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**FAU Poll Finds Scott and Nelson in Tight Race as Gillum  
Maintains Slight Lead on DeSantis in Florida's Governor Race**  
*Healthcare Tops List of Voters' Most Important Issues*

**BOCA RATON, Fla. (Oct. 23, 2018)** – With two weeks left before Election Day, Republican Florida Gov. Rick Scott leads incumbent Democrat U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson by less than two points in Florida's critical U.S. Senate race, while Democratic nominee Andrew Gillum maintains a narrow lead over Republican nominee Ron DeSantis in the battle to be the state's next governor, according to the statewide survey by the [Florida Atlantic University Business and Economics Polling Initiative](#) (FAU BEPI).

Since the last FAU survey five weeks ago, Scott has seen his lead increase slightly, from less than one point in September to 42.3 percent over Nelson's 40.6 percent in this latest poll, with 13.1 percent undecided. The margin of error for the survey is +/- 3.6 percent.

Scott has a slight edge in overall job approval, with 42.9 percent of voters approving Scott's performance as governor and 35.8 percent disapproving. Nelson's performance as senator earned him a 36.4 percent approval and 34.7 percent disapproval.

In the gubernatorial race, Gillum, the mayor of Tallahassee, garnered 41.4 percent of the vote, while DeSantis, a former U.S. representative, has 36.7 percent, with 17.5 percent undecided. That's a slightly larger margin than the September poll, which showed Gillum up 41.3 percent to 38.5 percent. Young voters could be a major factor in the governor's race, as 18 to 34 year olds favor Gillum 46.3 percent to 24.7 percent.

"This election will be a test of the youth vote," said [Kevin Wagner](#), Ph.D., professor of political science at FAU and a research fellow of the Initiative. "If young voters turn out in high numbers, it could carry the Democratic ticket."

A ban on assault weapons was supported by 42.7 percent of voters, down eight points from the September survey, while 33.6 percent oppose and 23.7 percent are undecided. Gun control policy again ranked fourth among the most important issues to voters in the upcoming election. Healthcare jumped to No. 1 among the most important issues with 30.8 percent, followed by immigration at 23.9 percent, the economy in

general at 13 percent, and gun control policy at 10.3 percent. An August survey had immigration polling two points above healthcare at the top of voters' most important issues.

When asked whose policies they believe are most responsible for the algae problem along Florida's coasts, 35.3 percent of voters said Scott as governor is most responsible, while 19.9 percent said Nelson as U.S. Senator was most responsible, and 44.7 percent said they don't know.

"Perhaps holding Scott back is the algae problem in the state," said Monica Escaleras, Ph.D., director of the BEPI. "Voters are nearly twice as likely to blame him as they are Nelson."

Roughly one-third of Floridians (33.4 percent) rated the state of Florida's evacuation planning and process prior to Hurricane Michael making landfall as excellent, while 40.6 said it was good, 23.6 percent fair and 2.4 percent poor. Scott's response to Hurricane Michael was rated excellent by 38.8 percent of voters, while 32.1 percent rated it good, 24.6 percent rated it fair and 4.5 percent rated it poor.

U.S. President Donald Trump's approval rating improved more than five points from 38.7 percent in last month's poll to 44.5 percent in the latest survey, while his disapproval rating fell to 42 percent.

Party breakdown among the survey respondents was 37 percent Democrats, 35 percent Republicans and 28 percent Independents.

The survey was conducted Oct. 18-21 and polled 704 Florida registered voters who said they are likely to vote. The survey was conducted using an online sample supplied by Survey Sampling International using online questionnaires and via an automated telephone platform (IVR) using registered voter lists supplied by Aristotle, Inc. The survey has a margin of error of +/- 3.6 percentage points. Responses for the entire sample were weighted to reflect the statewide distribution of the Florida population. The polling results and full cross-tabulations are available at [www.business.fau.edu/bepi](http://www.business.fau.edu/bepi).

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***About FAU BEPI:***

*The Florida Atlantic University Business and Economic Polling Initiative conducts surveys on business, economic, political and social issues with a focus on Hispanic attitudes and opinions at regional, state and national levels via planned monthly national surveys. The initiative subscribes to the American Association*

*of Public Opinion Research and is a resource for public and private organizations, academic research and media outlets. In addition, the initiative is designed to contribute to the educational mission of the University by providing students with valuable opportunities to enhance their educational experience by designing and carrying out public opinion research.*

***About Florida Atlantic University***

*Florida Atlantic University, established in 1961, officially opened its doors in 1964 as the fifth public university in Florida. Today, the University, with an annual economic impact of \$6.3 billion, serves more than 30,000 undergraduate and graduate students at sites throughout its six-county service region in southeast Florida. FAU's world-class teaching and research faculty serves students through 10 colleges: the Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters, the College of Business, the College for Design and Social Inquiry, the College of Education, the College of Engineering and Computer Science, the Graduate College, the Harriet L. Wilkes Honors College, the Charles E. Schmidt College of Medicine, the Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing and the Charles E. Schmidt College of Science. FAU is ranked as a High Research Activity institution by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. The University is placing special focus on the rapid development of critical areas that form the basis of its strategic plan: Healthy aging, biotech, coastal and marine issues, neuroscience, regenerative medicine, informatics, lifespan and the environment. These areas provide opportunities for faculty and students to build upon FAU's existing strengths in research and scholarship. For more information, visit [www.fau.edu](http://www.fau.edu).*