

# Rick Scott Gets High Marks on Hurricane Irma

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Gov. Rick Scott is getting high marks for his handling of Hurricane Irma and that could help him if he runs for the U.S. Senate in 2018, a new poll shows.

On Wednesday, Florida Atlantic University's (FAU) Business and Economics Polling Initiative (BEPI) released a poll looking at Scott and the state's response to Hurricane Irma.

Almost three-quarters of those surveyed--72 percent--think Scott's response to the hurricane was excellent or good while 19 percent thought he did a fair job and 8 percent thought he did a poor job. A majority--57 percent--of Floridians think Scott's performance will help him in 2018 if he decides, as is expected, to challenge U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson, D-Fla., while 18 percent think the governor will be hurt based on his handling of Hurricane Irma while 25 percent are not sure.

The poll shows that Floridians generally think that state and local governments did a good job in preparing for the hurricane. More than two-thirds of those surveyed--68 percent--give the state government excellent or good marks for preparing the hurricane while 25 percent think it did a fair job and 7 percent think it did poorly. Asked about how their local governments prepared for Hurricane Irma, 69 percent give excellent or good grades while 18 percent say fair and 13 percent give poor grades. Floridians are less impressed with how their local governments did in terms of clearing debris with 56 percent saying excellent or good while 27 percent say fair and 17 percent say poor.

"Floridians are satisfied with the state's preparedness and response to Hurricane Irma," said Monica Escaleras, the director of the BEPI. "Although he hasn't formally declared his candidacy for the U.S. Senate, Gov. Scott maintained a very high profile during that time, which has helped how voters view him going into what most people expect is a likely run for U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson's seat in 2018."

Almost half of those surveyed--49 percent--see Scott as favorable while 39 percent view the governor in an unfavorable light. Nelson is seen as favorable by 45 percent and unfavorable by 22 percent. Despite being in the Senate for three terms and spending more than four decades on the Florida political stage, a quarter of those surveyed--25 percent--are not sure what they think about Nelson.

The poll also shows President Donald Trump still upside down in Florida despite carrying the state last year with 41 percent approving of him and 47 percent disapproving of him. That's a slight improvement from an August FAU poll which had 37 percent approving of Trump and 47 percent disapproving of him.

Turning to the environment, 39 percent of those surveyed say they are very concerned about it, 38 percent are somewhat concerned and 24 percent are not at all concerned about it. While 56 percent of Floridians think climate change is impacting hurricanes, 30 percent do not think this is the case. When asked about if Florida is doing enough about rising sea levels, 37 percent say yes and 39 percent say no.

Asked about the federal government, 45 percent say the environment should be a medium priority while 27 percent think it should be a high priority, 18 percent a very high priority and 13 percent a low priority.

Despite his prominent role as an environmental activist, Floridians do not give former Vice President Al Gore high marks with 41 percent seeing him as unfavorable while 37 percent view him in a favorable light.

The poll of 500 registered Florida voters was taken from Nov. 2 through Nov. 5 and had a margin of error of +/- 4.5 percent.