime specifically, with very strong majorities of both indicating that crime and gang-related crime are not problems where they live. However, the two candidates' voters diverge sharply on whether illegal immigration is a problem, with a third (33%) of Gillespie voters agreeing or strongly agreeing that illegal immigration is a problem where they live and only 6% of Northam voters saying the same.

"Gillespie's focus on crime and immigration appear to be attempts to appeal to his base, specifically those Republicans who voted for his primary opponent," said Rachel Bitecofer, assistant director of the Wason Center.

Q3: If the election for governor were being held today and the candidates were [RANDOMIZE NAMES] for whom would you vote? Which one are you leaning toward right now?

Q4: [If undecided or refused] Do you think by the time Election Day comes you might end up voting for either...

	9/25	10/9
Ed Gillespie	41	42
Ralph Northam	47	49
Cliff Hyra	4	3
Undecided/Dk/Ref (vol)	3	6



Q5: If the election for lieutenant governor were being held today and the candidates were [RANDOMIZE NAMES] for whom would you vote? Which one are you leaning toward right now?

Q6: [If undecided or refused] Do you think by the time Election Day comes you might end up voting for either...

	9/25	10/9
Justin Fairfax	46	48
Jill Vogel	42	40
Undecided/Dk/Ref (vol)	12	12

Q7: If the election for attorney general were being held today and the candidates were [RANDOMIZE NAMES] for whom would you vote? Which one are you leaning toward right now?

Q8: [If undecided or refused] Do you think by the time Election Day comes you might end up voting for either...

	9/25	10/9
John Adams	42	40
Mark Herring	47	51
Undecided/Dk/Ref (vol)	11	9

Q9: In addition to the election for governor, there will also be elections for all 100 House of Delegates seats in November. Thinking about just the House of Delegates, if the election for the House of Delegates were held TODAY, would you vote for [RANDOMIZE NAMES]

	9/25	10/9
Democratic candidate	47	49
Republican candidate	40	38
Undecided/Dk/Ref (vol)	13	12

I'm going to read some statements, and for each one please tell me whether you agree or disagree with it.

Q10: Crime is generally a problem where I live. [Note: prompt for “strongly” or not]

	All	Gillespie	Northam
Agree strongly	7	7	7
Agree	18	17	18
Neither agree or disagree (vol)	1	1	1
Disagree	58	59	56
Disagree strongly	17	15	19
Dk/ref (vol)	-	-	-

Q11: Gang-related crime is a problem where I live. [Note: prompt for “strongly” or not]

	All	Gillespie	Northam
Agree strongly	4	4	4
Agree	9	10	8
Neither agree or disagree (vol)	1	2	1
Disagree	58	57	58
Disagree strongly	27	25	29
Dk/ref (vol)	1	2	-

Q12: Illegal immigration is a problem where I live. [Note: prompt for “strongly” or not]

	All	Gillespie	Northam
Agree strongly	6	10	1
Agree	13	23	5
Neither agree or disagree (vol)	5	6	4
Disagree	52	46	58
Disagree strongly	22	12	31
Dk/ref (vol)	2	3	2

Demographics

EDUC:

High school or less	12
Some college	19
Vocational or technical training	3
College graduate	35
Graduate study or more	30
Dk/ref (vol)	1

HISPANIC:

Yes	4
No	96

RACE:

White	72
Black or African American	19
Other	9

MILITARY OR RETIRED MILITARY:

Yes	32
No	68

AGE:

18-24	6
25-34	14
35-44	17
45-54	22
55 & older	42

PARTYID:

Republican	32
Democrat	36
Independent	29
No preference (vol)	2
Other party (vol)	<1
Dk/ref (vol)	<1

[IF OTHER THAN REP OR DEM ABOVE]

PARTLEAN:

Republican	38
Democratic	34
Independent	25
Dk/ref (vol)	3

RELIG:

Christian	74
Jewish	1
Muslim	1
Other	10
No Preference	12
Dk/ref (vol)	2

IDEOL:

Strong liberal	6
Liberal	14
Moderate, leaning liberal	21
Moderate, leaning conservative	19
Conservative	20
Strong Conservative	12
Dk/ref (vol)	8

INCOME:

Under \$25,000	3
\$25-\$49,999	10
\$50-\$74,999	17
\$75-\$99,999	17
\$100,000-\$149,999	18
Over \$150,000	23
Dk/ref (vol)	12

REGION:

Northern Virginia	33
Richmond/Central	22
Hampton Roads	24
South/Southwest	21

SEX:

Male	49
Female	51

How the survey was conducted:

The results of this poll are based on 928 interviews of registered Virginia voters, of which 616 were determined to be likely voters in the upcoming November election (registered voters who have voted in recent statewide elections, who also say they definitely or probably will vote in the upcoming elections), including 294 on landline and 322 on cell phone, conducted October 2-6, 2017. Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding. The margin of error for the likely voter model is +/- 4.3 % at the 95% level of confidence. **This means that if 50% of respondents indicate a topline view on an issue, we can be 95% confident that the population's view on that issue is somewhere between 45.7% and 54.3%.** The margin of error is higher for subgroups. All error margins have been adjusted to account for the survey's design effect, which is 1.16 in this survey. The design effect is a factor representing the survey's deviation from a simple random sample, and takes into account decreases in precision due to sample design and weighting procedures. Sub samples have a higher margin of error. In addition to sampling error, the other potential sources of error include non-response, question wording, and interviewer error. The response rate (AAPOR RRI Standard Definition) for the survey was 17%. Five callbacks were employed in the fielding process. Live calling was conducted by trained interviewers at the Wason Center for Public Policy Survey Research Lab at Christopher Newport University. The data reported here are weighted using an iterative weighting process on sex, age, race and region of residence to reflect as closely as possible the demographic composition of likely voters in the November 2017 Virginia elections.