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*The Capitol Report for the Week of Sept. 20, 2018*

**What the Marquette Law poll tells us about ‘nationalized’ midterm elections**

You would think a good economy would mean clear sailing for Wisconsin incumbents.

But the coming midterm elections could turn that notion on its head. This year’s elections could be “nationalized,’’ being more about President Trump and emotional trends rather than the bread-and-butter issues that in the past would have seemed to be the driving issues

The recent Marquette University Law School poll shows 50 percent of the state’s registered voters think the state is headed in the right direction. That’s down from 53 percent in August.

Gov. Scott Walker is under 50 percent when it comes to job approval. Walker’s job approval among registered voters was at 44 percent in the September poll, down from 48 percent in the August survey.

What happened? A partisan gubernatorial campaign began, with state schools Superintendent Tony Evers winning the Democratic primary in mid-August and Walker and his allies launching TV ad attacks. Evers and his allies responded in kind.

The Democrats think the national environment favors them. Republicans hope their voters will come around and that Walker’s upside is that right-track figure. Meanwhile, Wisconsin candidates are debating health care, education and roads in their campaigns again.

The Marquette Law poll shows some interesting views on these issues.

* On education: A majority of registered voters were satisfied with the job public schools are doing in their community, with 18 percent saying they are very satisfied and 46 percent saying satisfied. Seventeen percent say they are dissatisfied, and 8 percent are very dissatisfied. But voters say they would rather increase spending on public schools than reduce property taxes by a 57 percent to 38 percent margin. The Marquette Poll notes that support for additional spending on public schools has increased since the question was first asked in 2013. One way to read this is that Republicans’ emphasis on keeping a lid on property taxes and school spending has become less popular as the economy has improved.
* On roads: 5 percent of registered voters say roads where they live are in excellent condition, 30 percent say good condition, 32 percent say fair condition, and 32 percent say poor condition. Views differ between northern and southern Wisconsin, but the southern part of the state has more negative views, Marquette Law says.
* On health care: 47 percent of registered voters say they have a favorable view of the Affordable Care Act, also called Obamacare, while 45 percent have an unfavorable view. Asked what should be done about the ACA/Obamacare health reform, 4 percent say keep the law as it is, 55 percent say keep and improve the law, 25 percent say repeal and replace the health reform law and 10 percent say the law should be repealed and not replaced. Opinion on the health reform law has changed little since June 2017, when 6 percent said keep as the law, 54 percent said improve it, 27 percent said repeal and replace and 7 percent said repeal and not replace the law.

The debate over pre-existing conditions is especially acute, with Democrats accusing Republicans of abandoning people while Republicans adamantly state they will make sure those with pre-existing conditions will be covered despite their support for a lawsuit seeking to overturn the ACA.

But how many voters are going to the polls on the issues? Many ads, many polls and an election will give us clues.

*The Capitol Report is written by editorial staff at WisPolitics.com, a nonpartisan, Madison-based news service that specializes in coverage of government and politics, and is distributed for publication by members of the Wisconsin Newspaper Association.*

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