



## Florida Opinion Research

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June 6, 2012

TO: Interested Parties

FR: Paul Fallon

RE: Survey Results on Amendment 8 in Florida

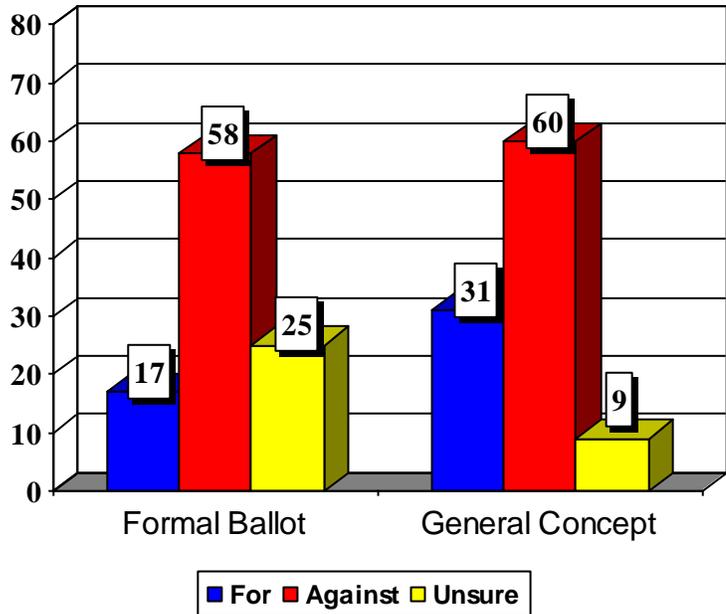
I just completed the spring installment of the quarterly Florida Omnibus Survey™ for my various clients, and decided to also include a couple questions to measure support for Amendment 8. It will appear on the November, 2012 ballot, asking Florida voters if they wish to change the State Constitution to allow more permissive uses of public funds for entities or activities that are affiliated with religious organizations. It has been a topic of much discussion and consternation because of concerns among some groups that it could be broadly interpreted to sanction the use of tax-funded vouchers for students to pay for tuition to attend private schools, such as those operated by churches and religious organizations. Although there is sizeable opposition to the idea from any point of view, the results indicate that the notion of allowing tax dollars to be used for activities that are affiliated with religious organizations is more somewhat popular than the proposed amendment.

Overall, when respondents were read the **formal ballot** language -- with wording that may be somewhat politically-charged by including the reference to sects -- just a paltry 17% of voters interviewed in the survey said they would vote for Amendment 8, while 58% said they would vote against it and 25% were unsure. Although public schools might face drastic losses of funding that could adversely affect school budgets, as well as academic programs and services, parents of public school students were, statistically speaking, no more likely to oppose the issue, with 57% saying they will vote against it, compared to 60% among voters who were not public school parents. This indicates parents may not fully comprehend the stakes of this complex constitutional topic.

**AMENDMENT 8 QUESTION WORDING:**

*“Would you vote for or against a proposed amendment to the state constitution that would remove the prohibition against using revenues from the public treasury, directly or indirectly, in aid of any church, sect, or religious denomination or in aid of any sectarian institution?”*

Curiously, despite the strong opposition to the proposed Amendment, when asked a subsequent question about the **general concept** of allowing tax dollars to be used for activities that are affiliated with religious organizations, which was worded in more colloquial language about “*allowing public tax dollars to be allocated to private schools, such as those run by or affiliated with religious groups or organizations*”, overall support among all voters jumped to 31%, with 60% being opposed and 9% being unsure. Almost identical to their non- school parent counterparts, 30% parents of public school students supported the idea. This suggests that voters like the principle a lot more than the law.



Regardless of how you look at it, since 60% of the vote is required to alter the Constitution, this proposed Amendment faces a steep uphill climb! Please note that these questions were not funded or commissioned by any candidate, organization, association or committee. They were included in the survey because I believe that this is a topical matter that may be of interest to people with whom I work and professionally associate. If you have any questions about this data or would like to discuss it, please feel free to call me at 813-283-2665.

*This information is based on survey data that was gathered through telephone interviews that specially-trained opinion research interviewers conducted with 802 randomly-selected registered voters in the State of Florida who had valid residential or cellular telephone numbers and recent histories of voting in past even-year general elections. The interviews were performed during the period of May 23, 2012 through May 25, 2012. The overall estimated margin of sampling error is +/- 3.46%, based on a confidence level of 95%, although it varies for each individual question. This means that if this survey was repeated, 95 times out of 100 the results would be within plus or minus 3.46% of those provided herein. Adjustments were made to weight the results toward geographic and demographic characteristics of the state, in order to account for under- and over-sampling that normally occurs as a result of the random selection process, to ensure that all major sub-groups are represented in proportion to their actual percentages of the electorate.*

## About Paul Fallon...



**Paul Fallon is a public opinion researcher, political pollster and advisor for levy committees, local government agencies, school districts, interest groups and trade associations. He specializes in land-use policy research, education and transit, as well public funding ballot issues and referendums.**

**He has worked on issues and campaigns in more than 35 different states throughout the country, and has conducted opinion research and citizen satisfaction studies for transit services, school districts and government agencies of all sizes, from Florida to California.**