

# **The Oklahoma Democratic Gubernatorial Primary Pre-election Polling: What happened?**

## **Jari Askins vs. Drew Edmondson**

Prior to the Primary Election, all of the publicly released pre-election polls conducted in Oklahoma inaccurately predicted Edmondson would win the primary election. The three polls were conducted by SoonerPoll.com, Celinda Lake Research (D - Edmondson's pollster), and Cole Hargrave Snodgrass and Associates, Inc. (R).

All three polls use a likely voter methodology with live interviewers. So, why did Askins win over Edmondson?

## Election Day Facts

- On July 27, 2010, the Democratic Gubernatorial had one of its lowest turnouts ever recorded. Oklahoma is not alone however. According to a study by American University, Democratic statewide primary turnout, meanwhile, fell to record lows in 9 other states as well: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota and Tennessee. ([http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-503544\\_162-20015753-503544.html](http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-503544_162-20015753-503544.html))
- Conversely, Republican turnout increased in all but five states out of 35, according to Curtis Gans of American University, and GOP statewide primary turnout reached new records in nine states -- Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Missouri, Oklahoma and South Carolina.
- Tulsa County, a county that has favored Edmondson in all pre-election polling and critical to winning any statewide election due to its size in voter registration, had the fourth lowest turnout of all 77 counties in Oklahoma.
- Edmondson lost by less than 1500 votes, or less than 1 vote per precinct in the state.

## Current Electorate Climate

- In a July poll conducted by SoonerPoll for the Tulsa Word, Obama fell to 27 percent approval in July, the lowest for any elected official in the 17-year history of the survey. The previous low for an elected official was former Gov. David Walters' 33 percent in both 1993 and 1994. The previous low for a president was Obama's 36 percent in January of this year. Before that, it was President Bill Clinton's 37 percent at the end of 1994. (SoonerPoll.com)
- Earlier that month, another SoonerPoll found that Republicans were more enthusiastic about elections this year than Democrats, with 63.7 percent of Republicans saying they were more enthusiastic compared to only 39.8 percent of Democrats. (SoonerPoll.com)

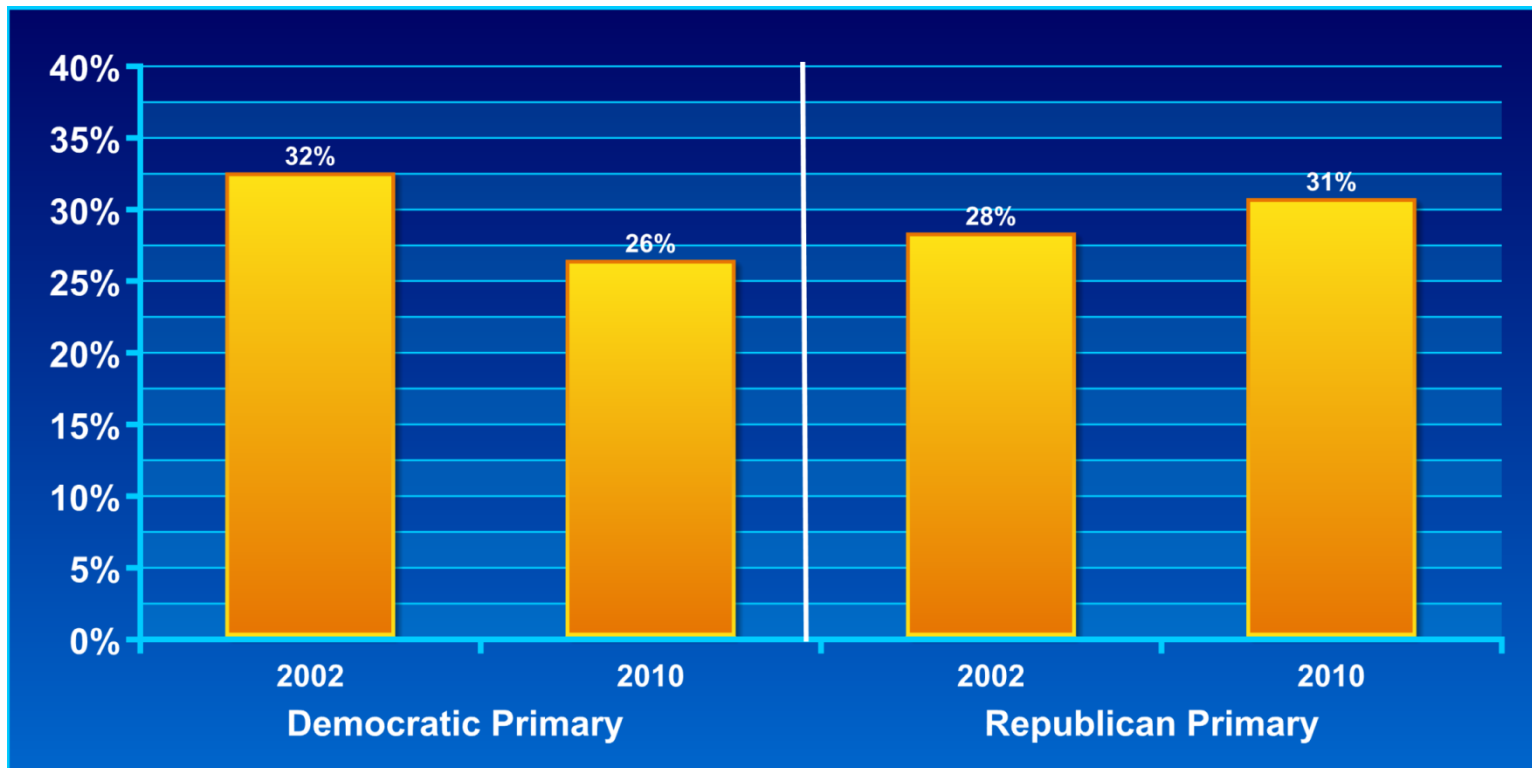
## Pre-Election Polling

- Pre-election polling methodologies predominately focus on likely voters, meaning that pollsters seek to predict those that will vote on the day of election. Based on the behavior of registered voters, pollsters have the ability to implement techniques to identify the likely voter universe to populate the sampling frame.
- In the process of data collection, researchers seek to achieve a proportional sample. In other words, a balanced sample will better reflect the true universe and will help to minimize survey error.
- When low disproportional turnout, predominately for one candidate and not the other, occurs it could potentially misrepresent any polling turnout model due to a voter population being systematically different than the universe of likely voters -- which is used in pre-election polling methodologies.

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## Turnout Comparison

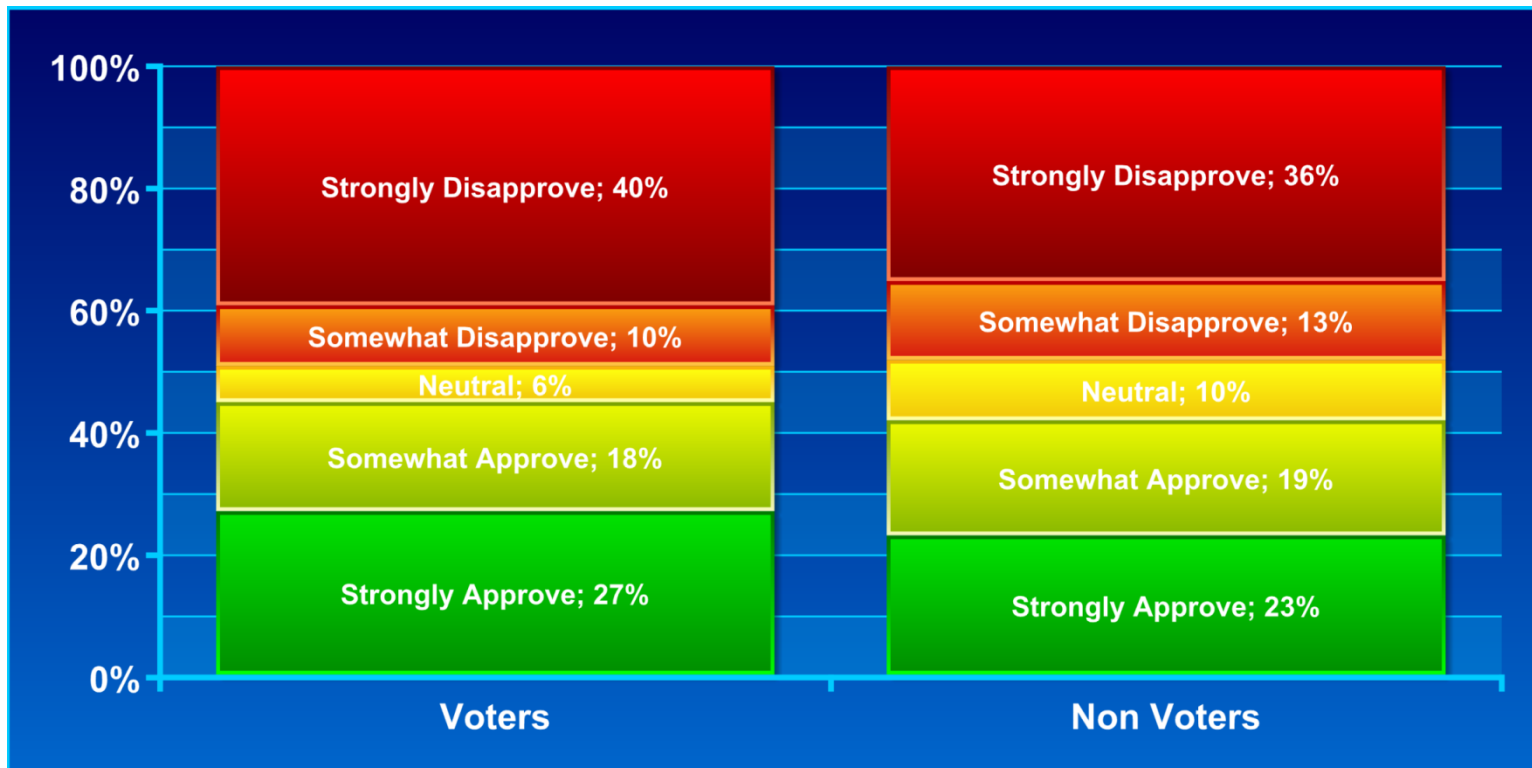
- Compared to the last time that Oklahoma had an open race for governor, Democrats turned out less than Republicans did.
- Additionally, the number of registered Democrats have decreased whereas the number of registered Republicans have increased over the same period of time.
- Republicans, not only gained in registration, but gained in turning out a higher percent of those voters.



# The Obama Effect on the Primary Election

"... please tell me whether you APPROVE or DISAPPROVE of the way he is performing his job."

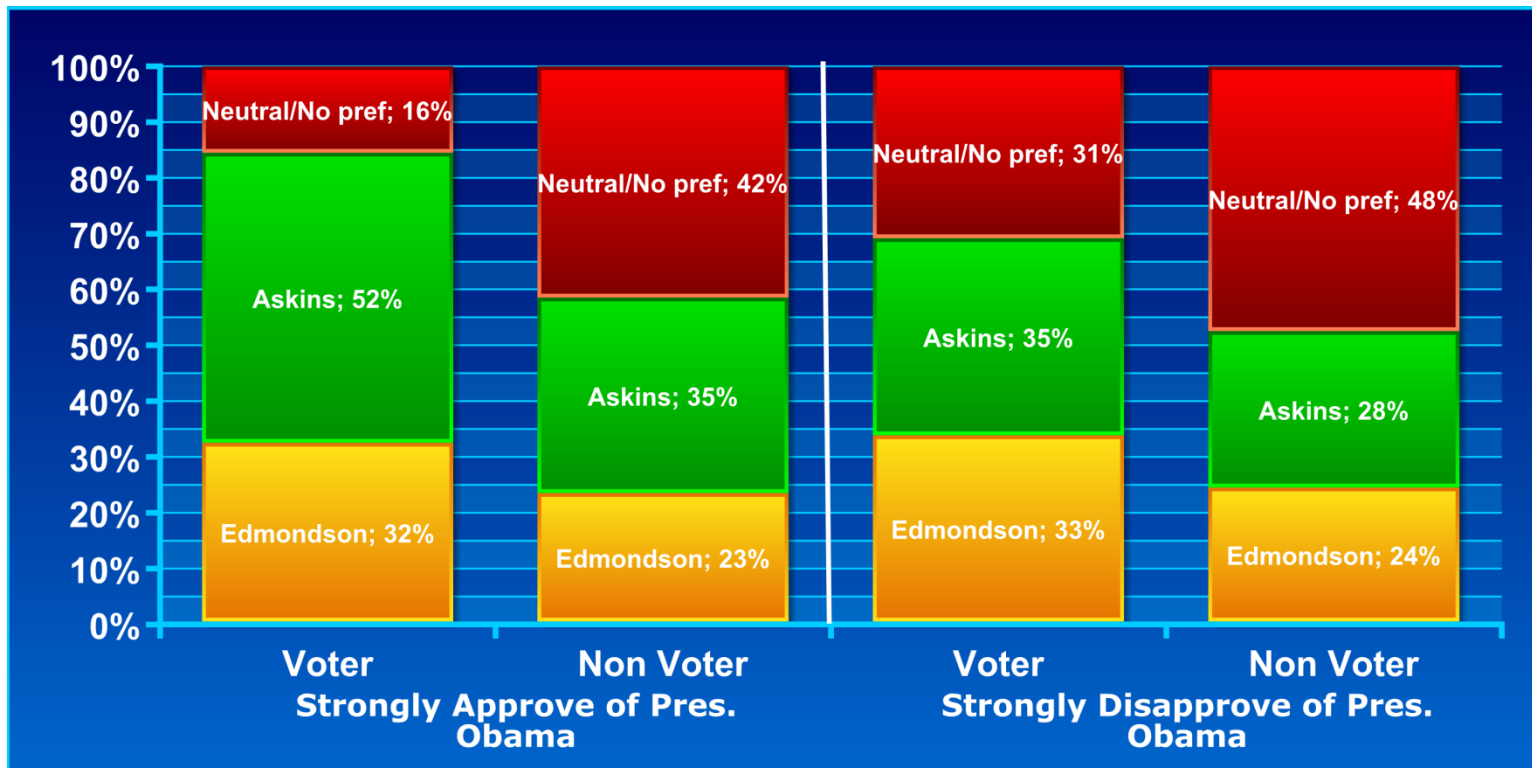
- The Democrats that turned out to vote in July were more **polarized** in their approval rating of President Obama than non-voters.
- There is a significant relationship in the polarized approval of President Obama and voting in the Primary Election ( $p=.10$ , Chi-square = 9.05).



# Obama's Impact on the Candidates

"... please tell me whether you APPROVE or DISAPPROVE of the way he is performing his job."

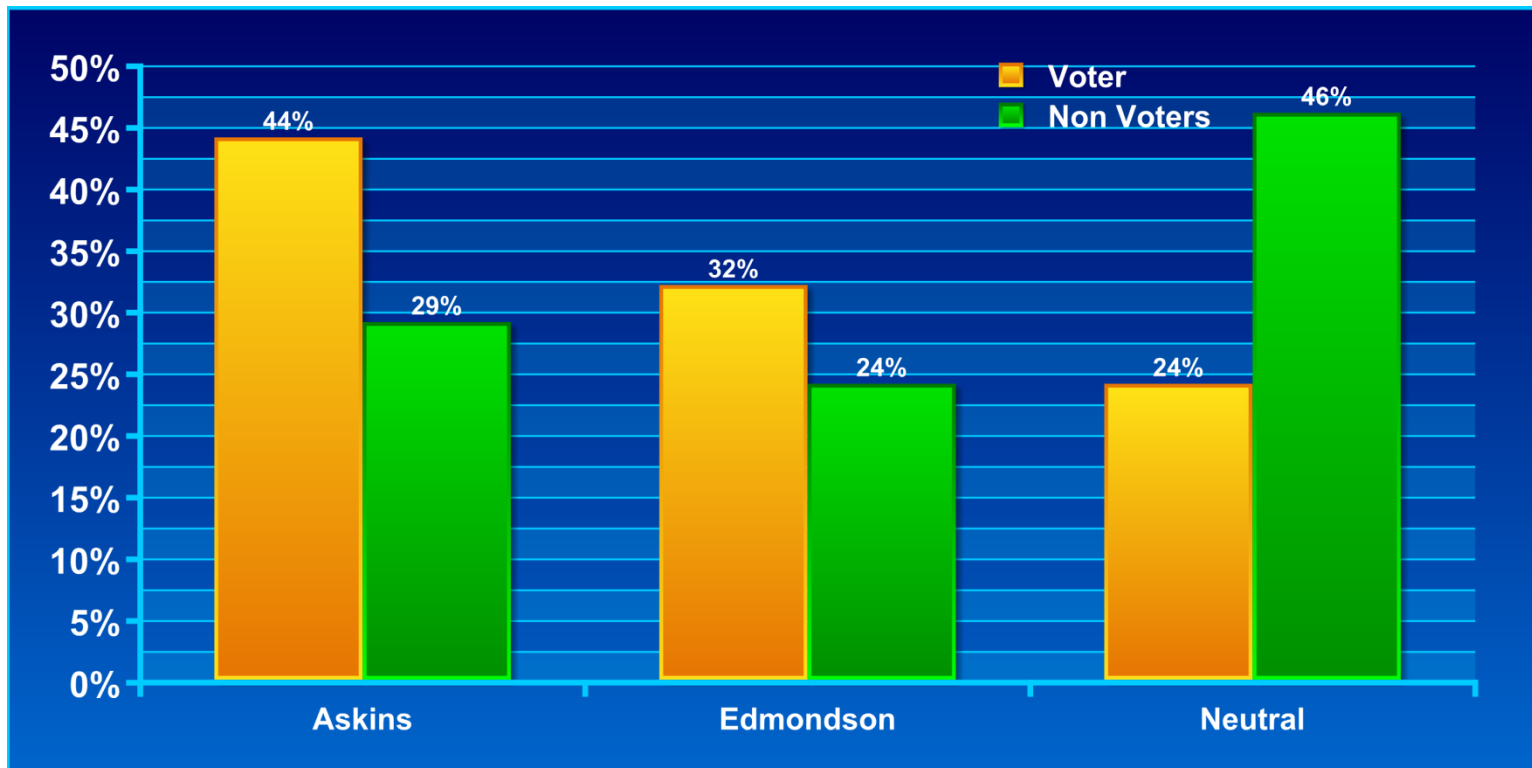
- The stronger the approval of President Obama the more likely the voter was to have a preference toward Askins, who was able to capitalize more than Edmondson of both groups (52% of strong approval of Obama and 35% of strong disapproval of Obama, whereas Edmondson had 32% and 33%)
- However, the voters that were polarized in the disapproval of President Obama were more likely to have no preference toward either candidate which would affect turnout of these 'disenfranchised' voters.



# Askins & Edmondson Preference

*"Attorney General Drew Edmondson and Lt. Governor Jari Askins were both candidates for the Democratic Nomination for Governor. Regardless of the turnout did you have a preference?"*

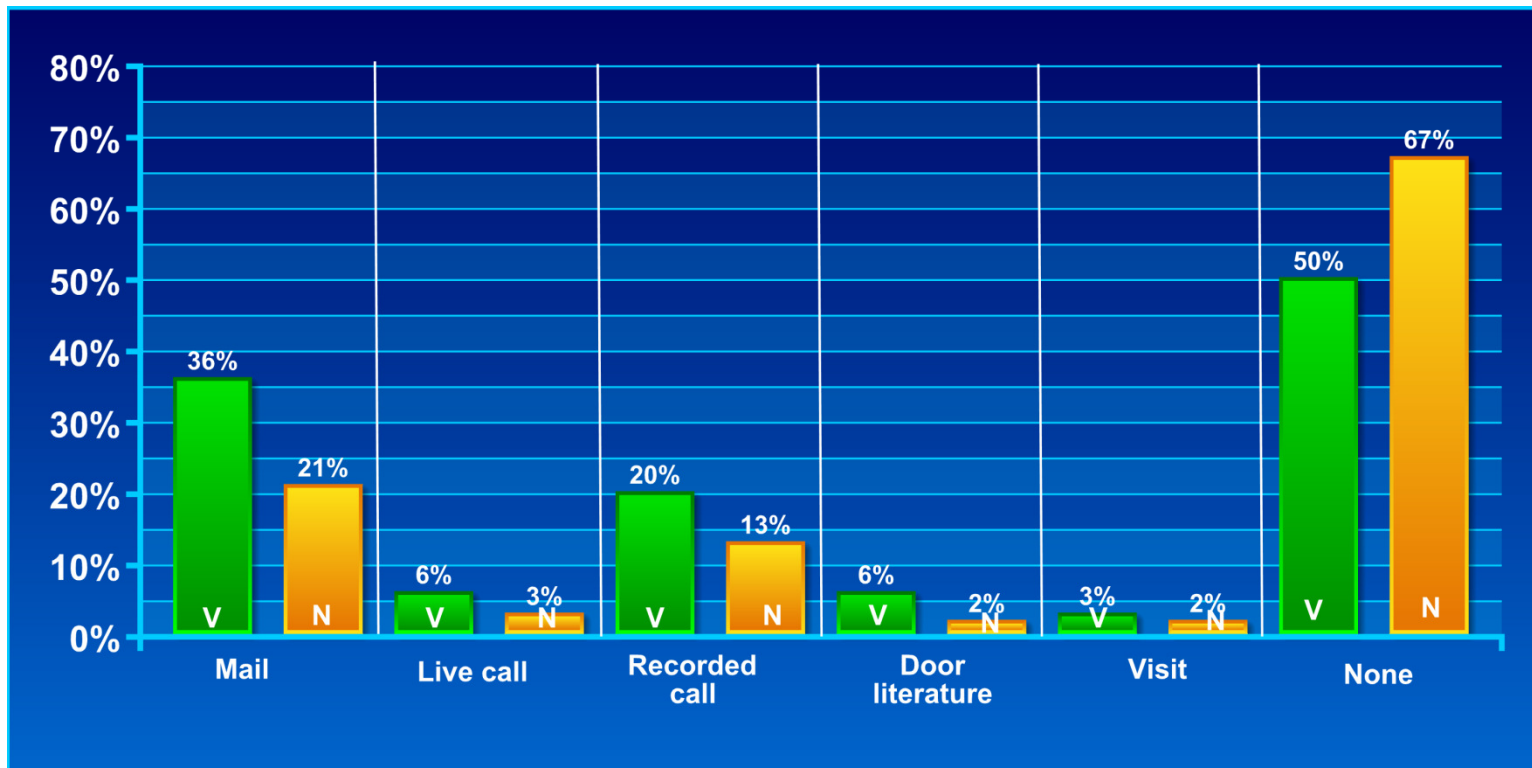
- 46.1% of likely voting Democrats that did not vote in the Primary Election had no preference between Jari Askins and Drew Edmondson.



# Askins Direct Contact Campaigning

"During the Democratic primary race for governor, did you ever receive ... from the Jari Askins campaign?"

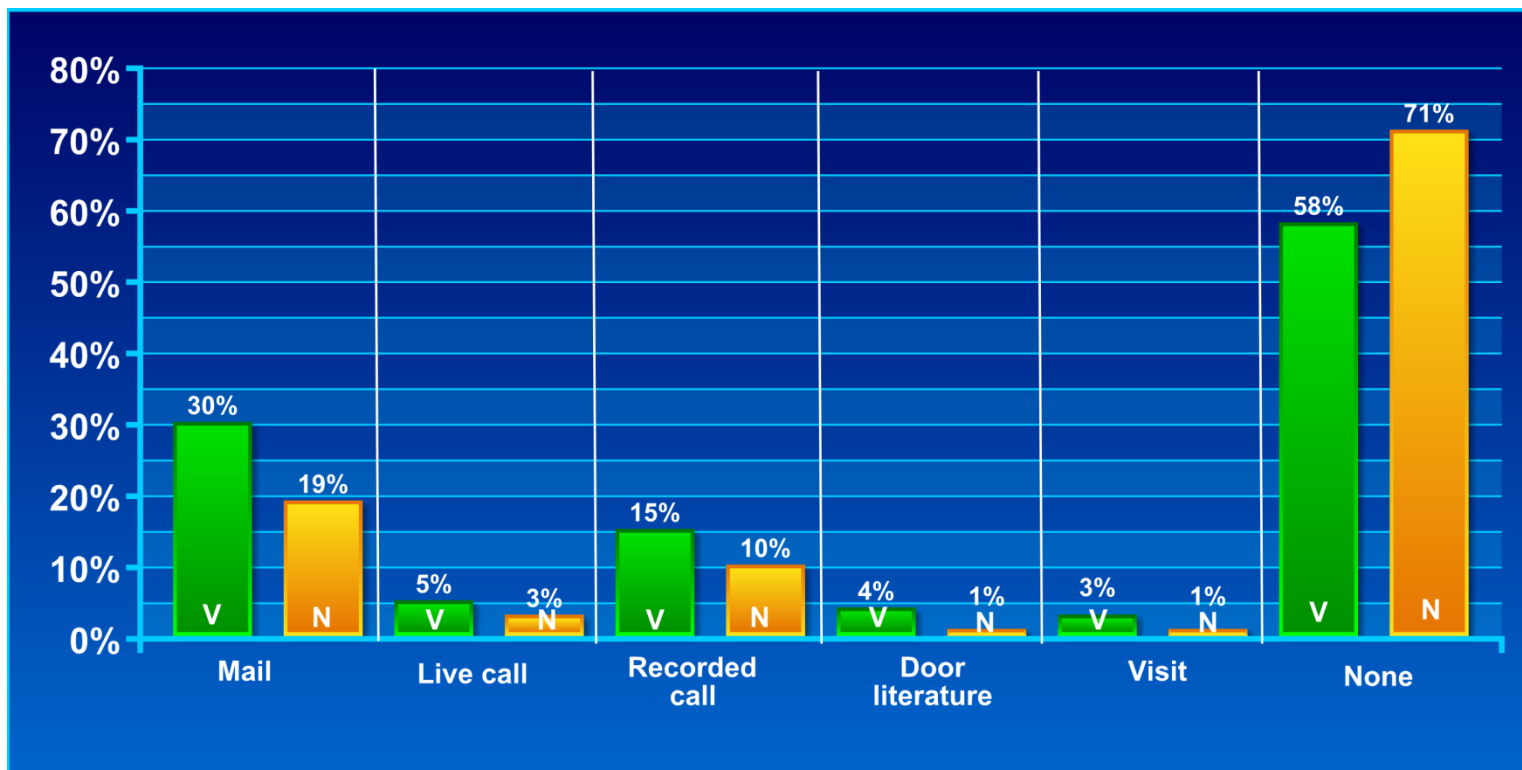
- Voters, more so than non-voters, were more likely to remember direct contact campaigning.



# Edmondson Direct Contact Campaigning

*"During the Democratic primary race for governor, did you ever receive ... from the Drew Edmondson campaign?"*

- Same for Edmondson, although at lower levels throughout all direct contact campaigning versus Askins.
- Edmondson's campaign was less effective than the Askins campaign in turning out their vote.



# Effectiveness of Campaign Contacting Methods

- A Binary Logistic Regression Model is used to predict the probability of an event occurring. In this model the event occurring is Voting.
- The different forms of directly contacting voters and demographics are the variables used which is presumed to affect/determine voting in the Primary Election.

Binary Logistic Regression  
Dependent Variable: Voting in the Primary Election

	$\beta$	S.E.
Edmondson Mail pieces	0.141	0.221
Edmondson Live phone call	-0.38	0.443
Edmondson Recorded phone call	0.05	0.287
Edmondson Literature at the door	0.295	0.64
Edmondson Visit from a volunteer	0.5	0.656
Askins Mail pieces	0.643 **	0.21
Askins Live phone call	0.882 *	0.42
Askins Recorded phone call	0.334	0.241
Askins Literature at the door	1.001 *	0.494
Askins Visit from a volunteer	0.544	0.561
Income	0.057	0.05
Education	0.44	0.052
Age	0.111	0.074
Evangelical	0.045	0.136
Married	-0.214	0.198
President Obama Approval	0.035	0.076
Gov. Henry Approval	-0.083	0.07
Healthcare Approval	0.012	0.078
Constant	-1.09	0.711

\*p < 0.5, \*\*p < 0.01, \*\*\*p < 0.001

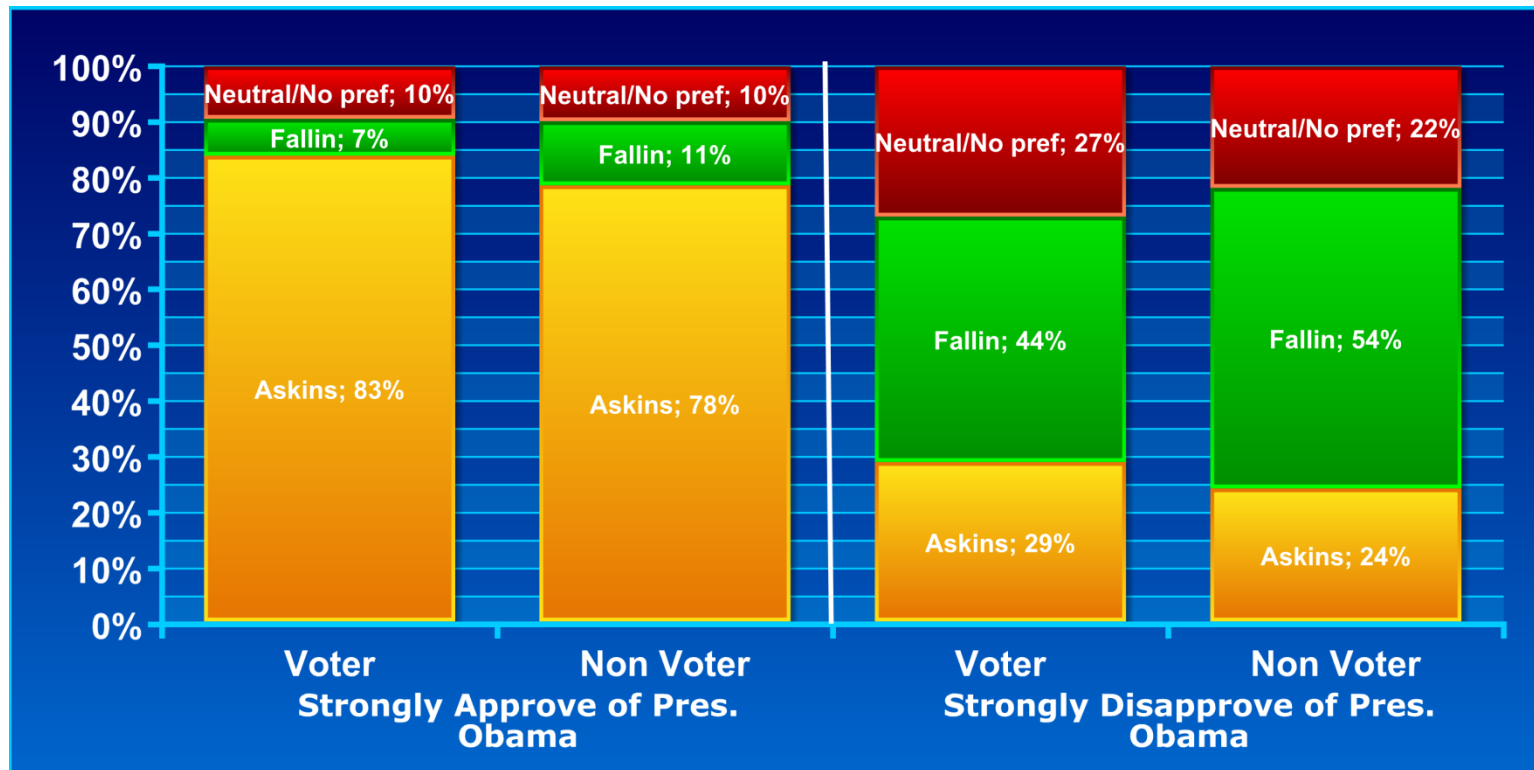
## Askins ran a better turnout campaign...

- The results from this model indicate that of the five methods of direct voter contact methods from each of the two candidates, only receiving Mail, Live Phone Call, and Literature at the door from Jari Askins were significantly associated with turning out to vote when considering simultaneously receiving campaign contacting methods from both Askins and Edmondson.
- The Edmondson campaign's direct contacting methods are not significantly associated with voter mobilization when controlling for these other factors. Although each of the individual forms of campaign contacting method was significantly related to voting, these relationships diminished when other variables were present in this regression model.
- The significant association in receiving Mail pieces, Live Phone Call, and Literature from Askins hold true when controls of Income, Age, Education, Ideology, President Obama Evaluation, Governor Henry Evaluation, and other controls are introduced into this same regression model.

# The Obama Effect on the General Election

"... please tell me whether you APPROVE or DISAPPROVE of the way he is performing his job."

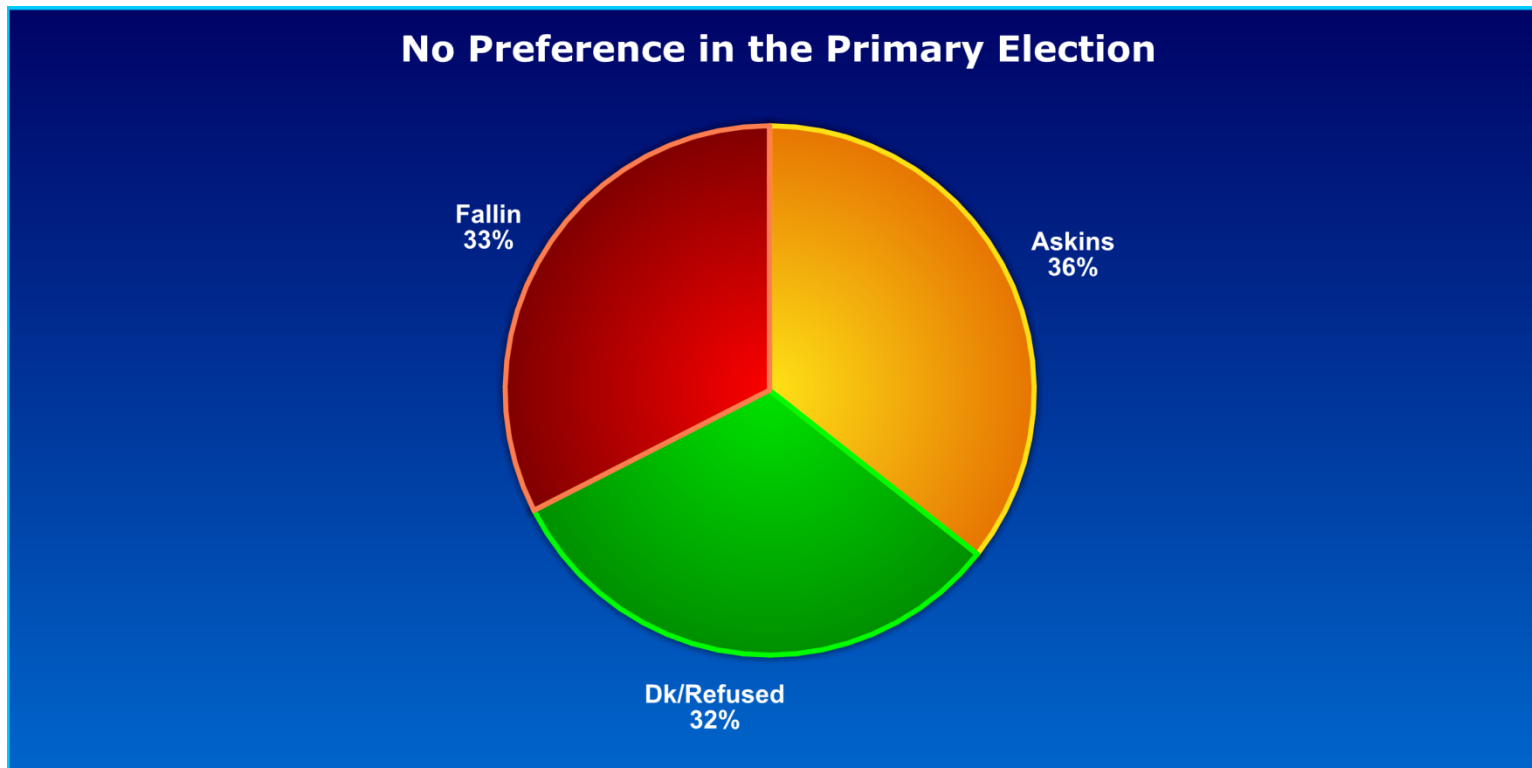
- Of the Democrats that voted in the primary election and likely Democrat voters that did not vote in the primary election, those with strong approval of Obama were more likely to prefer Askins.
- On the other hand, of those Democrats that are polarized toward the disapproval of Obama they are more likely to prefer Fallin.



## The critical 46%

*"If the general election for Governor was held today and you were standing in the voting booth right now and had to make a choice, for whom would you vote?"*

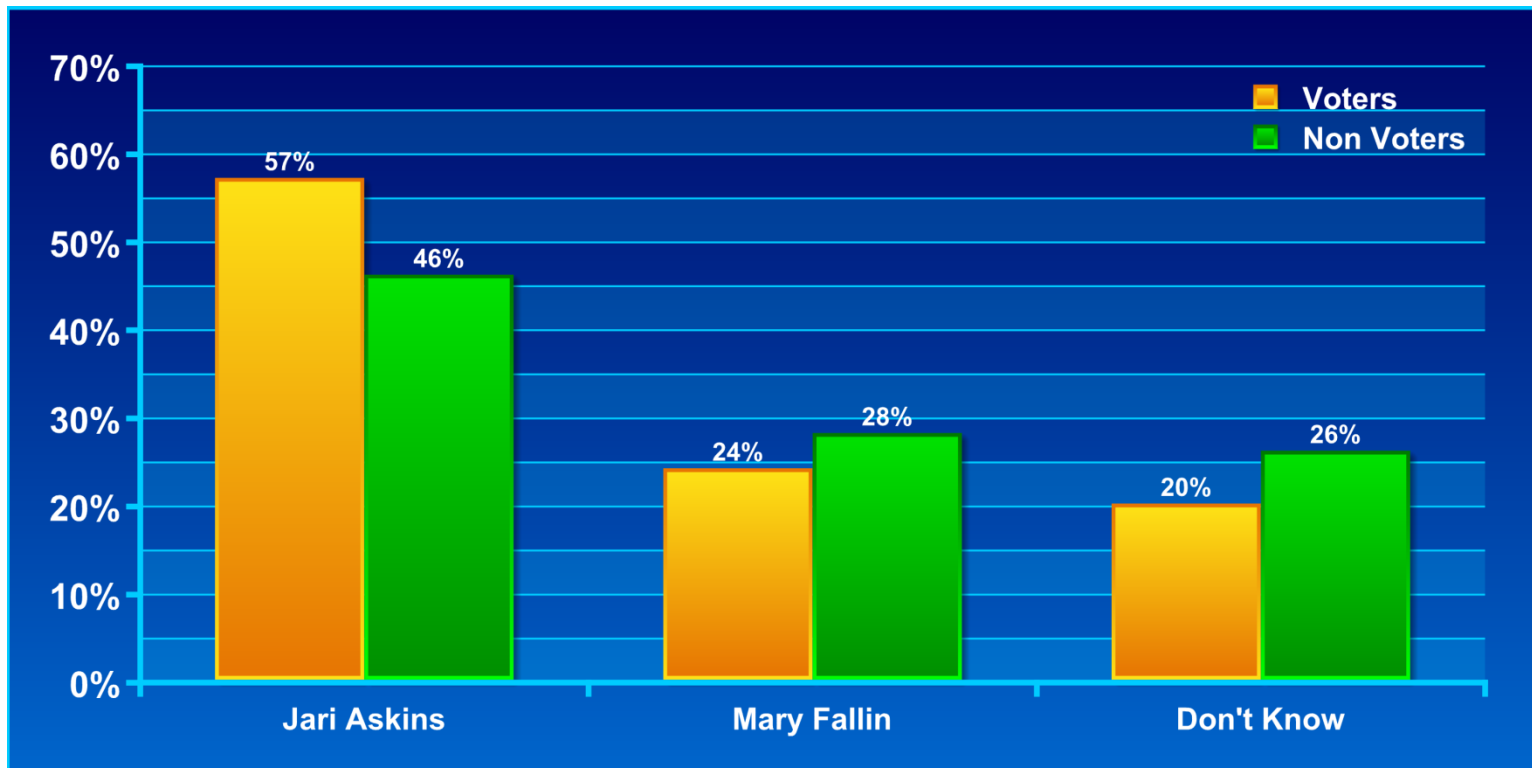
- Of those Democrats that did not vote in the Primary Election and did not have a preference for Edmondson or Askins, only 36% indicated that they would vote for Askins if the general election was held that day.
- On the other hand, 33% indicated that they would vote for Fallin if the general election was held that day.



# General Election Democrat Registered Voters

*"If the general election for Governor was held today and you were standing in the voting booth right now and had to make a choice, for whom would you vote?"*

- Those Democrats that Voted and did not vote in the Primary Election both indicated that they would vote for Jari Askins in the General Election.
- 57% of the respondents that voted in the Primary indicated that they would vote for Jari Askins in the General Election and 24% indicated that they would vote for Mary Fallin.



## The Crossover Vote: How much do Republicans need to win statewide?

	Registration as of Jan 2010	Percent of Reg. Population	Reg. Rule of Thumb*	What the Rep needs to win based on Reg.	2008 Turnout	Turnout Rule of Thumb*	What the Rep needs to win based on turnout
Republican	813,158	39.89	90%	35.90	43.25	90%	38.93
Democrat	999,855	49.05	<b>18%</b>	8.83	49.05	<b>15%</b>	7.36
Independent	225,607	11.07	50%	5.53	7.70	50%	3.85
	<b>2,038,620</b>	<b>100.00</b>		<b>50.26</b>	<b>100.00</b>		<b>50.13</b>

*\*Rule of thumb: Based on the assumption that Republicans and Democrats would split the Independent vote and Republicans would receive 90% of their party vote*

- Taking into perspective the distribution of registered voters, if the Rule of Thumb holds true Mary Fallin will need at least 18% of registered Democrats to vote Republican in the Gubernatorial race in November.
- If historical trends hold true with regard to turnout and the same Rule of Thumb holds true, Mary Fallin will need to have only 15% of voting Democrats to win.
- Historically, statewide Republican candidates need a much larger crossover of Democrats to win. That amount is slowly decreasing through a combination of the increase in the net gain in Republican registration and lower Democratic turnout on election day.

# Conclusions

• **Askins ran a better GOTV campaign than Edmondson.** When analyzed individually there was a significant relationship in voting for both the Edmondson and Askins direct contact campaigning methods. However, the relationship disappeared for the direct contact campaigning methods that was used by Edmondson once all of the campaign contacting methods and demographics were accounted for. Only contact from Askins by mail pieces, live phone call and literature was significantly associated with the probability of voting in the primary election. Thus, the Askins campaign contacting methods were more effective in mobilizing voters to the voting booth on day of the primary election.

• **President Obama's dismal approval rating in the state has had a polarizing effect on the Democratic electorate.** The poll results reveal that those with strong opinions for or against the president were more likely to vote than those with weak or no opinions. Primary voters who strongly support Obama were more likely to prefer Askins over Edmondson, while voters who strongly oppose Obama remained split and more undecided in the primary election.

• **Democrats who stayed home were 'disenfranchised' in the primary election.** They were slightly more likely to be conservative, disapprove of Obama, and not have a preference in the primary (46%). For obvious political reasons, neither Askins nor Edmondson wanted to distance themselves from their party in Washington or Obama.

• **That critical 46% (those who stayed home and had no preference in the primary) are even more 'disenfranchised' for the general election.** To date, Askins has not tried to separate herself from Obama or his policies and Democrats who disapprove of Obama are turning to Mary Fallin.

## **Methodology**

This study and its analysis is based on two samples: those that are registered Democrat and voted in the Primary Election on July 27, 2010 and another target population of likely Democrat voters that did not vote in the Primary Election. Once the two target populations were identified and a sampling frame constructed a simple random selection technique was used to identify the sample populations. Of the Democrats that voted in the primary election, 450 completed the survey instrument (moe  $\pm 4.62\%$ ) and 401 (moe  $\pm 4.89\%$ ) that are likely Democrat voters and did not vote in the primary election.

The data collection was conducted by telephone from September 9 – September 28, 2010, with none (0) of the surveys conducted in Spanish. SoonerPoll's own interviewers, who are pre-dominantly female age 30 to 60, conducted the survey from Oklahoma City with an interviewer to supervisor ratio of 4 to 1. All telephone interviewers participated in a training session prior to fielding the survey. Recognized research standards were followed throughout the data collection process in order to minimize all types of research bias and errors.

*The above methodology meets the disclosure standard as prescribed by the Marketing Research Association (MRA).*

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