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Democrat leads in key Iowa race

Raleigh, N.C. – The special election that will determine control of the Iowa State Senate on Tuesday is close, but it looks like Democrats will probably hold serve. Democrat Liz Mathis leads Republican Cindy Golding 52-46 in our poll taken over the weekend.

The numbers suggest that Mathis is just a stronger candidate than Golding. Voters in the district are split right down the middle, 44/44, on whether they'd rather Democrats or Republicans had control of the State Senate. But Mathis is outrunning those numbers when it comes to how people are planning to vote on Tuesday. The big key for her is that she's taking 16% of the GOP vote from Golding, while losing only 9% of the Democratic vote. That helps her make up for a 50-45 deficit with independents.

This election has been framed to some extent as a battle over gay marriage, but our poll suggests voters aren't seeing it that way. They're planning to vote for Mathis even as 46% of them say gay marriage should be illegal, compared to just 42% who think it should be legal. Although voters in the district may oppose gay marriage, only 11% say that issue is the most important factor guiding their vote compared to 86% who say it's something else. It's also worth noting that 66% of voters do support either gay marriage or civil unions with only 30% opposed to all legal recognition for same sex couples.

If this election's not hinging on gay marriage, then what is making the difference here? Voters may be sending a message to Governor Terry Branstad. His approval rating in the district is only 39% with 42% disapproving of him. This special election is seen in some quarters as the product of a power grab by Branstad and if Mathis wins it could be indicative of an electorate that doesn't want to enhance his power.

“This race is still close enough that it could go either way on Tuesday,” said Dean Debnam, President of Public Policy Polling. “But it looks like Democrats will probably hold onto control of the Iowa State Senate and if that is the case it will be a reflection of dissatisfaction with Governor Branstad.”

PPP surveyed 878 likely voters from November 4th to 6th. The margin of error for the survey is +/-3.3%. This poll was not paid for or authorized by any campaign or political organization. PPP surveys are conducted through automated telephone interviews. PPP is a Democratic polling company, but polling expert Nate Silver of the *New York Times* found that its surveys in 2010 actually exhibited a slight bias toward Republican candidates.



Iowa State Senate District 18 Survey Results

Q1 The candidates for State Senate are Republican Cindy Golding and Democrat Liz Mathis. If the election was today, who would you vote for?

Republican Cindy Golding 46%
Democrat Liz Mathis 52%
Undecided..... 2%

Q2 Do you approve or disapprove of Governor Terry Branstad's job performance?

Approve..... 39% *Not sure* 18%
Disapprove..... 42%

Q3 Generally speaking, would you prefer that Democrats or Republicans had control of the Iowa State Senate?

Democrats..... 44% *Not sure* 12%
Republicans 44%

Q4 Do you think same-sex marriage should be legal or illegal?

Legal..... 42%
Illegal 46%
Not sure 12%

Q5 Which of the following best describes your opinion on gay marriage: gay couples should be allowed to legally marry, or gay couples should be allowed to form civil unions but not legally marry, or there should be no legal recognition of a gay couple's relationship?

Gay couples should be allowed to legally marry 38%
Gay couples should be allowed to form civil unions but not marry 28%
There should be no legal recognition of a gay couple's relationship 30%
Not sure 4%

Q6 Is the gay marriage issue the most important factor influencing your vote or not?

Gay marriage is the most important factor..... 11%
It is not..... 86%
Not sure..... 4%

Q7 Do you approve or disapprove of President Barack Obama's job performance?

Approve 37%
Disapprove..... 51%
Not sure..... 11%

Q8 If you are a woman, press 1. If a man, press 2.

Woman 53%
Man..... 47%

Q9 If you are white, press 1. If other, press 2.

White 94%
Other..... 6%

Q10 If you are 18 to 29 years old, press 1. If 30 to 45, press 2. If 46 to 65, press 3. If you are older than 65, press 4.

18 to 29..... 8%
30 to 45..... 26%
46 to 65..... 40%
Older than 65..... 26%

Q11 If you are a Democrat, press 1. If a Republican, press 2. If you are an independent or identify with another party, press 3.

Democrat 39%
Republican..... 35%
Independent/Other..... 26%

Q12 Who did you vote for President in 2008?

John McCain..... 43%
Barack Obama..... 51%
Someone else/Don't remember 6%



Q13 Would you describe yourself as very liberal, somewhat liberal, moderate, somewhat conservative, or very conservative?

<i>Very liberal</i>	7%
<i>Somewhat liberal</i>	19%
<i>Moderate</i>	29%
<i>Somewhat conservative</i>	27%
<i>Very conservative</i>	18%



Crosstabs

	Base	Gender	
		Woman	Man
Golding/Mathis			
Republican Cindy Golding	46%	43%	48%
Democrat Liz Mathis	52%	54%	50%
Undecided	2%	3%	2%

	Base	Gender	
		Woman	Man
Branstad Approval			
Approve	39%	33%	47%
Disapprove	42%	44%	40%
Not sure	18%	23%	13%

	Base	Gender	
		Woman	Man
Want Dems or GOP to Control Sen?			
Democrats	44%	46%	42%
Republicans	44%	42%	46%
Not sure	12%	12%	12%

	Base	Gender	
		Woman	Man
Same-sex Legal/Illegal			
Legal	42%	47%	37%
Illegal	46%	43%	50%
Not sure	12%	10%	13%





Crosstabs

	Base	Gender	
		Woman	Man
Gay Marriage/Civ. Unions/No Recognition			
Gay couples should be allowed to legally marry	38%	42%	33%
Gay couples should be allowed to form civil unions but not marry	28%	28%	29%
There should be no legal recognition of a gay couple's relationship	30%	27%	33%
Not sure	4%	3%	5%

	Base	Gender	
		Woman	Man
Marriage Issue Most Important Factor in Vote?			
Gay marriage is the most important factor	11%	9%	12%
It is not	86%	87%	84%
Not sure	4%	4%	4%

	Base	Gender	
		Woman	Man
Obama Approval			
Approve	37%	39%	35%
Disapprove	51%	47%	56%
Not sure	11%	14%	9%

	Base	Race	
		White	Other
Golding/Mathis			
Republican Cindy Golding	46%	47%	31%
Democrat Liz Mathis	52%	51%	66%
Undecided	2%	2%	3%





Crosstabs

	Base	Race	
		White	Other
Branstad Approval			
Approve	39%	40%	28%
Disapprove	42%	41%	58%
Not sure	18%	18%	15%

	Base	Race	
		White	Other
Want Dems or GOP to Control Sen?			
Democrats	44%	43%	65%
Republicans	44%	45%	26%
Not sure	12%	12%	9%

	Base	Race	
		White	Other
Same-sex Legal/Illegal			
Legal	42%	42%	44%
Illegal	46%	46%	43%
Not sure	12%	12%	12%

	Base	Race	
		White	Other
Gay Marriage/Civ. Unions/No Recognition			
Gay couples should be allowed to legally marry	38%	38%	36%
Gay couples should be allowed to form civil unions but not marry	28%	29%	27%
There should be no legal recognition of a gay couple's relationship	30%	29%	31%
Not sure	4%	4%	7%





Crosstabs

	Base	Race	
		White	Other
Marriage Issue Most Important Factor in Vote?			
Gay marriage is the most important factor	11%	10%	21%
It is not	86%	87%	70%
Not sure	4%	3%	8%

	Base	Race	
		White	Other
Obama Approval			
Approve	37%	36%	60%
Disapprove	51%	53%	29%
Not sure	11%	11%	11%

	Base	Age			
		18 to 29	30 to 45	46 to 65	Older than 65
Golding/Mathis					
Republican Cindy Golding	46%	38%	46%	46%	48%
Democrat Liz Mathis	52%	59%	51%	53%	50%
Undecided	2%	3%	3%	2%	2%

	Base	Age			
		18 to 29	30 to 45	46 to 65	Older than 65
Branstad Approval					
Approve	39%	36%	40%	37%	42%
Disapprove	42%	56%	39%	44%	40%
Not sure	18%	8%	21%	19%	17%





Crosstabs

	Base	Age			
		18 to 29	30 to 45	46 to 65	Older than 65
Want Dems or GOP to Control Sen?					
Democrats	44%	49%	44%	43%	46%
Republicans	44%	35%	44%	46%	43%
Not sure	12%	16%	12%	11%	11%

	Base	Age			
		18 to 29	30 to 45	46 to 65	Older than 65
Same-sex Legal/Illegal					
Legal	42%	49%	48%	42%	35%
Illegal	46%	41%	39%	47%	54%
Not sure	12%	11%	13%	12%	11%

	Base	Age			
		18 to 29	30 to 45	46 to 65	Older than 65
Gay Marriage/Civ. Unions/No Recognition					
Gay couples should be allowed to legally marry	38%	43%	46%	37%	29%
Gay couples should be allowed to form civil unions but not marry	28%	16%	23%	29%	37%
There should be no legal recognition of a gay couple's relationship	30%	35%	25%	31%	31%
Not sure	4%	5%	7%	3%	3%

	Base	Age			
		18 to 29	30 to 45	46 to 65	Older than 65
Marriage Issue Most Important Factor in Vote?					
Gay marriage is the most important factor	11%	11%	14%	9%	9%
It is not	86%	84%	84%	89%	83%
Not sure	4%	5%	2%	2%	8%





Crosstabs

	Base	Age			
		18 to 29	30 to 45	46 to 65	Older than 65
Obama Approval					
Approve	37%	51%	37%	35%	37%
Disapprove	51%	41%	48%	54%	53%
Not sure	11%	8%	15%	10%	10%

	Base	Party		
		Democrat	Republican	Independent/Other
Golding/Mathis				
Republican Cindy Golding	46%	9%	83%	50%
Democrat Liz Mathis	52%	91%	16%	45%
Undecided	2%	1%	1%	6%

	Base	Party		
		Democrat	Republican	Independent/Other
Branstad Approval				
Approve	39%	9%	74%	40%
Disapprove	42%	79%	10%	32%
Not sure	18%	12%	17%	29%

	Base	Party		
		Democrat	Republican	Independent/Other
Want Dems or GOP to Control Sen?				
Democrats	44%	84%	9%	33%
Republicans	44%	9%	84%	41%
Not sure	12%	7%	7%	26%





Crosstabs

	Base	Party		
		Democrat	Republican	Independent/Other
Same-sex Legal/Illegal				
Legal	42%	61%	21%	42%
Illegal	46%	26%	72%	42%
Not sure	12%	13%	7%	15%

	Base	Party		
		Democrat	Republican	Independent/Other
Gay Marriage/Civ. Unions/No Recognition				
Gay couples should be allowed to legally marry	38%	58%	16%	38%
Gay couples should be allowed to form civil unions but not marry	28%	22%	33%	33%
There should be no legal recognition of a gay couple's relationship	30%	16%	48%	24%
Not sure	4%	4%	4%	5%

	Base	Party		
		Democrat	Republican	Independent/Other
Marriage Issue Most Important Factor in Vote?				
Gay marriage is the most important factor	11%	5%	17%	9%
It is not	86%	92%	77%	87%
Not sure	4%	2%	5%	4%

	Base	Party		
		Democrat	Republican	Independent/Other
Obama Approval				
Approve	37%	71%	6%	29%
Disapprove	51%	16%	90%	52%
Not sure	11%	13%	4%	19%





Crosstabs

	Base	2008 Vote		
		John McCain	Barack Obama	Someone else/Don't remember
Golding/Mathis				
Republican Cindy Golding	46%	88%	8%	56%
Democrat Liz Mathis	52%	10%	90%	34%
Undecided	2%	2%	2%	10%

	Base	2008 Vote		
		John McCain	Barack Obama	Someone else/Don't remember
Branstad Approval				
Approve	39%	73%	12%	42%
Disapprove	42%	9%	72%	23%
Not sure	18%	18%	16%	35%

	Base	2008 Vote		
		John McCain	Barack Obama	Someone else/Don't remember
Want Dems or GOP to Control Sen?				
Democrats	44%	7%	79%	21%
Republicans	44%	86%	9%	36%
Not sure	12%	7%	12%	42%

	Base	2008 Vote		
		John McCain	Barack Obama	Someone else/Don't remember
Same-sex Legal/Illegal				
Legal	42%	17%	64%	34%
Illegal	46%	75%	23%	43%
Not sure	12%	8%	13%	23%





Crosstabs

	Base	2008 Vote		
		John McCain	Barack Obama	Someone else/Don't remember
Gay Marriage/Civ. Unions/No Recognition				
Gay couples should be allowed to legally marry	38%	13%	60%	27%
Gay couples should be allowed to form civil unions but not marry	28%	37%	23%	19%
There should be no legal recognition of a gay couple's relationship	30%	48%	14%	37%
Not sure	4%	3%	4%	18%

	Base	2008 Vote		
		John McCain	Barack Obama	Someone else/Don't remember
Marriage Issue Most Important Factor in Vote ?				
Gay marriage is the most important factor	11%	16%	6%	14%
It is not	86%	82%	91%	69%
Not sure	4%	3%	3%	17%

	Base	2008 Vote		
		John McCain	Barack Obama	Someone else/Don't remember
Obama Approval				
Approve	37%	2%	68%	22%
Disapprove	51%	94%	17%	45%
Not sure	11%	4%	15%	33%

	Base	Ideology				
		Very liberal	Somewhat liberal	Moderate	Somewhat conservative	Very conservative
Golding/Mathis						
Republican Cindy Golding	46%	26%	8%	23%	72%	91%
Democrat Liz Mathis	52%	73%	92%	72%	27%	8%
Undecided	2%	2%	1%	5%	1%	1%





Crosstabs

	Base	Ideology				
		Very liberal	Somewhat liberal	Moderate	Somewhat conservative	Very conservative
Branstad Approval						
Approve	39%	26%	7%	29%	55%	74%
Disapprove	42%	74%	80%	49%	23%	8%
Not sure	18%	-	13%	22%	22%	18%

	Base	Ideology				
		Very liberal	Somewhat liberal	Moderate	Somewhat conservative	Very conservative
Want Dems or GOP to Control Sen?						
Democrats	44%	72%	83%	56%	22%	7%
Republicans	44%	26%	8%	22%	67%	89%
Not sure	12%	2%	9%	22%	11%	4%

	Base	Ideology				
		Very liberal	Somewhat liberal	Moderate	Somewhat conservative	Very conservative
Same-sex Legal/Illegal						
Legal	42%	65%	79%	55%	18%	11%
Illegal	46%	27%	14%	29%	67%	84%
Not sure	12%	9%	7%	17%	15%	5%

	Base	Ideology				
		Very liberal	Somewhat liberal	Moderate	Somewhat conservative	Very conservative
Gay Marriage/Civ. Unions/No Recognition						
Gay couples should be allowed to legally marry	38%	63%	72%	49%	15%	8%
Gay couples should be allowed to form civil unions but not marry	28%	20%	17%	26%	42%	28%
There should be no legal recognition of a gay couple's relationship	30%	17%	8%	19%	39%	62%
Not sure	4%	-	4%	7%	5%	2%





Crosstabs

	Base	Ideology				
		Very liberal	Somewhat liberal	Moderate	Somewhat conservative	Very conservative
Marriage Issue Most Important Factor in Vote?						
Gay marriage is the most important factor	11%	11%	6%	8%	12%	17%
It is not	86%	87%	90%	87%	87%	78%
Not sure	4%	1%	4%	6%	1%	5%

	Base	Ideology				
		Very liberal	Somewhat liberal	Moderate	Somewhat conservative	Very conservative
Obama Approval						
Approve	37%	71%	67%	48%	16%	6%
Disapprove	51%	24%	18%	31%	78%	92%
Not sure	11%	6%	15%	21%	6%	2%

