



University of North Florida
Public Opinion Research Lab
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**Poll of Duval County Likely Voters Shows Mixed Feelings about Pension Tax
but Overall Confidence in Local Leadership**

Jacksonville, Fla. – A new poll of likely voters in Duval County by the Public Opinion Research Laboratory (PORL) at the University of North Florida shows that support for the pension tax plan is not universal. Support for Mayor Lenny Curry’s pension tax is a mixed bag, with 41 percent of respondents who strongly or somewhat approve, 33 percent who strongly or somewhat oppose and 26 percent who still do not know. Support and opposition for the pension tax is relatively uniform across party affiliations.

“Mayor Curry still has some work to do garnering votes for the pension tax, but there is reason for optimism since support outweighs opposition by 8 percentage points,” said PORL Faculty Director Michael Binder

Regarding job approval of local leadership, Curry fared well with 69 percent of likely voters who strongly or somewhat approve of his performance as mayor. Not surprisingly, more Republicans than Democrats approve of Curry, but the vast majority of respondents approve of Curry regardless of party affiliation.

“The mayor is enjoying extremely high levels of job approval through the first year of his term. It will be interesting to see if Curry can parlay his political capital into a passing vote on the pension tax ballot measure,” said Binder.

Mike Williams also has widespread approval with 72 percent of respondents who strongly or somewhat approve of his job as Jacksonville’s Sheriff.

“Like Mayor Curry, Williams has strong support among whites and Republicans, but the majority of blacks and Democrats also approve of how he is handling his duties,” said Binder.

The Jacksonville City Council and the Superintendent of Duval County Schools, Nikolai Vitti, garnered the approval (strongly or somewhat) of about half of the sample, whereas roughly 30 percent disapprove of the job they are doing and 20 percent do not know.

Clerk of Court incumbent Ronnie Fussell will be on the ballot in November after gaining notoriety last year for cancelling all Duval County courthouse wedding ceremonies when same-sex marriage was legalized nationwide. Currently, 39 percent of Duval County likely voters strongly or somewhat approve of Fussell's performance on the job, 10 percent somewhat or strongly disapprove, while more than half of respondents (51 percent) are unsure.

"Though Fussell will not be on the ballot in August, he will be in November and his current level of job approval bodes well for him," said Binder.

When asked about the most important problem facing Jacksonville, 38 percent said it is crime, 16 percent think it is the economy/jobs, and 15 percent selected education. Further analysis shows differences between races, with more than half (54 percent) of black likely voters who think crime is the most important problem compared with 34 percent of white likely voters; and only 2 percent of black likely voters perceive the public pension problem as the most important in contrast to 18 percent of white likely voters.

"Similar to our Spring 2015 Jax Speaks survey of Duval likely voters, crime is the most important problem facing Jacksonville," said the PORL faculty director. "The 20-point difference between white and black likely voters is striking, as is the discrepancy between white and black opinion on the importance of the pension problem. Perhaps that points to the racial differences in levels of support for the proposition, if the black community doesn't think the pension debt is a big problem, then it makes sense they would be less likely to support a tax to pay for it."

In the wake of the Orlando massacre, support for an HRO in Duval County runs high. The majority of likely voters support expanding the HRO (human rights ordinance) to include anti-discrimination protection on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression in the areas of housing, employment and public accommodations. However, this support varies widely across party lines, with more than 70 percent of Democrats and those with other party affiliations who support the HRO compared with only 38 percent of Republicans.

"The PORL has been running surveys on the HRO for several years, this is the first time that Republicans have had a net negative for the HRO," said Binder. "I can only surmise that the bathroom debate has eroded support among Republican super voters".

Duval County Likely Voters Survey Results

Do you support or oppose the referendum to be presented to Jacksonville voters in the Aug. 30 primary election that reads: “Permanently closing up to three of the City’s underfunded defined benefit retirement plans, increasing the employee contribution for those plans to a minimum of 10 percent, and ending the Better Jacksonville half-cent sales tax are all required to adopt a half-cent sales tax solely dedicated to reducing the City’s unfunded pension liability. Shall such pension liability sales tax, which ends upon elimination of the unfunded pension liability or in 30 years maximum, be adopted?”

	Duval County Likely Voters n= 553
Strongly Support	18%
Somewhat Support	23%
Somewhat Oppose	14%
Strongly Oppose	19%
Don’t Know	26%

Pension Tax and Party Affiliation n= 553	Duval County Likely Republican Voters	Duval County Likely Democrat Voters	Duval County Likely NPA/Other Voters
Strongly/Support	43%	39%	36%
Strongly/Somewhat Oppose	31%	34%	45%
Don’t Know	26%	27%	19%

Pension Tax and Race n=553	Duval County Likely White Voters	Duval County Likely Black Voters	Duval County Likely Other Race Voters
Strongly/Support	44%	35%	27%
Strongly/Somewhat Oppose	32%	34%	50%
Don’t Know	25%	31%	23%

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

	Duval County Likely Voters n= 572
Strongly Approve	30%
Somewhat Approve	39%
Somewhat Disapprove	10%
Strongly Disapprove	7%
Don’t Know	15%

Lenny Curry Job Approval and Party Affiliation n= 572	Duval County Likely Republican Voters	Duval County Likely Democrat Voters	Duval County Likely NPA/Other Voters
Strongly/Support	81%	52%	50%
Strongly/Somewhat Oppose	6%	32%	26%
Don't Know	13%	16%	24%

Lenny Curry Job Approval and Race n= 572	Duval County Likely White Voters	Duval County Likely Black Voters	Duval County Likely Other Race Voters
Strongly/Support	72%	61%	42%
Strongly/Somewhat Oppose	14%	23%	35%
Don't Know	14%	17%	23%

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

	Duval County Likely Voters n= 578
Strongly Approve	35%
Somewhat Approve	37%
Somewhat Disapprove	8%
Strongly Disapprove	5%
Don't Know	14%

Mike Williams Job Approval and Party Affiliation n= 578	Duval County Likely Republican Voters	Duval County Likely Democrat Voters	Duval County Likely NPA/Other Voters
Strongly/Support	83%	61%	47%
Strongly/Somewhat Oppose	7%	22%	25%
Don't Know	11%	17%	28%

Mike Williams Job Approval and Race n= 578	Duval County Likely White Voters	Duval County Likely Black Voters	Duval County Likely Other Race Voters
Strongly/Support	78%	60%	42%
Strongly/Somewhat Oppose	9%	27%	27%
Don't Know	13%	13%	31%

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

	Duval County Likely Voters n= 570
Strongly Approve	7%
Somewhat Approve	41%
Somewhat Disapprove	18%
Strongly Disapprove	14%
Don't Know	19%

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Nikolai Vitti is handling his job as the Duval County Superintendent of Schools?

	Duval County Likely Voters n= 573
Strongly Approve	19%
Somewhat Approve	31%
Somewhat Disapprove	15%
Strongly Disapprove	19%
Don't Know	17%

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Ronnie Fussell is handling his job as Clerk of Courts?

	Duval County Likely Voters n= 553
Strongly Approve	14%
Somewhat Approve	25%
Somewhat Disapprove	5%
Strongly Disapprove	5%
Don't Know	51%

In your opinion, what is the most important problem facing Jacksonville?

	Duval County Likely Voters n= 596
Improving the Downtown Area	4%
Education	15%
Improving Transportation and Infrastructure	6%
Crime	38%
Solving the Public Pension Problem	14%
Economy/Jobs	16%
Something Else	4%
Don't Know	2%

Most important problem facing Jacksonville and Race	Duval County White Likely Voters	Duval County Black Likely Voters	Duval County Other Race Likely Voters
Improving the Downtown Area	4%	3%	5%
Education	16%	12%	19%
Improving Transportation and Infrastructure	7%	3%	21%
Crime	34%	54%	29%
Solving the Public Pension Problem	18%	2%	4%
Economy/Jobs	16%	19%	15%
Something Else	4%	5%	-
Don't Know	2%	1%	7%

Q12. Do you support or oppose the City of Jacksonville expanding the city's human-rights ordinance to include anti-discrimination protection on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression in the areas of housing, employment and public accommodations?

	Duval County Likely Voters n= 554
Strongly Support	38%
Somewhat Support	18%
Somewhat Oppose	11%
Strongly Oppose	26%
Don't Know	8%

HRO and Party Affiliation n=554	Duval County Likely Republican Voters	Duval County Likely Democrat Voters	Duval County Likely NPA/Other Voters
Strongly/Support	38%	77%	70%
Strongly/Somewhat Oppose	51%	17%	30%
Don't Know	11%	5%	-

HRO and Race n=554	Duval County Likely White Voters	Duval County Likely Black Voters	Duval County Likely Other Race Voters
Strongly/Support	50%	67%	73%
Strongly/Somewhat Oppose	41%	26%	19%
Don't Know	9%	7%	8%

Methodology

The Duval County poll was conducted, Tuesday June 28, through Thursday June 30, 2016 by telephone. Samples were created through voter files provided by Duval County's Supervisor of Elections and selected through the use of randomization among likely voters. Calls were conducted only in English, with 596 registered likely voters, 18 years of age or older. Likely voters were considered people who had voted in either four out of the last five statewide elections (presidential preference primary in 2016, statewide primary elections in 2012 and 2014 and general elections in 2012 and 2014). Voters who voted in at least the 2014 statewide primary election and newly registered voters that voted in the 2016 presidential preference primary were also included as likely voters. In addition to be considered a likely voter, respondent indicated that they would "Definitely Vote" or "Probably Vote" in August's primary election.

The margin of error is +/- 4 percent. The breakdown of completed responses on a landline phone to a cell phone was 39 to 59 percent with 2 percent unknown. The sample had quota for partisan registration and geography by Congressional District and was weighted to race and gender statistics for the likely voter profile of the county. This survey was sponsored by the PORL at the University of North Florida and is directed by associate professor of Political Science Dr. Michael Binder. 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 and a charter member of the American Association for Public Opinion Research Transparency Initiative. For more information about methodology, contact Binder at porl@unf.edu or at (904) 620-2784. PDF version; website: <https://www.unf.edu/coas/porl/>

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