



The Elway Poll

An independent
nonpartisan
analysis of
public opinion
trends in
Washington and
the Northwest

04 JANUARY 18

Dem's Head Into Midterm Year With Advantage

Washington Democrats, like their national counterparts, head into the midterm election year with the odds in their favor. As 2018 opens here in Washington:

- Democrats have a 9-point advantage over Republicans in party identification (33% to 24%);
- The generic vote for congress favors the Democratic candidate by 10 points (45% to 35%);
- Democrats have a 12-point advantage in the generic vote for the legislature, (46% to 34%).

None of these items predict a specific race, of course. But they indicate the climate in which individual races will take place. They do not indicate climate hospitable for state Republicans.

PARTY IDENTIFICATION

Washington Democrats have had a party identification edge for years. Party identification in Washington state is variable, since there is no party registration. Over the last 25 years, Democratic identification has been as high as 42% and as low as 24%; Republican identification has ranged from 41% to 20%. That fluctuation has settled down in the last decade.

Since 2006, there has been only one month in which Republicans outnumbered Democrats in *The Elway Poll* (Feb. 2011). The average spread since 2000 for this point in the election cycle is +9 for the Democrats—exactly what it is this month. In this survey:

- Democrats had an identification advantage over Republicans in every category of age, education and income, except those age 51-64, where Republicans led 31-30%.
- There was a 21-point gender gap. Democrats outnumbered Republicans among women 43% to 22%.

Party ID is not exactly destiny, however. At this point in the 2014 mid-term cycle, Democrats had a 13-point advantage (34% to 21%). Democrats won 50 seats in the state House that year, but the total vote for all House races was 47% to 47%.

CONGRESSIONAL RACES

The generic race for congress ("which party's candidate are you planning to vote for?") has been a generally reliable indicator of national elections. In 2014, Republicans went into the election with a 2-point advantage nationally in the generic election question and picked up 13 seats in Congress. In 2010, the generic Republican had a 9-point advantage in the polls and the GOP picked up 63 Congressional seats.

The national average for this question currently is +13 for the Democrats. Here in Washington it is +10 this month. Among voters most likely to cast ballots in November, the Democrat advantage is +14.

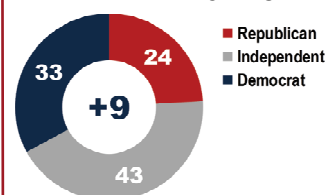
The sample sizes in individual districts are too small to be statistically reliable, but we can get a composite picture from combining the congressional districts. In the combined 4 districts currently held by Republicans, the generic Republican beat the generic Democrat 44% to 35% (+9). Results in the 6 Democrat-held congressional districts were substantially stronger: the generic Democrat won there by 52% to 29% (+23).

The fact that the generic Republican did not get a majority across Republican-held districts is a warning flag to Republicans and a rally flag to Democrats.

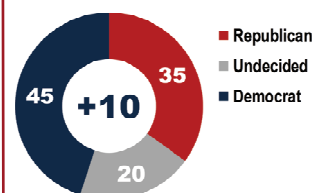
In Eastern Washington, home to 2 of the 4 GOP districts, the generic Republican beat the Democrat by just 4 points: 41% to 37%, hinting at vulnerability for Spokane's Cathy McMorris-Rogers, the #4 ranking Republican in Congress.

On the other hand, in the combination of the 2 western Washington GOP districts (CD3, CD8), the generic Republican led the Democrat by 17 points: 48-31%, casting a shadow on Democrats' hopes for a pick up in the 8th.

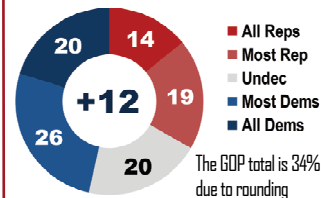
PARTY IDENTIFICATION



VOTE FOR CONGRESS



VOTE FOR LEGISLATURE



Sample Profile

504 registered voters, selected at random from registered voter lists in Washington state, were interviewed December 27-30 by live, professional interviewers. 28% of the interviews were conducted on cell phones. The margin of sampling error is $\pm 4.5\%$ at the 95% level of confidence. This means, in theory, had this same survey been conducted 100 times, the results would be within $\pm 4.5\%$ of the results reported here at least 95 times.

REGION

Seattle	10%
King County	21%
Pierce/Kitsap	15%
No. Puget Sound	17%
Western WA	17%
Eastern WA	20%

GENDER

Male	50%
Female	50%

PARTY ID

Democrat	33%
Republican	24%
Independent	43%

AGE

18-35	9%
36-50	25%
51-64	38%
65+	27%

EDUCATION

High School	16%
Some College / Voc-Tech	28%
College Degree	37%
Graduate Degree	20%

INCOME

\$50,000 or less	20%
\$50 to 74,000	21%
\$75 to 99,000	17%
\$100,000+	25%
No Answer	17%

LEGISLATIVE RACES

The generic election question for the state legislature is more nuanced than the congressional vote, since voters will have the opportunity to cast votes in 2 or 3 state legislative races, depending on whether they have a state senate race (half of the districts do).

Counting those who said they were voting for “all” or “mostly” candidates of one party or the other, Democrats were +12 (46-34%). Counting those who were voting only for candidates of one party, Democrats were +6.

- Democrats had the advantage in every category of age, education and income, except those age 51-64, where the parties were tied.
- In legislative districts carried by Trump in 2016 (N=19) the advantage was +16 for Republicans: 48% were planning to vote for “all Republicans (21%) or “mostly Republicans (27%);
- In districts carried by Clinton (N=30), the advantage was +30 for Democrats: 55% intended to vote for “all Democrats” (26%) or “mostly Democrats (29%).

Notably, Democrats had sizable advantages among several key constituencies:

- Likely November voters (+16);
- Women (+28);
- Voters over 65 (+11);
- Independents (+8);
- Those with only a high school education, a core Trump constituency (+8).

WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

The table is set for the Democrats. There is much talk among national commentators about a Democratic wave election this year. Structural barriers (one-party districts) and math (Democrats defending more seats) make that a difficult proposition, regardless of public opinion.

Locally, those factors are less determinative, and as things stand today, Washington public opinion is definitely leaning toward the Democrats.

Of course the election is not today. The outcomes will be determined by individual voters choosing between individual candidates in individual races. At this stage of the game, the playing field is not level.

The Elway Poll

The Elway Poll is an independent, non-partisan analysis of public opinion in Washington and the Northwest, published since 1992.

PROPRIETARY QUESTIONS: Each quarter, space is reserved in the questionnaire for organizations to insert their own, proprietary questions. Sponsors are able to ask their own questions for a fraction of the cost of a full survey. Results, with demographic crosstabulations, are provided within days after the interviews are completed.

The Elway Poll

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STRETCH

YOUR RESEARCH DOLLAR

Sometimes all you need is the answer to a question or two.

Sometimes that is all you have the budget for.

The Elway Poll reserves space in its quarterly survey of Washington voters for proprietary questions. This gives you an economical way to get a survey done. You can get your questions answered for a fraction of the cost of doing your own survey. Your questions and answers are completely proprietary – no one sees them but you.

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- Track Opinion Change Over Time
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- Measure message penetration, voter response

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