



MEMORANDUM

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Michael D. Cohen, Ph.D., WRS // mcohen@wrs.gop
Aaron Evans, WRS // aaron@wrs.gop
DATE: July 28, 2020
RE: WRS Virginia Likely Voter Poll

The following recaps the results of our first WRS Virginia Likely Voter Poll. We focused on three issues: school reopening, defunding the police, and taking down statues of Confederate political and military leaders. The statewide poll was completed by WRS July 15-23, 2020 among a sample of 1,028 likely voters in Virginia by live telephone interviewing. The data was weighted by gender, locality, age, and education. The survey has a margin of sampling error of $\pm 3.1\%$ at the 95% confidence level, meaning if we conducted the survey 100 times, the results would be within 3.1% 95 out of 100 times.

School Reopening

While making the decision to reopen local schools is a shared responsibility, we asked likely voters in Virginia who they would like to be most responsible in determining the range of options for them to consider in how schools reopen in the fall.

- Close to half (49%) of likely voters in Virginia believe local school boards and superintendents should be the *most* responsible for determining the range of options for returning to school this fall. No other leadership group was close.
- More than one in five Virginians (22%) want federal health officials at the Center for Disease Control (CDC) to be responsible for providing options for reopening schools.
- Parents with preschool children (58%) are most likely to want their local school boards and superintendents to be most responsible for school reopening options.
- Parents of college-age children (21%) were least likely to want their local school boards and superintendents to take the lead, preferring the CDC, instead (32%).
- Top preferences by Congressional District:

Congressional District	Local school boards and superintendents	Center for Disease Control (CDC)
7	57%	24%
8	54%	24%
6	53%	19%
1	51%	19%
10	49%	18%
3	48%	18%
9	47%	23%
2	46%	19%
4	46%	25%
5	43%	28%

11	37%	26%
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- Virginians do not want national elected leaders making these decisions. Fewer than one in ten want Trump and his cabinet (8%) or Congress (1%) to be most responsible for reopening schools.
- Virginians don't want leadership in Richmond to be most responsible for these decisions, either. Again, fewer than one in ten want Governor Northam and his cabinet (9%) or the state legislature (3%) to lead decision-making on reopening schools this fall.

Separately, we asked if they approved or disapproved of the options they have been presented to return to school this fall.

- Despite preferring local control of decision-making, a plurality of Virginians disapprove of their local school system's plan to return to school this fall (44%, vs. 34% approve).
- Virginia likely voters are significantly more likely to strongly *disapprove* (30%) of their local school's plan to reopen than those who strongly *approve* (19%).
- Parents with young school-age children, in preschool (50%) or elementary school (50%), were most likely to approve of the options they were given for reopening in the fall. Parents with children in middle school (32%) or high school (27%) were significantly less likely to approve of their fall options.
- The strongest net approval for school reopening options is in CD-07 (+11%) and the strongest net disapproval found was in CD-03 (-42%).

Congressional District	Percent Approve	Percent Disapprove	Net Approval
7	49%	38%	+11%
11	41%	46%	-5%
9	38%	43%	-5%
10	38%	42%	-4%
5	36%	42%	-6%
1	34%	38%	-4%
6	32%	52%	-20%
4	29%	40%	-11%
2	29%	34%	-5%
8	28%	51%	-23%
3	19%	61%	-42%

Defund the Police

We asked likely voters in Virginia if they support or oppose the effort to defund the police without additional context as definitions vary quite a bit within left- and right-leaning groups.

- Likely voters in Virginia oppose the effort to defund the police by a wide margin of 61% to 27% and most of the opposition is solid. A majority of likely voters in Virginia (54%) say they *strongly oppose* defunding the police while only 13% *strongly support* it.
- Republicans almost universally (93%) reject the notion of defunding the police while, in contrast, a slight majority of Democrats (51%) support defunding the police and one in five (20%) Democrats are unsure. Only 25% of independents support defunding the police while more than six in ten (63%) oppose the effort.

- Only likely voters in Congressional District 8 support defunding the police. In every other CD, the net support is negative, and by a significant margin.

Congressional District	Percent Support	Percent Oppose	Net Support
8	48%	39%	+9%
11	36%	55%	-19%
3	34%	50%	-16%
4	32%	57%	-25%
7	27%	52%	-25%
10	27%	65%	-38%
5	24%	66%	-42%
6	23%	71%	-48%
1	22%	69%	-47%
2	17%	77%	-60%
9	13%	72%	-59%

Taking Down Confederate Statues

By a narrower margin, likely voters in Virginia *oppose* the effort to remove statues of Confederate political and military leaders (50% oppose, 43% support).

- Virginia likely voters are more likely to strongly oppose (39%) than strongly support (33%) removal of these statues, while those who *somewhat* oppose (11%) or *somewhat* support removal (10%) are statistically tied.
- Virginia's partisans are extremely divided by party affiliation on this issue. Almost eight in ten Democrats (79%) support the removal of these statues, while an even greater proportion of Republicans (86%) are against their removal. About half of independents (51%) are also against removing statues of Confederate political and military leaders.
- Likely voters in the Commonwealth of Virginia are divided on this issue with five Congressional Districts supporting the removal of Confederate statues and another five opposing. Swing Congressional District 10 is split almost evenly.

Congressional District	Percent Support	Percent Oppose	Net Support
3	60%	37%	+23%
11	58%	34%	+24%
8	56%	30%	+26%
4	50%	43%	+7%
7	49%	43%	+6%
10	47%	48%	-1%
9	37%	61%	-24%
2	34%	56%	-22%
6	31%	62%	-31%
5	31%	64%	-33%
1	29%	65%	-36%