

Media Relations

Press Release for Friday, June 21, 2019

New UNF Poll Shows Overwhelming Support for Half-Cent Sales Tax Increase for Schools

Share

Tweet

Media Contact: Amanda Dawson
Public Relations Specialist
(904) 620-2192

Methodology Results Contact: Dr. Michael Binder
Public Opinion Research Lab Director
(904) 620-2784

New UNF Poll Shows Overwhelming Support for Half-Cent Sales Tax Increase for Schools

Crime Considered Most Important Issue in Jacksonville for Fifth Consecutive Year

A new poll of registered voters in Duval County by the Public Opinion Research Lab (PORN) at the University of North Florida finds that approximately 75% of Duval County registered voters support increasing sales tax by a half-cent to upgrade or replace aging schools. Support is strongest among registered Democrats at 86%, although registered Republicans still have a 60% majority support for the sales tax increase.

Last month, the Duval County School Board approved a resolution seeking a special election in November to ask voters to support the half-cent sales tax. When asked when the election should be held, 34% of the sample preferred a November 5, 2019, special election, while 49% indicated the general election November 3, 2020, while 17% didn't desire a referendum at all.

“No matter how you slice it, Duval voters are very supportive of the half-cent sales tax increase,” Dr. Binder, faculty director of the PORL, commented. “Registered voters, general election voters, off-cycle election voters, Democrats and Republicans are all in favor of getting the schools the revenue needed to upgrade facilities.”

The poll also showed a large 72% majority of registered Duval County voters oppose selling all or parts of JEA. “While JEA leadership and city hall have been noncommittal about selling, voters are very clear about their preference to keep the largest community-owned utility in Florida,” said Binder.

Voters were also asked whether they support or oppose a person 18 years of age or older, charged with possession of 20 grams or less of marijuana, be declared a civil infraction and eligible to receive a civil citation as opposed to a misdemeanor with potential jail time. An overwhelming 84% majority supports such a change.

“Aside from the use of body cameras by police, marijuana decriminalization has had the most support of any issue that we have polled since I have been in Jacksonville,” Binder noted. “There has been a bill introduced in City Council addressing this issue and city leadership might want to take note of the voice of the voters.”

For the fifth consecutive year, voters in Jacksonville view crime as the most important issue, at 45% of registered voters in this poll. Education follows at 16% and downtown redevelopment is third at 13%. “Crime is and continues to be the number one issue in Jacksonville, and while steps have been taken, clearly the community is still concerned,” added Binder.

Mayor Lenny Curry’s job approval number is at 46%, with 37% disapproving. Though still positive, his approval has dipped since the last UNF PORL poll. Jacksonville City Council has only 34% approval and 46% disapproval, also dropping since we last polled on these questions.

When asked about Mike Williams’ job approval rate, 45% of Duval County registered voters strongly or somewhat approve of how he is handling his job as Jacksonville’s sheriff. Like the mayor, the sheriff’s numbers are down slightly, but still positive. Diana Greene, Duval County superintendent of schools, has 40% approval and 31% disapproval, with 29% not knowing.

For detailed methodology and crosstabs by party registration, sex, age, and race, visit the [webpage](#).

Survey Results

Do you support or oppose a half-cent sales tax increase, if those funds specifically go to upgrade or replace aging schools?

Answer Options	Duval County Registered Voters n=1,221	General Election Voters n=812	Off Cycle Election Voters n=597
Strongly support	49%	47%	52%
Somewhat support	26%	27%	25%
Somewhat oppose	9%	10%	9%
Strongly oppose	17%	17%	14%

Do you support or oppose a half-cent sales tax increase, if those funds specifically go to upgrade or replace aging schools?

Answer Options	Registered Democrats	Registered Republicans	Registered NPA/Others
Support	86%	61%	76%
Oppose	14%	29%	24%

Recently, the Duval County School Board voted to approve a resolution seeking a special election to ask voters to support a half-cent sales tax to upgrade or replace aging schools. The Jacksonville City Council will vote June 25 on the timing of the election. Should city council vote for this proposed referendum to be voted on in a special election on November 5, 2019, in the general election on November 3, 2020, or should there be no referendum at all.

Answer Options	Duval County Registered Voters n=1,221	General Election Voters n=813	Off Cycle Election Voters n=599
Special election on November 5, 2019	34%	33%	36%
General election on November 3, 2020	49%	49%	49%
No referendum at all	17%	17%	15%

This past year, officials discussed the possibility of selling JEA (the city's community owned utility company). In general, do you support or oppose the city selling all or parts of JEA?

Answer Options	Duval County Registered Voters n=1,204	General Election Voters n=800	Off Cycle Election Voters n=593
Strongly support	12%	10%	9%
Somewhat support	16%	14%	14%
Somewhat oppose	23%	23%	21%
Strongly oppose	49%	53%	56%

Do you support or oppose a person 18 years of age or older, charged with possession of marijuana (20 grams or less), be declared a civil infraction and eligible to receive a civil citation as opposed to a misdemeanor with potential jail time?

Answer Options	Duval County Registered Voters n=1,218	General Election Voters n=808	Off Cycle Election Voters n=596
Strongly support	66%	65%	64%
Somewhat support	18%	20%	20%
Somewhat oppose	5%	6%	6%

Answer Options	Duval County Registered Voters n=1,218	General Election Voters n=808	Off Cycle Election Voters n=596
Strongly oppose	11%	9%	11%

What do you think is the most important issue facing Jacksonville today?

Answer Options	Duval County Registered Voters n=1,225
Education	16%
The Economy	5%
Access to Healthcare	5%
Crime	45%
Downtown Redevelopment	13%
Tax Burden	2%
Access to Public Transportation	3%
Improving the Environment	5%
Infrastructure/Traffic/Growth	1%
Something Else	5%

Do you approve or disapprove of the way that Lenny Curry is handling his job as Mayor of Jacksonville?

Answer Options	Duval County Registered Voters n=1,222
Strongly approve	15%
Somewhat approve	31%
Somewhat disapprove	19%
Strongly disapprove	18%
Don't Know	18%

Do you approve or disapprove of the way the Jacksonville City Council is handling its job?

Answer Options	Duval County Registered Voters n=1,213
Strongly approve	2%
Somewhat approve	32%
Somewhat disapprove	29%
Strongly disapprove	17%
Don't Know	20%

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Mike Williams is handling his job as Jacksonville's Sheriff?

Answer Options	Duval County Registered Voters n=1,222
Strongly approve	15%
Somewhat approve	30%
Somewhat disapprove	21%
Strongly disapprove	19%
Don't Know	16%

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Diana Greene is handling her job as the Duval County Superintendent of Schools?

Answer Options	Duval County Registered Voters n=1,220
Strongly approve	10%
Somewhat approve	30%
Somewhat disapprove	18%

Answer Options**Duval County Registered****Voters n=1,220**

Strongly disapprove	13%
Don't Know	29%

Survey Demographics

Race	Duval County Registered Voters n=1,226	General Election Voters n=816	Off Cycle Elections Voters n=600
White (not Hispanic)	59%	65%	61%
Black (not Hispanic)	28%	25%	29%
Hispanic	5%	4%	4%
Other	8%	7%	7%

Sex	Duval County Registered Voters n=1,226	General Election Voters n=816	Off Cycle Election Voters n=600
Male	45%	45%	47%
Female	55%	55%	53%

Party Registration	Duval County Registered Voters n=1,226	General Election Voters n=816	Off Cycle Election Voters n=600
Republican	36%	42%	39%
Democrat	41%	40%	42%
NPA and other	23%	18%	19%

Age	Duval County Registered Voters n=1,226	General Election Voters n=816	Off Cycle Election Voters n=600
18 to 24	10%	5%	7%
25 to 34	20%	18%	16%
35 to 44	17%	18%	16%
45 to 55	17%	16%	14%
56 to 64	17%	19%	19%
65 and older	20%	24%	30%

Methodology

The UNF Jax Speaks Poll was conducted and sponsored by the University of North Florida's Public Opinion Research Lab from Monday, June 17, through Wednesday, June 19. The survey was administered through email via Qualtrics, an online survey platform. The sampling frame was comprised of registered voters who live in Jacksonville, Florida. The email addresses used for this survey were sourced from the Florida's Division of Elections June 4, 2019, update and selected through probability sampling among Duval County registered voters in the Florida voter file. Overall, there were 1,226 completed surveys of Duval County registered voters, 18 years of age or older.

The margin of sampling error for the total sample is +/- 2.8 percentage points. The total sample was weighted by partisan registration, sex, age and race. Weights were created from the June 6, 2019, update of the Florida voter file to match the active registered voters in Duval County. These demographic characteristics were pulled from the voter file list. All weighted demographic variables were applied using the SPSS version 23 rake weighting function, which won't assign a weight if one of the demographics being weighted is missing. Individuals without a weight were manually given a weight of 1. There were no statistical adjustments made due to design effects. This survey was sponsored by the UNF PORL and directed by Dr. Michael Binder, UNF associate professor of political science.

The PORL is a full-service survey research facility that provides tailored research to fulfill each client's individual needs from political, economic, social and cultural projects. The PORL opened in 2001 and is an independent, non-partisan center, a charter member of the American

Association for Public Opinion Research Transparency Initiative and a member of the Association of Academic Survey Research Organization. As members of AAPOR, the PORL's goal is to support sound and ethical practices in the conduct of survey and public opinion research. Moreover, the PORL is a charter member of the AAPOR Transparency Initiative and a member of the Association of Academic Survey Research Organizations.

UNF, a [nationally ranked](#) university located on an environmentally beautiful campus, offers students who are dedicated to enriching the lives of others the opportunity to build their own futures through a well-rounded education.

-UNF-

Public Relations

1 UNF Drive
Jacksonville, FL 32224
(904) 620-2125
Staff Directory
View Map

Quick Links

[President's Office](#)
[National Recognition](#)
[Osprey Update](#)
[UNF Newsroom](#)
[Marketing Project Request](#)

UNF Update

You can [subscribe to our monthly newsletter](#) that keeps readers informed about academic, athletic and cultural events at UNF.