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Illinois Top Political Leaders Draw Mixed Reviews from the Voters

Illinois' highest elected officials received mixed job-performance reviews in the poll just released from the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. The Simon Poll™ was based on a statewide sample of 1,000 registered voters conducted March 11 through March 17. The margin of error is plus or minus 3.1 percent.

The voters were asked whether they approved or disapproved of the jobs being done by Governor J. B. Pritzker, President Donald Trump, U.S. Senator Dick Durbin, Speaker of the House Michael Madigan, and Senate President John Cullerton.

This was an early test for Governor Pritzker, who just took office in mid-January. Since then the governor has introduced his first budget and embarked on an ambitious plan to deal with the state's long-term structural deficit. His plan has involved high-profile advocacy for a constitutional amendment that would shift Illinois' income tax from a flat rate to a graduated rate.

Two months into his new administration, Simon Poll respondents gave Governor Pritzker a 40 percent positive job rating, while 38 percent disapproved, a narrow two-percentage-point positive net. This included 10 percent who strongly approved and 30 percent who somewhat approved, and 14 percent who somewhat disapproved and 24 percent who strongly disapproved. Another 7 percent said they neither approved nor disapproved, and 15 percent had no opinion.

For comparison, at the same point in Bruce Rauner's term, the March 2015 Simon Poll™ showed Governor Rauner at 37 approval vs. 31 percent disapproval, with one-third, or 32, percent who had not decided or had no opinion at that point.

Not surprisingly, Pritzker's ratings varied significantly according to the voters' place of residence and partisan affiliation. Fifty percent of voters from the City of Chicago approved of the governor's job performance, while only 28 percent disapproved. Forty percent of the voters from suburban Cook and the Collar Counties approved and 36 percent disapproved. Downstate, 34 percent approved and 50 percent disapproved.

By party, 65 percent of Democrats endorsed Pritzker's job performance, while only 12 percent disapproved. Seventy percent of Republicans disapproved of Pritzker's performance, and 15 percent approved. Independents fell in-between, with 31 percent approving and 41 percent disapproving.

"These partisan and geographic differences in Illinois reflect the deep polarization that exists in the nation, and it shows no signs of getting any better" said John S. Jackson, one of the co-directors of the Simon Poll. "At this point Governor Pritzker is 2 percent above water, so he can go either way depending on how he is perceived to be handling the office of the governor and dealing with the enduring budgetary problems that have faced the state for a generation," Jackson added.

President Trump's job approval was 39 percent positive and 59 percent negative — net of 20 points underwater in Illinois. This consisted of 49 percent who strongly disapprove and 10 percent who somewhat disapprove of the president's performance.

Partisan and geographic differences are on stark display in the varying results for the president. Ninety-three percent of Democrats disapproved and only 6 percent approved of the job Trump is doing as president; 83 percent of Republicans approved and only 16 percent disapproved. Independents were in between, with 35 approval and 60 percent disapproval.

Three quarters (76 percent) of the voters in the City of Chicago disapproved of Trump's performance and 24 percent approved. In the suburbs, 39 percent approved and 60 percent disapproved. This left downstate as the only region where the president's approval ratings were not in a net negative range, with 50 percent who approved and 46 percent disapproved.

"Illinois exhibits its own version of the blue-state/red-state divide," said Charlie Leonard, a co-director of the Simon Poll. "Urban Chicago and its suburbs decidedly disapprove of President Trump, while in the more Republican, less densely populated "red" part of the state, he is about as popular as in a traditionally Republican state like Indiana or Nebraska."

U. S. Senator Dick Durbin is up for re-election next year and the poll tested his beginning point as he launches a new campaign. The results showed Senator Durbin with a 51 percent approval rating, compared to 41 percent disapproval, 8 percent who either didn't know or had no opinion.

Sixty-five percent of voters in the City of Chicago approved of the job Durbin is doing, while 29 percent disapproved. In suburban Cook and the Collar Counties, 51 percent approved and 41 percent disapproved, exactly matching the statewide results. Downstate the margins were 42 percent who approved and 48 percent who disapproved.

Durbin fared very well among his fellow Democrats with the results showing that 78 percent approved and 15 percent disapproved of the job he was doing. Republicans gave a 74 percent disapproval to 21 percent approval rating. Fifty-one percent of Independents approved and 41 percent disapproved, again exactly matching the statewide results.

Turning to state legislative leaders, the poll asked about the job performance of Speaker of the House Michael Madigan and Senate President John Cullerton.

Fully 71 percent of voters statewide said they disapproved of Madigan's job performance, while only 20 percent approved, with 10 percent undecided or neither.

City of Chicago voters gave Madigan a 26 percent approval to 66 percent disapproval rating. Suburban Cook and the Collar Counties gave him a 19 percent approve and 72 percent disapprove rating. Downstate voters were almost identical with the suburban voters with 71 percent disapproving and 19 percent approving.

Thirty-four percent of Democratic voters approved and 55 percent disapproved of the Speaker's job performance. Eighty-seven percent of Republicans disapproved and only 8 percent approved, while Independents showed a 10 percent approval and 78 percent disapproval rating.

The Speaker has long been a high-profile target for Republican attack ads in a variety of campaigns. In the campaigns for governor and in many state house and senate races in November of 2018, Republican candidates from Governor Rauner through state representative races and some local races focused on Madigan. His job approval vs. disapproval ratings show those results as well as his many years as perhaps the most highly recognizable Democrat in Illinois.

By contrast, Senate President John Cullerton keeps a much lower profile and the results show in contrast with the Speaker. Senator Cullerton's approval ratings were 24 percent approve and 35 percent disapprove, with 6 percent who said neither and more than one-third, 35 percent, who said they did not know enough to rate him.

There were virtually no regional differences on Cullerton's job approval ratings. By party, the differences were only marginal. Thirty-five percent of the Democrats said they approved of Cullerton's job performance with 23 percent who disapproved. Forty-eight percent of Republicans said they disapproved and 15 percent approved. This left 37 percent of the Democrats and 36 percent of the Independents saying they did not know enough to rate him with 29 percent of the Republicans who did not want to provide a rating.

Director of the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute, John Shaw, summarized the findings as follows, "Illinois remains a strikingly divided and polarized state. By and large, Illinoisans view their political leaders through profoundly partisan lenses."

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The margin of error for the entire sample of 1,000 voters is plus or minus 3.1 percentage points. This means that if we conducted the survey 100 times, in 95 of those instances, the population proportion would be within plus or minus the reported margin of error for each subsample. For

subsamples, the margin of error increases as the sample size goes down. The margin of error was not adjusted for design effects.

Live telephone interviews were conducted by Customer Research International of San Marcos, Texas using the random digit dialing method. The telephone sample was provided to Customer Research International by Scientific Telephone Samples. Potential interviewees were screened based on whether they were registered voters and quotas based on area code and sex (<60 percent female). The sample obtained 54 percent male and 46 percent female respondents. Interviewers asked to speak to the youngest registered voter at home at the time of the call. Cell phone interviews accounted for 60 percent of the sample. A Spanish language version of the questionnaire and a Spanish-speaking interviewer were made available.

Field work was conducted from March 11 to 17. No auto-dial or “robo” polling is included. Customer Research International reports no Illinois political clients. The survey was paid for with non-tax dollars from the Institute’s endowment fund. The data were not weighted in any way. Crosstabs for the referenced questions will be on the Institute’s polling web site, simonpoll.org.

The Paul Simon Public Policy Institute is a member of the American Association for Public Opinion Research’s (AAPOR) Transparency Initiative. AAPOR works to encourage objective survey standards for practice and disclosure. Membership in the Transparency Initiative reflects a pledge to practice transparency in reporting survey-based findings.

The Institute’s polling data are also archived by four academic institutions for use by scholars and the public. The four open source data repositories are: The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research (<http://ropercenter.cornell.edu/polls/>), The University of Michigan’s Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (<http://openicpsr.org>), the University of North Carolina’s Odum Institute Dataverse Network (<http://arc.irss.unc.edu/dvn/dv/PSPI>), and the Simon Institute Collection at OpenSIUC (<http://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/ppi/>).

Note: The “Simon Poll” and the “Southern Illinois Poll” are the copyrighted trademarks of the Board of Trustees of Southern Illinois University. Use and publication of these polls is encouraged- but only with credit to the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at SIU Carbondale.

Frequency Tables¹

I would like you to tell me how Governor J.B. Pritzker is doing his job. Do you strongly approve, somewhat approve, somewhat disapprove, or strongly disapprove of the job Governor Pritzker is doing?

Response	Percent (n=1000)
Approve	40%
<i>Strongly approve</i>	10%
<i>Somewhat approve</i>	30%
Neither	7%
Disapprove	38%
<i>Strongly disapprove</i>	24%
<i>Somewhat disapprove</i>	14%
Other/don't know	15%

And what about Speaker of the Illinois House of Representatives Mike Madigan? Do you strongly approve, somewhat approve, somewhat disapprove, or strongly disapprove of the job Speaker Madigan is doing?

Response	Percent (n=1000)
Approve	20%
<i>Strongly approve</i>	4%
<i>Somewhat approve</i>	17%
Neither	2%
Disapprove	71%
<i>Strongly disapprove</i>	52%
<i>Somewhat disapprove</i>	18%
Other/don't know	7%

And what about Illinois Senate President John Cullerton? Do you strongly approve, somewhat approve, somewhat disapprove, or strongly disapprove of the job Senate President Cullerton is doing?

Response	Percent (n=1000)
Approve	24%
<i>Strongly approve</i>	3%
<i>Somewhat approve</i>	21%
Neither	6%
Disapprove	35%
<i>Strongly disapprove</i>	19%
<i>Somewhat disapprove</i>	16%
Other/don't know	35%

And what about President of the United States Donald Trump? Do you strongly approve, somewhat approve, somewhat disapprove, or strongly disapprove of the job President Trump is doing?

Response	Percent (n=1000)
Approve	39%
<i>Strongly approve</i>	23%
<i>Somewhat approve</i>	16%
Neither	1%
Disapprove	59%
<i>Strongly disapprove</i>	49%
<i>Somewhat disapprove</i>	10%
Other/don't know	1%

And what about Senator Dick Durbin? Do you strongly approve, somewhat approve, somewhat disapprove, or strongly disapprove of the job Senator Durbin is doing?

Response	Percent (n=1000)
Approve	51%
<i>Strongly approve</i>	23%
<i>Somewhat approve</i>	28%
Neither	12%
Disapprove	41%
<i>Strongly disapprove</i>	28%
<i>Somewhat disapprove</i>	13%
Other/don't know	7%

Longitudinal Data and Demographic Crosstabs

PRITZKER APPROVAL (n=1000)

By AREA

	Chicago City	Chicago Suburbs	Downstate
Approve	50%	40%	34%
Neither	7%	8%	4%
Disapprove	28%	36%	50%
Other/Don't know	16%	17%	12%

By PARTY

	Democrat	Independent	Republican
Approve	65%	31%	15%
Neither	7%	9%	4%
Disapprove	12%	41%	70%
Other/Don't know	16%	20%	11%

HISTORIC GOVERNOR APPROVAL

	Rauner (Spring 2015)	Pritzker (Spring 2019)
Approve	37%	40%
Neither	9%	7%
Disapprove	31%	38%
Other/Don't know	23%	15%

MADIGAN APPROVAL
(n=1000)

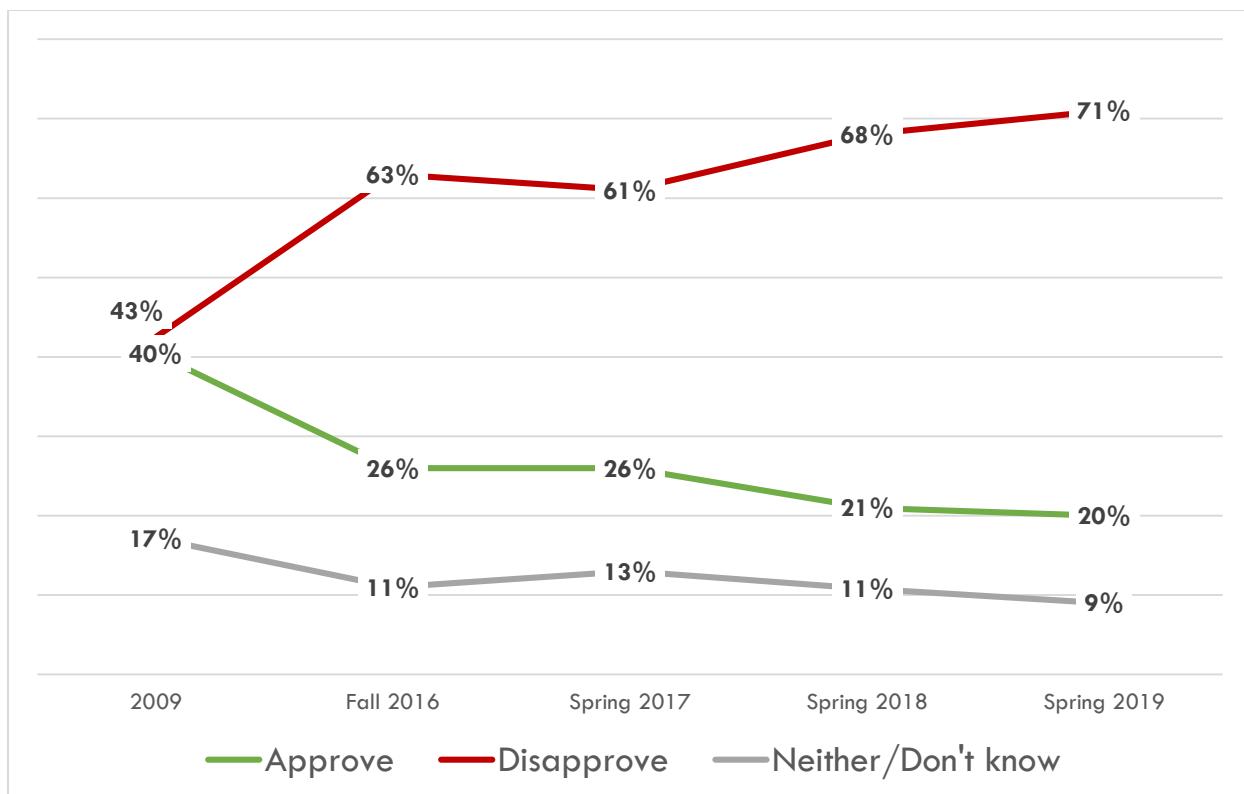
By AREA

	Chicago City	Chicago Suburbs	Downstate
Approve	26%	19%	19%
Neither	2%	3%	1%
Disapprove	66%	72%	71%
Other/Don't know	7%	6%	9%

By PARTY

	Democrat	Independent	Republican
Approve	34%	10%	8%
Neither	3%	4%	0%
Disapprove	55%	78%	87%
Other/Don't know	8%	7%	4%

HISTORIC APPROVAL



CULLERTON APPROVAL
(n=1000)

By AREA

	Chicago City	Chicago Suburbs	Downstate
Approve	27%	24%	22%
Neither	5%	6%	8%
Disapprove	37%	36%	32%
Other/Don't know	31%	34%	38%

By PARTY

	Democrat	Independent	Republican
Approve	35%	20%	15%
Neither	5%	7%	8%
Disapprove	23%	38%	48%
Other/Don't know	37%	36%	29%

TRUMP APPROVAL
(n=1000)

By AREA

	Chicago City	Chicago Suburbs	Downstate
Approve	24%	39%	50%
Neither	1%	2%	2%
Disapprove	76%	60%	46%
Other/Don't know	0%	0%	2%

By PARTY

	Democrat	Independent	Republican
Approve	6%	35%	83%
Neither	1%	3%	1%
Disapprove	93%	60%	16%
Other/Don't know	0%	1%	0%

DURBIN APPROVAL
(n=1000)

By AREA

	Chicago City	Chicago Suburbs	Downstate
Approve	65%	51%	42%
Neither	0%	1%	2%
Disapprove	29%	41%	48%
Other/Don't know	7%	7%	7%

By PARTY

	Democrat	Independent	Republican
Approve	78%	51%	21%
Neither	1%	1%	0%
Disapprove	15%	41%	74%
Other/Don't know	6%	7%	5%