

## Media Relations

---

**Press Release for Thursday, November 7, 2019**

# New UNF Poll Reveals Bipartisan Opposition Over Sale of JEA

Share

Tweet

Media Contact: Amanda Ennis  
Public Relations Acting Director  
(904) 620-2192

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

---

### **New UNF Poll Reveals Bipartisan Opposition Over Sale of JEA**

*Vast Majority Believe a Publicly Owned JEA Benefits Jacksonville*

The Public Opinion Research Lab (PORL) at the University of North Florida released a new poll comprised of registered voters in Duval County that reveals 59% oppose the sale of JEA in general, with 26% supporting. This opposition holds across party lines, as 58% of Democrats and 63% of Republicans oppose the sale of JEA.

Respondents were also asked about the sale of specific portions of JEA. Opposition is at 60% for the selling the electric portion of JEA, 61% for the water portion and 59% for the sewer portion. A large majority of 73% believe that a publicly owned JEA benefits the city. Just 16% did not believe there was a benefit for the city, while 12% didn't know.

Regarding the recent "Invitation to Bid" process initiated by JEA that requires a minimum bid of \$3 billion, respondents were asked what minimum price they would accept in order to support selling JEA. A majority, 51%, did not know what minimum price they would be willing to sell JEA for. A total of 14% are willing to sell at \$3 billion, while an additional 9% would be willing to sell

up to \$10 billion, and another 5% would require more than \$10 billion to sell. However, 22% volunteered that they would not be willing to sell JEA at any price. Ultimately, the sale of JEA must be put before the voters of Jacksonville prior to the sale being finalized. When asked when the election should be held to vote on the sale of JEA, 39% indicated a special election should be held as soon as the decision to sell has been made, while 55% said the vote should be held in the November 2020 general election.

"There is a strong base of opposition to the sale of JEA among voters of all parties here in Jacksonville," said Dr. Michael Binder, faculty director of the PORL at UNF. "However, without a concrete proposal in place yet it is difficult to infer how opinion might change when a proposal is finally put forward. There is so much uncertainty at this point around the price point of the sale, I could envision an active campaign offering \$1,000 or more in rebates shifting opinion quite dramatically."

When asked about job approval for Aaron Zahn, JEA's current CEO, 33% approve and 47% disapprove, while 21% didn't know. Jason Gabriel, the General Counsel for the City of Jacksonville, has 27% job approval with 15% disapproving and 58% not knowing. Regarding The Florida Times-Union, 44% approve of the way that they report on issues concerning local government, while 26% disapprove and 31% say they didn't know. Nate Monroe, a columnist for The Florida Times-Union, has 28% job approval and 12% disapproval, with 61% not knowing.

"Of all the public figures polled in this survey, Aaron Zahn is the only one with a net negative job approval," Binder noted. "Clearly, the Invitation to Negotiate and potential sale spearheaded by Zahn has impacted the public's view of his job performance."

Additionally, respondents were asked about the Jacksonville Jaguars. The field dates of the survey spanned a period of time prior to and after the Jaguars game in London. Before Sunday's game, when asked whether or not Gardner Minshew, the rookie Jacksonville Jaguars' quarterback, should remain the starting quarterback when Nick Foles returns from injured reserve, 47% of respondents indicated that he should, while only 20% stated the Nick Foles should return to the position. However, after Sunday's game, support shifted with 36% wanting Foles to return and 35% preferring to keep Minshew as the starter. Regarding Shad Khan, 65% approve of the way that he is handling his job as the owner of the Jacksonville Jaguars, with 10% disapproving. Similarly, 54% approve of the job that Doug Marrone is doing, with 18% disapproving.

"Shad Khan's approval is the highest of all the people we polled on. Coming off the Jalen Ramsey trade his net positive is 55 points, 13 points higher than the last time we polled in 2017. Marrone's net positive is 36 points, nearly identical to 2017," Binder said. "Minshew's support dropped dramatically after the Houston game, and the recent announcement that Foles will be under center against the Colts puts this mini quarterback controversy to bed."

For details about the methodology of the survey and additional crosstabs by partisanship, age, race, sex and education, visit the [PORL website](#).

## Survey Results

This past year, officials have discussed the possibility of selling JEA (the city's community owned utility company).

In general, do you support or oppose the city selling all of JEA?

Answer Options	Jacksonville Voters n=655		
	Democratic Voters n=272	Republican Voters n=232	NPA Voters n=151
Strongly Support	14%	11%	18%
Somewhat Support	12%	13%	9%
Somewhat Oppose	13%	15%	15%
Strongly Oppose	46%	48%	41%
Don't Know	15%		

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Democratic Voters n=272</b>	<b>Republican Voters n=232</b>	<b>NPA Voters n=151</b>
Don't Know	15%	13%	17%

In general, do you support or oppose the city selling the electric portion of JEA?

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Jacksonville Voters n=654</b>
Strongly Support	14%
Somewhat Support	12%
Somewhat Oppose	14%
Strongly Oppose	46%
Don't Know	14%

In general, do you support or oppose the city selling the water portion of JEA?

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Jacksonville Voters n=654</b>
Strongly Support	12%
Somewhat Support	12%
Somewhat Oppose	14%
Strongly Oppose	47%
Don't Know	15%

In general, do you support or oppose the city selling the sewer portion of JEA?

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Jacksonville Voters n=652</b>
Strongly Support	12%
Somewhat Support	14%
Somewhat Oppose	13%
Strongly Oppose	46%
Don't Know	16%

Do you believe that a publicly owned JEA benefits the city?

Answer Options	Jacksonville Voters n=662
Yes	73%
No	16%
Don't Know	12%

The "Invitation to Negotiate" bidding process initiated by JEA requires a minimum bid of at least \$3 billion from parties interested in the purchase of JEA. If JEA were to sell, what is the minimum price in billions of dollars that you would accept in order to support the sale of JEA?

Answer Options	Jacksonville Voters n=181
Wouldn't Support Selling for Any Price	22%
Less Than \$3 Billion	4%
\$3 Billion	10%
\$4-5 billion	4%
\$6-10 billion	5%
Over \$10 billion	5%
Don't Know	51%

The ultimate sale of JEA must be put before the voters of Jacksonville prior to being finalized. Do you believe the City of Jacksonville should hold a special election as soon as the decision to sell has been made, or wait until the November 2020 General election?

Answer Options	Jacksonville Voters n=659
Special Election	39%
November 2020 General Election	55%
Don't Know	6%

Do you approve or disapprove of the way that Aaron Zahn is handling his job as the CEO of JEA (the city's community owned utility company)?

Answer Options	Jacksonville Voters n=651
Strongly Approve	13%
Somewhat Approve	20%
Somewhat Disapprove	15%
Strongly Disapprove	32%
Don't Know	21%

Do you approve or disapprove of the way that Jason Gabriel is handling his job as the General Counsel of the City of Jacksonville?

Answer Options	Jacksonville Voters n=644
Strongly Approve	7%
Somewhat Approve	20%
Somewhat Disapprove	8%
Strongly Disapprove	7%
Don't Know	58%

Do you approve or disapprove of the way that the Jacksonville Times-Union reports on issues concerning local government?

Answer Options	Jacksonville Voters n=650
Strongly Approve	18%
Somewhat Approve	26%
Somewhat Disapprove	14%
Strongly Disapprove	12%
Don't Know	31%

Do you approve or disapprove of the way that Nate Monroe is handling his job as a Jacksonville Times-Union columnist?

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Jacksonville Voters n=643</b>
Strongly Approve	12%
Somewhat Approve	16%
Somewhat Disapprove	7%
Strongly Disapprove	5%
Don't Know	61%

When Nick Foles returns from injured reserve, should he be the starting quarterback, or should Gardner Minshew remain the starting quarterback?

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Jacksonville Voters Pre Houston Game n=460</b>	<b>Jacksonville Voters Post Houston Game n=205</b>
Nick Foles	20%	36%
Gardner Minshew	47%	35%
Don't Know	33%	29%

Do you approve or disapprove of the way that Shad Khan is handling his job as the Owner of the Jacksonville Jaguars?

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Jacksonville Voters n=646</b>
Strongly Approve	44%
Somewhat Approve	21%
Somewhat Disapprove	4%
Strongly Disapprove	6%
Don't Know	24%

Do you approve or disapprove of the way that Doug Marrone is handling his job as the Head Coach of the Jacksonville Jaguars?

Answer Options	Jacksonville Voters n=642
Strongly Approve	26%
Somewhat Approve	28%
Somewhat Disapprove	7%
Strongly Disapprove	11%
Don't Know	28%

## Survey Demographics

Telephone	Jacksonville Voters n=665
Landline	17%
Cell phone	84%

What is the highest grade in school or year of college you have completed?

Education	Jacksonville Voters n=660
Less than high school	4%
High school graduate	24%
Some college	44%
College graduate	19%
Post graduate degree	9%

## Methodology

The UNF Jax Speaks Poll was conducted and sponsored by the Public Opinion Research Lab at the University of North Florida, from Thursday, Oct. 31, 2019, through Monday, Nov. 4, 2019, by live callers via the telephone; calls were made from 4 to 9 p.m. daily, with a maximum of five callbacks attempted. Interviews were conducted in English by UNF undergraduate students and



employees. Data collection took place at the PORL facility with its 27-station Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) system. The phone numbers used for this survey were sourced from the Tuesday, Sept. 10, 2019, update of the Florida Voter File. The sample frame was comprised of registered Florida voters who reside in Jacksonville. Overall, there were 665 completed surveys of Florida registered voters, 18 years of age or older.

The margin of sampling error for the total sample is +/- 3.8 percentage points. The breakdown of completed responses on a landline phone to a cell phone was 17% to 84%. Through hand dialing, an interviewer upon reaching the individual as specified in the voter file asked that respondent to participate, regardless of landline telephone or cell phone. Data were then weighted by partisan registration, age, race, sex and education. Education weights were created from the 2017 American Community Survey (ACS). Partisan registration, sex, race and age weights were created from the Tuesday, Sept. 10, 2019, update of the Florida Voter File to match the active registered voters in Florida. These demographic characteristics were pulled from the voter file list.

All weighted demographic variables were applied using the SPSS version 25 rake weighting function, which won't assign a weight if one of the demographics being weighted on is missing. In this case, respondents missing a response for education were given a weight of 1. There were no statistical adjustments made due to design effects. This study had a 14.4% response rate. The American Association of Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) Response Rate 3 (RR3) calculation was used which consists of an estimate of what proportion of cases of unknown eligibility are truly eligible. 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. For more information about methodology, contact Binder at [porl@unf.edu](mailto:porl@unf.edu) or at (904) 620-2784.

UNF is a nationally ranked university in Jacksonville, Florida, that is nestled on a beautiful 1,300-acre nature preserve, featuring six colleges of distinction as well as nationally recognized flagship programs, with 56 bachelor degree programs and over 75 areas of concentration.

-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.