

Minnesota Public Radio News and Humphrey Institute Poll
Republicans Win Capitol Budget Battle

Report prepared by the Center for the Study of Politics and Governance
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The new Minnesota Public Radio News and Humphrey Institute poll finds that the Republicans won the budget battle with Democrats.

Other findings include:

- Minnesotans strongly disapprove of how the Legislature handled its job, more so than in the recent past. This is having ripple effects on Minnesota politics.
- Democrats are deadlocked with Republicans in state legislative elections.
- Large majorities oppose the use of tax payer money to build a new Vikings stadium even if it means that the team may leave the state.

The survey was conducted of 701 Minnesota adults between May 13 to May 16, 2010, which follows the endorsing conventions by the three major parties in Minnesota and came during the final weekend of the legislative session. The margin of error is +/-5.8 percentage points. For smaller subgroups the margin of sampling error is larger.

Republican Win Budget Battle

The grueling round of budget battles that brought the legislative session to a close was won by Republicans. **Thirty-five percent of Minnesotans report that the Republicans did a better job handling the state budget compared to 27% who gave the edge to Democrats.**

Republican Better Handle Budget

	Better Job Handling State Budget
Democrats	27%
Republicans	35%
About the Same	18%
No Opinion	20%

The public gave poor scores to the Minnesota Legislature, which is controlled by large Democratic majorities. **Only 37% approved of the way the Legislature was handling its job** at the end of session. This is a decline from 46% in the January 2008 MPR News/Humphrey Institute survey, which occurred at the beginning of session.

Sagging Public Support for Minnesota Legislature

	Handling Job in January 2008	Handling Job in May 2010
Approve	46%	37%
Disapprove	44%	52%
No Opinion	10%	12%

The Legislature is both a punching bag for the political backlash in the state and a liability. The Legislature is associated in the minds of Minnesotans with the state's misdirection: among those who view the state as heading off on the wrong track, two thirds disapprove of the legislature.

The dissatisfaction with the Legislature is feeding into political attitudes and may impact the gubernatorial elections. **Among independents who often swing elections, half disapprove of the Legislature.** Even a third of Democrats disapprove.

Among the supporters of presumptive Republican Party nominee Tom Emmer, nearly two thirds disapprove of the Legislature. Over half of the support of the Independence Party candidate, Tom Horner, is also coming from critics of the Legislature. The bottom line is that running against the Legislature makes political sense and may become a feature of the upcoming campaign.

State Legislative Elections are Deadlocked

In 2008, Democrats enjoyed a steady advantage over Republicans in Minnesota state legislative elections, ranging from 13 points in August to 16% shortly before Election Day. The political winds have shifted.

Today, the battle for control of the Minnesota Legislature is a toss-up. Forty-one percent report that they favor the Democratic Party candidate and 38% indicate they support the Republican rival.

Toss-Up For Minnesota Legislative Elections

	August 2008	Early October 2008	Late October 2008	May 2010
Democratic candidate	49%	45%	49%	41%
Republican candidate	36%	34%	33%	38%
No Opinion	13%	19%	16%	21%

Strong Opposition to Vikings Stadium

Keeping the Vikings is not worth public tax dollars, according to the MPR News/HHH survey. **A large majority (64%) oppose using tax payer money to build a new Vikings stadium even if it means that the team might leave the state.** Only 30% support using tax dollars. Not only is there lopsided opposition to the Vikings stadium but the resisters are three times more intense than the backers of the stadium (47% vs. 15%).

Minnesotans Oppose Tax-Funded Vikings Stadium

Favor using tax payer money to build a new Vikings stadium to keep the team	30% (15% strongly favor)
Oppose using tax payer money to build a new Vikings stadium even if it means that the team might leave	64% (47% strongly oppose)
No Opinion	6%

Women are substantially more opposed than men to using tax dollars to build a new Vikings stadium. Although most men do oppose the stadium (55%), women oppose the stadium by nearly 20 points more (72%).

Women Oppose Stadium More Strongly

	Favor using taxes to pay for new stadium and keep team	Oppose using taxes to pay for new stadium even if team might leave	No Opinion
Men	40%	55%	5%
Women	22%	72%	6%

About the Survey

This survey is a collaboration between Minnesota Public Radio News and the Center for the Study of Politics and Governance at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs. The survey was analyzed by the Center. The research team was Lawrence R. Jacobs (Center Director) and Joanne M. Miller (Associate Professor, Department of Political Science). Geoff Sheagley provided research assistance.

The survey was fielded by the Information Specialists Group (ISG) and is based on a landline random digit dial survey in Minnesota. ISG called a sample of telephone exchanges that was randomly selected by a computer from a list of active residential exchanges within Minnesota. Within each exchange, random digits were added to form a complete telephone number, thus permitting access to both listed and unlisted numbers. Within each household, one adult was selected to be the respondent for the survey.

As is common with public opinion surveys, the data were weighted. In the first stage, the data were weighted based on the number of potential survey respondents and the number of landline telephone numbers in the household. In the second stage, data were weighted according to cell phone usage, as well as gender, age, race, and Hispanic ethnicity to approximate the demographic characteristics of the population according to the Census.

The distribution of party identification among Minnesotan adults in the full sample is as follows:

	Minnesota Adults
Republican	42%
Independent	15%
Democrat	42%

701 adults living in Minnesota were interviewed by telephone between May 13 and May 16, 2010; the margin of sampling error is +/-5.8 percentage points. In theory, in 19 cases out of 20 the results among Minneapolis voters will differ by no more than +/-5.8 percentage points in either direction from what would have been obtained by interviewing all voters in the election. The response rate is 26 percent (based AAPOR response rate calculation 4).

Our calculation of sampling error uses a more cautious approach than is common in order to take account of design effects. The common approach calculates the margin of sampling error based primarily on the number of respondents, which would produce a margin of error of +/-3.7 percent for a sample size of 701. This approach implicitly assumes a 100% response rate, which of course never happens. Our calculation of the margin of sampling error takes into account the response rate and the effects of weighting, in particular, which produces a margin of error of +/-5.8 percent. This is reflected in our analysis of Dayton's 4 point lead over Emmer outside the margin of error and as a statistical "toss-up" even though we also suggest a "slight edge" for the Democrat. In our view, taking account of design effects errs on the side of caution and should enhance confidence in the reported results.

In addition to sampling error, the practical difficulties of conducting any survey of public opinion may introduce sources of error into the poll. Variations in the wording and order of questions, for example, may lead to somewhat different results.

Questions

Do you approve or disapprove of the way the Minnesota Legislature is handling its job?

Which party do you think is doing a better job of handling the state budget?

Do you favor using tax payer money to build a new Vikings stadium to keep the team in Minnesota or do you oppose using tax payer money to build a new Vikings stadium even if it means that the team might leave the state?

If the November elections for the Minnesota State Legislature were being held today, would you vote for? The Democrat Party candidate, The Republican Party candidate, or Somebody Else.