

Klobuchar Builds Commanding Lead in U.S. Senate Race

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With only a week before Election Day, Amy Klobuchar, the Democratic candidate for U.S. Senate, has widened her lead over her Republican opponent, Mark Kennedy, to 22 percentage points, 55 percent to 33 percent. The Humphrey Institute survey of 663 likely Minnesota voters was conducted October 23-28, 2006 and has a 3.8 margin of error.

Klobuchar's commanding lead results from three factors:

- She has rallied Democrats and broadened her appeal to Republicans, independents and men and women while receiving lower negative evaluations than Kennedy.
- The Senate election is setting up as a referendum on President George W. Bush, the War in Iraq, the country's direction, and Congressional ethics. A consistently negative reaction to these national personalities and conditions is boosting Klobuchar's campaign.
- Kennedy's campaign is underperforming. This is evident in comparisons with the performance of Governor Tim Pawlenty – another Republican running in a difficult year for his Party.

Klobuchar Widens Already Large Lead

Klobuchar has increased her lead by 6 points since the Humphrey Institute's last survey from September 13 to 18, 2006. She is benefiting from strong unity among Democrats (with 88% rallying to her) and from the defection of 14 percent of Republicans (a 5 point gain since mid-September). The independent voter – that is, Minnesotans who do not identify with either the Democratic or Republican parties – overwhelmingly favor Klobuchar over Kennedy by a 35 point margin (54% to 19%).

Klobuchar Enjoys Commanding Lead

	Klobuchar	Kennedy	Fitzgerald	Don't Know/ Other/ Refused
Candidate Choice Among Likely Voters				
October 23-28	55%	33%	3%	8%
September 13-18	52%	36%	7%	6%
Party Identification				
Republican	14%	78%	2%	7%
Independent	54%	19%	7%	21%
Democrat	88%	4%	3%	5%

Support for Independence Party candidate Robert Fitzgerald is fading; it has declined from 7 percent to 3 percent. Worse still, a third of his remaining supporters indicate that they might change their minds.

Under normal circumstances, large leads narrow as Election Day approaches. **Although Klobuchar's unusually large margin may decline a bit, her support appears solid with 93 percent of her current backers indicating that their choice is "definite."** Indeed, Kennedy's support appears to be softer, with 14 percent reporting that they might change their minds compared to 7 percent for Klobuchar.

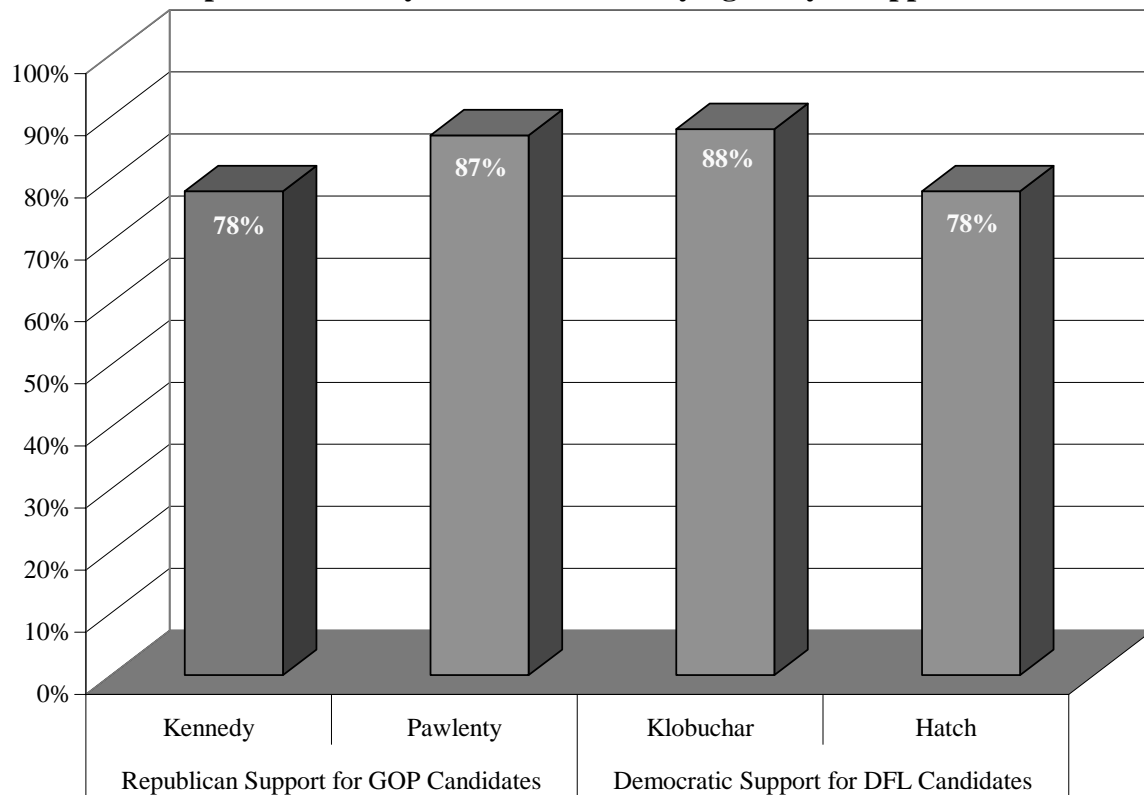
Klobuchar Support Appears More Solid than Kennedy's (Likely Voters)

	Definitely	Might Change Mind	Don't Know
Candidate Choice Among Likely Voters			
Klobuchar	93%	7%	0%
Kennedy	85%	14%	1%

Klobuchar Rallies Her Party's Base and Benefits from Democratic Tilt

Klobuchar is excelling at rallying party supporters, surpassing Kennedy's efforts. Eighty-eight percent of Democrats plan to vote for her compared to 78 percent of Republicans who back Kennedy. Klobuchar's success in unifying her Party has been more effective than Democratic Gubernatorial candidate, Mike Hatch, and comparable to Governor Pawlenty's rallying ability – somewhat surprising given the advantages of incumbency.

Klobuchar Surpasses Kennedy and Hatch in Rallying Party's Supporters



The unity of Democrats behind Klobuchar and defections of Republicans from Kennedy reflects what appears to be a significant shift in Minnesotans' attitudes toward the political parties. **Among likely voters, Democratic voters (including those that "lean" toward the Party) hold an 11 point advantage over Republicans – 48 percent to 37 percent**, with 13 percent independent and 2 percent not willing to respond. Identification with the Democratic and Republican parties do change over time as new voters emerge, circumstances change, and Americans update their evaluations of the each party.

Minnesotan Likely Voters (includes leaners)

Identification with Political Parties	
Republican (including leaners)	37%
Independent	13%
Democrat (including leaners)	48%
Don't Know / Refused	2%

The Democratic advantage stems from substantially greater enthusiasm and interest among Democrats compared to Republicans and from the tarnishing of the Republican "name brand." **More Democrats than Republicans are expressing "strong interest" in the elections; the Democrats 6 point advantage over Republicans in mid-September has now widened to a 13 point gap.** This disparity helps to explain why

more Democrats than Republicans were identified as likely to vote in the Humphrey Institute Survey. Similar patterns have been detected in a number of national surveys.

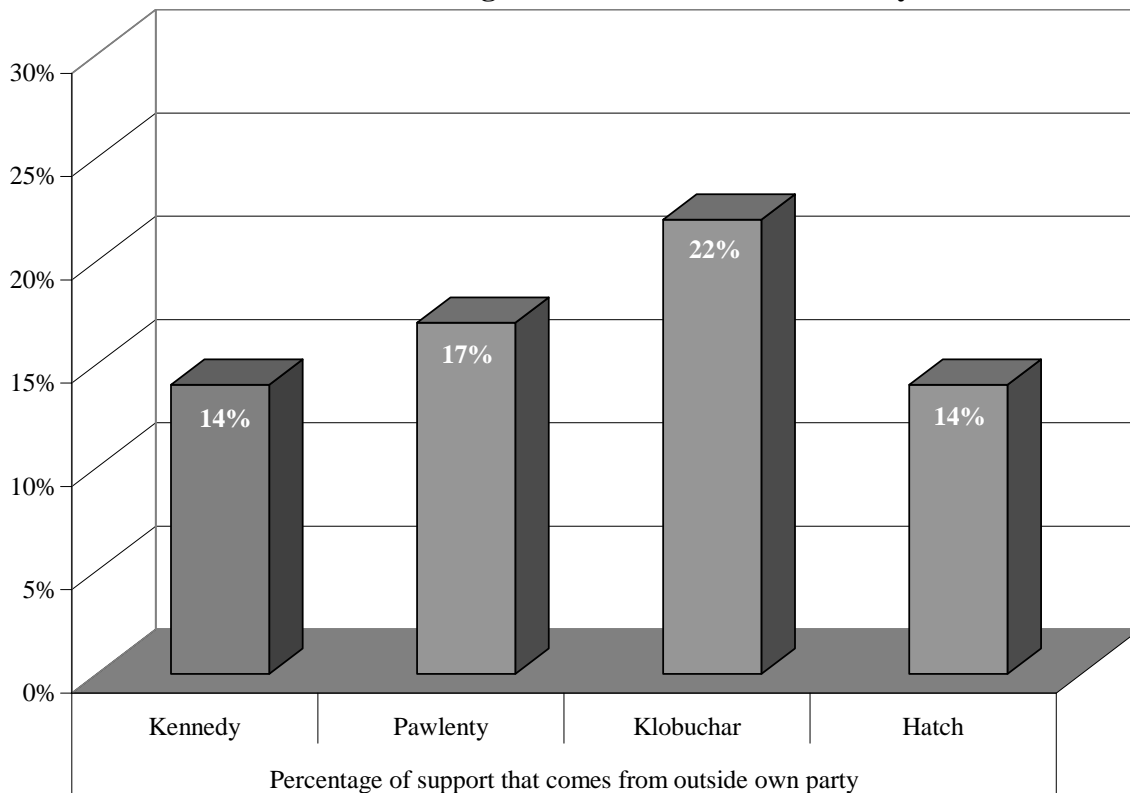
The avalanche of bad news for Republicans from the Mark Foley scandal to Iraq has registered in the running tally that Minnesotans keep of the parties, prompting some Republicans to shift toward declaring themselves independent and prodding independents toward the Democrats. A fuller discussion of these changes can be found in the Center's October report on the Governor's race (http://www.hhh.umn.edu/centers/cspg/elections_projects/reports.html).

Klobuchar Broadens Support

Klobuchar is pulling off the political equivalent of a hat trick: she has unified Democrats behind her candidacy even as she has broadened her appeal and avoided Kennedy's far higher negative evaluations.

Twenty-two percent of her total support comes from people who do not identify with the Democratic Party; this broader appeal surpasses that of Kennedy who is only drawing 14 percent outside the GOP. She also enjoys wider supporter than the Gubernatorial candidates.

Klobuchar More Successful Drawing Voters From Outside of Party



In addition, **a fifth of Pawlenty supporters are also backing Klobuchar.** (By comparison, only 5 percent of Hatch’s supporters favor Kennedy.)

Klobuchar Draws Pawlenty Supporters

	Plan to Vote for Klobuchar	Plan to Vote for Kennedy	Plan to Vote for Fitzgerald
Plan to Vote for Pawlenty	20%	79%	2%
Plan to Vote for Hatch	95%	5%	0%
Plan to Vote for Hutchinson	55%	15%	31%

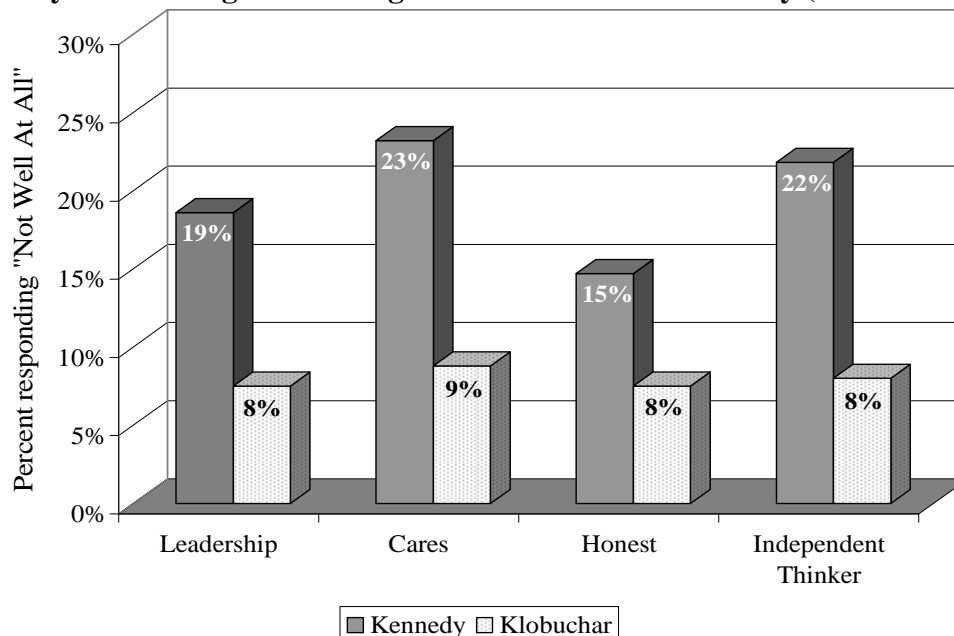
Klobuchar is also winning both fronts of the gender wars. She enjoys an unusually **lopsided 28 point advantage over Kennedy among women.** Unlike the usual pattern in which the Democrats lag behind Republicans among men, Klobuchar sports a 15 point lead among men (a 10 point increase since mid-September).

Klobuchar Winning Among Men and Women

	Klobuchar	Kennedy	Fitzgerald	Don't Know/ Other/ Refused
Gender				
Male	50%	35%	5%	10%
Female	60%	32%	2%	6%

Klobuchar has made headway without generating strong negatives. Indeed, **Kennedy’s “negatives” are double Klobuchar’s** on core personality traits that define public officials and successful politicians – perceptions of their leadership, empathy (i.e. “caring about people like you”), honesty, and thinking independently.

Likely Voters’ Negative Ratings of Klobuchar and Kennedy (“Not Well At All”)



Minnesota Senate Race is a Referendum on President Bush and National Conditions

Klobuchar benefits politically from voters' strong negative evaluations of President Bush and the country's direction. Sixty-two percent of Minnesotans disapprove of Bush's handling of his job (52% very strongly disapprove). **Klobuchar is drawing the backing of 82 percent of Minnesotans who are disgruntled with the President's job** compared to 8 percent who are siding with Kennedy.

Bush's Unpopularity Hurts Kennedy

	Total	Klobuchar	Kennedy	Fitzgerald	Don't Know/ Other/ Refused
President Bush's handling of his job					
Approve	37%	12%	77%	2%	9%
Disapprove	62%	82%	8%	4%	7%
Don't Know / Refused	1%	25%	25%	13%	38%

Iraq Backlash: Likely voters in Minnesota are even more critical of the President's handling of Iraq. **Sixty-four percent disapprove of Bush's performance in Iraq (56% very strongly disapprove), with Klobuchar drawing in more than three quarters of these frustrated voters.** Kennedy is only receiving 10 percent of the nearly two thirds of voters who dislike Bush's performance.

Disapproval of Bush's Handling of Iraq Pulls Down Kennedy

	Total	Klobuchar	Kennedy	Fitzgerald	Don't Know/ Other/ Refused
President Bush's handling of Iraq					
Approve	34%	11%	77%	3%	9%
Disapprove	64%	79%	10%	4%	7%
Don't Know / Refused	2%	46%	18%	9%	27%

Terrorism no longer "Republican" Issue: In the two major national elections after the 9/11 attacks (2002 and 2004), President Bush and Republicans overall enjoyed a substantial advantage among voters on the issue of fighting terrorism. Today, the issue of terrorism has lost much of its bite in Minnesota's Senate contest. **Likely voters in Minnesota are divided on Bush's handling of terrorism (48% approve of it and 50% disapprove).** Klobuchar reaps 84 percent of the support from voters who disapprove of Bush's handling of terrorism as well as 25 percent of those who approve of his job. By contrast, the bounce for Kennedy is noticeably more muted.

Disapproval of Bush's Handling of Terrorism Drags Down Kennedy

	Total	Klobuchar	Kennedy	Fitzgerald	Don't Know/ Other/ Refused
President Bush's handling of Terrorism					
Approve	48%	25%	63%	3%	10%
Disapprove	50%	84%	6%	4%	7%
Don't Know / Refused	2%	55%	36%	9%	0%

Klobuchar is also benefiting from the backlash against the direction that Minnesotans see the country heading in. Seventy-one percent of likely voters see the United State heading on the “wrong track” and Klobuchar is harvesting three quarters of these pessimists (a 6 point jump since mid-September).

Pessimism about Country's Direction Boosts Klobuchar

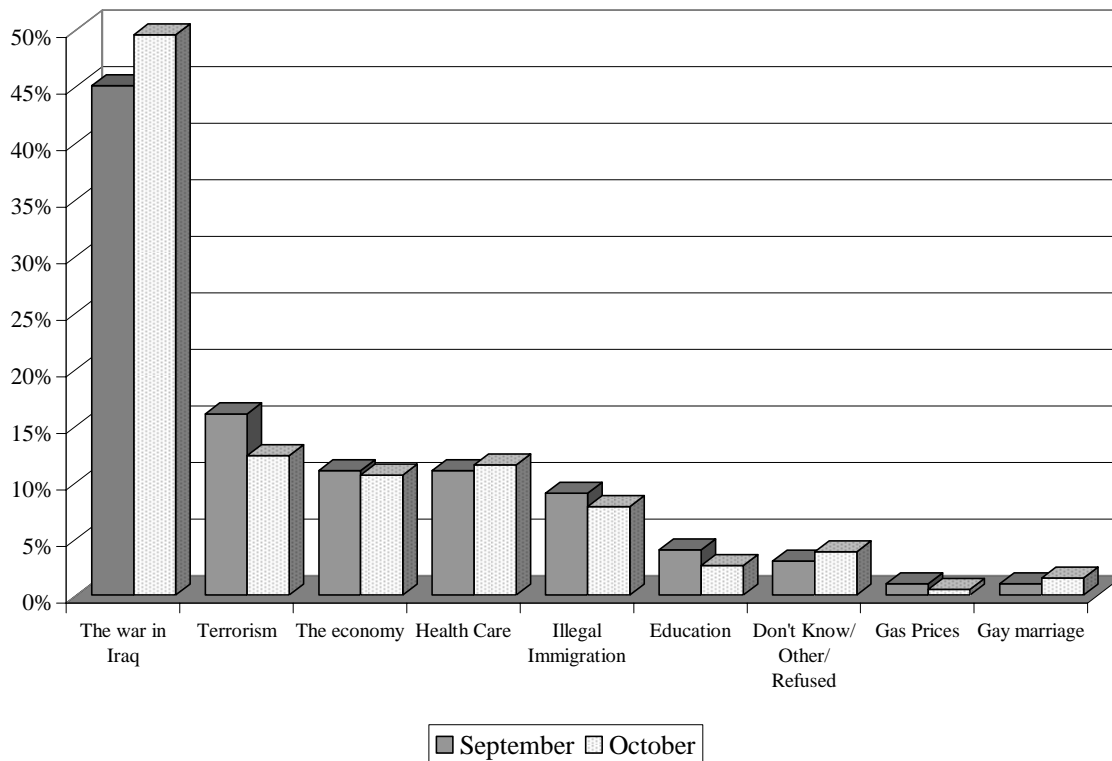
	Total	Klobuchar	Kennedy	Fitzgerald	Don't Know/ Other/ Refused
Direction of United States					
Right Direction	26%	11%	80%	2%	6%
Wrong Track	71%	73%	16%	4%	8%
Don't Know / Refused	3%	13%	52%	4%	30%

Iraq Dominates Voter Concerns, Propelling Klobuchar's Candidacy

Conventional political advice to Mark Kennedy is that he should change the subject from Iraq to other issues on which Republicans traditionally enjoy greater public support. Certainly, Kennedy (along with the White House) has tried to shift public attention to other topics such as the economy and gay marriage. The problem is that voters are locked in on Iraq and this single-minded focus has grown (rather than faded) as Election Day approaches.

An astounding 50 percent of likely voters identify the War in Iraq as the most important issue facing the country. Indeed, the importance of Iraq has increased by 5 points since mid-September as the ranking of terrorism declined by 4 points. The dominance of Iraq is pushing aside classic “Republican issues” (like terrorism and gay marriage) as well as domestic “bread and butter” issues that usually dominate the concerns of voters (such as jobs and the economy). These results also suggest that the President's effort to reframe the Iraq War as the first front in the fight against terrorism is not getting traction among likely voters in Minnesota.

Iraq Dominates as the Nation's Most Important Issue



On the one issue that preoccupies voters (the Iraq War), **Klobuchar enjoys a 12 point advantage over Kennedy in handling is issue and is drawing 94 percent of those who are convinced that she can do a better job on it.** Adding to her advantage, even 10% of voters who think Kennedy will do a better job on Iraq still support Klobuchar.

Klobuchar Holds Advantage on Iraq

	Total	Plan to vote for Klobuchar	Plan to vote for Kennedy	Plan to vote for Fitzgerald	Don't Know/ Other/ Refused
Candidate Expected to do Better Job On:					
Iraq					
Klobuchar	46%	94%	3%	1%	2%
Kennedy	34%	10%	85%	2%	4%
Fitzgerald	4%	32%	12%	52%	4%

Even on the previously “Republican” issue of fighting terrorism, Klobuchar holds an edge, 42 percent to 37 percent. She draws 96 percent of those who expect her to do a better job on Iraq and even 15 percent among who give Kennedy stronger marks on the issue. By comparison, Kennedy gets less support.

Klobuchar Holds Edge on Terrorism

	Total	Plan to vote for Klobuchar	Plan to vote for Kennedy	Plan to vote for Fitzgerald	Don't Know/ Other/ Refused
Candidate Expected to do Better Job on:					
Terrorism					
Klobuchar	42%	96%	1%	1%	2%
Kennedy	37%	15%	80%	2%	4%
Fitzgerald	3%	28%	6%	61%	6%

A similar pattern of Klobuchar's dominance emerges on a full range of issues from the economy, health care, and education to crime.

The "Ethics Gap": Series of Scandals Give Democrats Edge Over Republicans

The series of scandals in Washington – from Congressman Mark Foley's inappropriate behavior toward pages to Jack Abramoff's corrupt dealings – has hurt the Republican Party's reputation and boosted Klobuchar's support. **By a 2 to 1 margin, likely voters report that Democrats are more ethical than Republicans in Congress. Eighty-eight percent of voters declaring congressional Democrats more ethical support Klobuchar.**

Ethics Boosts Democrats and Klobuchar

	Total	Klobuchar	Kennedy	Fitzgerald	Don't Know/ Other/ Refused
More Ethical Party					
Democrats in Congress	41%	88%	6%	3%	3%
Republicans in Congress	21%	5%	83%	3%	9%
Don't Know / Refused	38%	48%	35%	5%	13%

The Underperformance of Kennedy's Campaign

Both Kennedy and Pawlenty are campaigning in a year that is hostile to Republican candidates. There are signs, though, that Kennedy's campaign has lagged behind Pawlenty's in its performance.

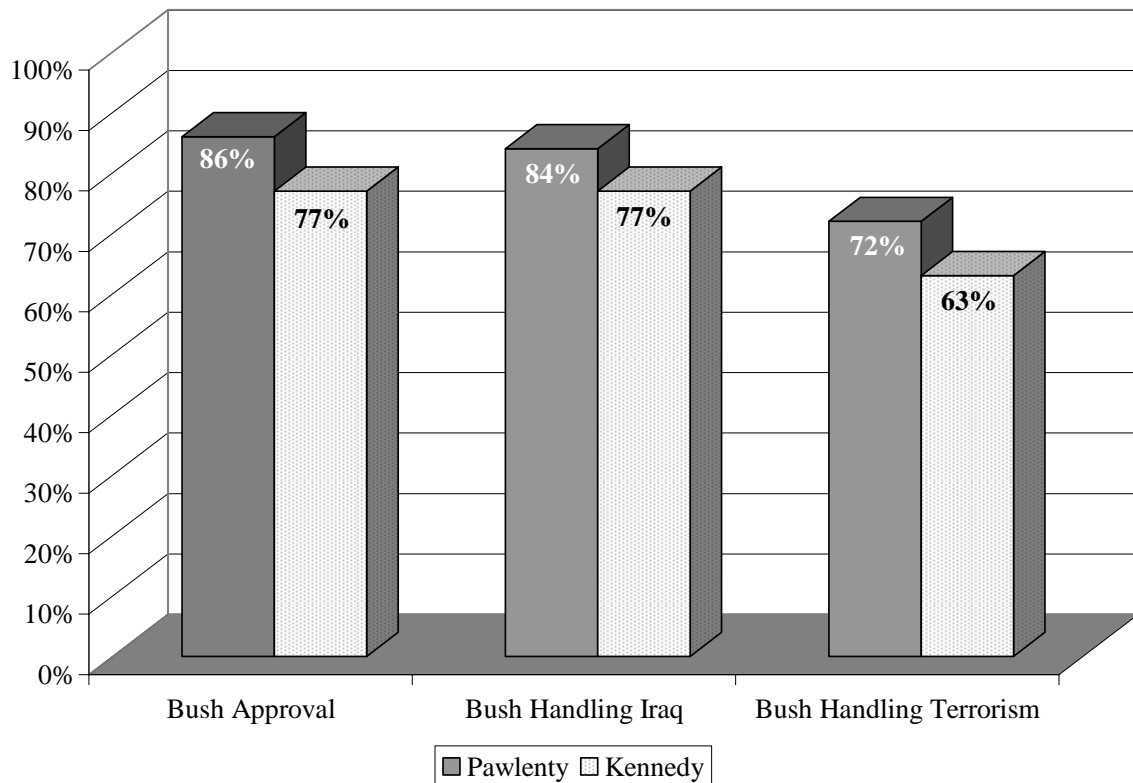
Pawlenty has consistently drawn more support than Kennedy from voters overall. The Governor has rallied his Party's base of support while Kennedy has lost more a fifth of it. This may reflect some disappointment among Republicans after Kennedy openly distanced himself from Bush and emphasized his "independence" from his Party. **Pawlenty also attracts substantially more independent swing voters than Kennedy.**

Kennedy Less Successful than Pawlenty in Winning Support

	Pawlenty	Kennedy
Candidate Choice Among Likely Voters		
October 23-28	39%	33%
September 13-18	42%	36%
Party Identification		
Republican	87%	78%
Independent	26%	19%
Democrat	7%	4%

Kennedy's struggles also show up in his weaker ability to capitalize on approval for Bush's job performance. Pawlenty draws 7 percent to 9 percent more support from approval of Bush than Kennedy.

Pawlenty's Advantage among those who Approve of President Bush



About the Survey

The Center for the Study of Politics and Governance at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs designed the survey. The Center and Humphrey Institute are non-partisan academic institutions that are committed to rigorous research that contributes to informed discussions of elections and public affairs more generally.

The research team was Lawrence R. Jacobs (director) and Joanne M. Miller. Melanie Burns provided superior research assistance. Jacobs is responsible for designing and analyzing the survey. No statements of fact, interpretations, or conclusions should be attributed to the Humphrey Institute.

The survey was fielded by the Center for Survey Research and Analysis (CSRA) at the University of Connecticut, which has extensive national and state experience conducting non-partisan surveys on politics and government policy. CSRA called a sample of telephone exchanges that was randomly selected by a computer from a list of active residential exchanges within the State of Minnesota. Within each exchange, random digits were added to form a complete telephone number, thus permitting access to both listed and unlisted numbers. The sample was designed to represent different regions of the state in proportion to the number of adults living in each region. Within each household, one adult was selected to be the respondent for the survey.

1,186 residents of Minnesota were interviewed by telephone between October 23 and October 28, 2006, and 663 were determined to be likely to vote. Results are based on a model that adjusts responses according to the likelihood of a respondent voting. Likelihood to vote is based on the following factors: the likelihood of voting as reported by the respondent, voter registration, past voting behavior, and interest in the election. In addition, the results have been weighted to reflect the number of adults in a household and the number of telephone lines reaching the household as well as the demographic characteristics of Minnesota based on region, sex, age, education, and race.

The distribution of party identification among likely voters analyzed in this survey is as follows:

Republican	37%
Independent	13%
Democrat	48%
Don't Know / Refused	2%

In theory, in 19 cases out of 20 the results among likely voters will differ by no more than 3.8 percentage points in either direction from what would have been obtained by interviewing all likely voters in the state. For smaller subgroups the margin of sampling error is larger.