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FAU Poll Finds Florida U.S. Senate Race Remains Close While Voters Are Warming to Trump *Floridians Would Still Rather Have Obama as President*

BOCA RATON, Fla. (May 9, 2018) – Florida Gov. Rick Scott, who announced he would run for the U.S. Senate last month, has opened up a small four-point lead on U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson, 44 to 40 percent, with 16 percent still undecided, according to the statewide survey by the Florida Atlantic University Business and Economics Polling Initiative (FAU BEPI). However, that’s a six-point swing from a poll taken by FAU in late February, which showed Nelson leading 40 to 38 percent. Among those respondents who said they are very likely to vote in November, the race is still tied at 45 percent.

“The Senate race in Florida continues to be very close and is going to be one of the most expensive and competitive contests in the nation,” said [Kevin Wagner](#), Ph.D., professor of political science at FAU and a research fellow of the Initiative. “President Trump’s approval ratings in Florida are edging up, and if that continues, it could help Rick Scott and other Republicans on the midterm ballot.”

U.S. President Donald Trump is enjoying his highest approval rating since taking office among Florida voters, but a majority says his tax cut legislation has made no difference to them financially. Trump’s approval rating is at 43 percent, while his disapproval rating is at 45 percent. When asked specifically about the Republican-led tax legislation, which Trump signed into law in December 2017, only 29 percent said it has helped them financially, while 19 percent said it has hurt them and 52 percent said it has made no difference to them. When voters were asked who they would rather have as president, 49 percent said former U.S. President Barack Obama, while 43 percent said Trump.

Meanwhile, leading candidates have emerged in both the Republican and Democratic primaries for governor of Florida. In the Republican race, Ron DeSantis garnered 16 percent support, with Adam Putnam close behind at 15 percent, while no other candidate reached double digits. The top Democratic candidates are Philip Levine at 16 percent and Gwen Graham at 15 percent, with Christopher King at 10 percent. More

than four in 10 voters in both parties are undecided, however, so the candidates have a long way to go. (43 percent of Republicans and 42 percent of Democrats).

“The race for governor remains wide open in Florida, with large numbers of undecided voters in both races,” said Monica Escaleras, Ph.D., director of the BEPI. “It is not unusual to have so many undecided voters at this early stage, as even the leading candidates are still introducing themselves to much of Florida.”

The most important issue for voters in the survey is immigration (23 percent), followed by healthcare (20 percent), the economy (13 percent) and gun control (12 percent).

Party breakdown among the survey respondents was almost evenly split, with 34 percent currently registered as Republican, 34 percent Democrat and 32 percent Independent.

The survey, which polled 1,000 Florida registered voters May 4-7, 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 +/- 3.0 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.

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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.