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FAU Poll Finds Warren Cutting Into Biden's Lead in Florida, Where Trump Narrowly Leads in Matchups with Democrats
Bi-partisan Support on Background Checks, Split on Tariffs

BOCA RATON, Fla. (September 18, 2019) – U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren has doubled her support in Florida in the last four months to pull within 10 points of former U.S. Vice President Joe Biden in the race for the Democratic party's nomination for president in 2020, according to a statewide survey of Florida voters by the Florida Atlantic University Business and Economics Polling Initiative (FAU BEPI).

U.S. President Donald Trump garnered 85 percent support from Republican Primary voters, while former South Carolina Gov. and Congressman Mark Sanford had 8 percent, former Illinois Congressman Joe Walsh 5 percent and former Massachusetts Gov. Bill Weld 2 percent.

Among the Democratic candidates, Biden continues to lead at 34 percent, down from 39 percent in BEPI's May poll. Warren was second at 24 percent, up from 12 percent in May, while U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders' support has seen only a modest gain of two points in the last four months, now at 14 percent. South Bend, Indiana Mayor Pete Buttigieg came in a distant fourth at 5 percent, followed by Kamala Harris at 4 percent. No other candidate polled above 3 percent.

Warren, Biden and Sanders are all in a statistical dead heat in head-to-head matchups against Trump. Warren fared best, losing by just two-tenths of a point, 50.1-49.9 percent, while Biden and Sanders were both just one point behind the president, 50.5-49.5 percent, and Harris lost by four points 52-48 percent.

There is overwhelming bi-partisan support from 75 percent of voters for universal background checks for all gun buyers, with just 14 percent opposed. Voters are split on the new tariffs on Chinese goods, with 40 percent saying it hurts America, 33 percent saying it helps America and 27 percent saying it has no effect. Independents (44 percent) and Democrats (40 percent) were more likely to say the tariffs are hurting America than Republicans (20 percent).

"It seems that the majority of Democrats, Republicans and Independents agree on universal background checks," said Monica Escaleras, Ph.D., director of the FAU BEPI. "However, if tariffs become a central issue in the presidential election, then Independents appear to be more aligned with Democrats."

Trump's approval rating among Florida voters rose to 49 percent (up from 47 percent in the May poll) with 46 percent disapproval.

"While Joe Biden continues to lead other primary candidates in Florida, Elizabeth Warren is gathering strength and is becoming a real competitor for the state," said Kevin Wagner, Ph.D., professor of political science at FAU and a research fellow of the Initiative. "President Trump is in a dead heat with the leading Democrats in Florida, which continues to be the largest battleground state."

The most important issues among Florida voters are the economy (21 percent), immigration (19 percent) and healthcare (18 percent). The environment finished fourth (11 percent), while gun control and foreign policy were tied for fifth among voters' most important issues.

The survey was conducted Sept. 12-15 and polled 934 Florida registered voters. The survey has a margin of error of +/- 3.1 percentage points. The margin of error for the Republican Primary is +/- 5.2 percentage points, while the margin for error for the Democratic Primary is +/- 4.9 percent.

The data was weighted by ethnicity, age, education, party affiliation, region and gender based on a 2016 voter model. It is important to remember that subsets carry with them higher margins of error, as the sample size is reduced. Data was collected using both an Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system of landlines and an online panel provided by Dynata. The polling results and full cross-tabulations are available at www.business.fau.edu/bepi.

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