DGA

DEMOCRATIC GOVERNORS
ASSOCIATION

DemocraticGovernors.org

TO:	Interested Parties
FROM:	Marshall Cohen, Political Director
MEMO:	New Poll in MO Shows Close Race, Pickup Opportunity
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As the DGA closes out our historic 2019 cycle, where we beat an incumbent in Kentucky (where Donald Trump won by 30) and re-elected a Democrat in Louisiana (where Trump won by 20), we are looking to stay on offense in 2020. We have an unparalleled record of winning 9 states Trump won since 2016, and we know that with quality candidates, the right message, and a well-funded campaign, we can win anywhere, even if the reddest of places.

We commissioned a poll November 14-15 of 921 likely 2020 voters in Missouri (matching 2016 exit polls) to see the lay of the land heading into this big gubernatorial contest. The results show the race is wide open, Republican Governor Mike Parson is vulnerable, State Auditor Nicole Galloway has unique cross-party appeal, and with the right resources this race will be close until the finish.

The Horserace

Democrat Nicole Galloway starts the race down just 9 points to an incumbent Republican, with Parson earning 45% of the vote to Galloway's 36%. This has Parson well below the 50% threshold an incumbent wants heading into an election year. More importantly, Galloway has real potential to grow. After balanced positive statements about both candidates, the margin narrows to just 3 points. With another round of limited messaging the race is tied.

The initial ballot test reinforces Galloway's electoral strength, which is why she is the last remaining statewide elected Democrat in Missouri. She starts strong with Democrats, leading Parson 65% to 16%, giving her the ability to increase her vote share as she consolidates her own party and expands her name identification.

Impressively, she begins the race with a 6 point lead against Parson among Independents, 40% to 34%, and grows her lead after positive biographical statements to a 15 point advantage. She is currently ahead among African-American voters by 50, with 26% of them not sure yet who they will support. African-American voters support a generic Democrat against Trump by 80 points, meaning she can make significant gains with this voting bloc as the race progresses. Galloway's cross party appeal Is evident as she earns 10% of Trump voters, and that holds throughout the messaging in the survey.

Undecided voters present another opportunity for Galloway. They are disproportionally Democrats, disapprove of Trump 57% to 28%, and after hearing initial bios of both candidates are 4.5 times more likely to support Galloway than Parson. Galloway also seems to have real potential to grow among Missouri women when they learn more about her – she initially starts down 6 points and then leads by 2 after solely hearing her biography.

Candidate Images

More than a year after being sworn in as Governor to replace the disgraced Eric Greitens, Parson has not cemented his position among Missouri voters. Nearly 4 in 10 Missourians can't rate the job he is doing. He is most known among Republicans, Trump voters and white voters. This means he can be defined early with those who know him least – 42% of Democrats and 64% of African-Americans can't rate him yet. And there is evidence that those who do not know him yet won't like what they learn about him. Among voters who can't rate him yet, 56% disapprove of Trump,

57% say they are less likely to support Parson after hearing he pushed for and signed the law to criminalize women's health care. They find Galloway's biography more appealing than Parson's (71% to just 44%). With such an undefined incumbent, we have the ability to define him on our terms.

On the other side, voters across both parties and all demographics find Nicole Galloway's message appealing. Sixty three percent (63%) say her basic biography is appealing. Women (66% appealing), Independents (67% appealing), and white voters (59% appealing) and those starting undecided in the Governors race (63%) like her introductory message.

Impact of Parson Actions to Criminalize Women's Health Care

Voters in Missouri are keenly aware and not happy about Governor Parson pushing for and signing the law to criminalize women's health care by banning abortion even in the case of rape and incest. A shocking 89% of voters say they've heard at least a little about the news. Significantly, a majority (50%) of Missourians say it makes them less likely to support Parson.

The Governor has a huge problem on his hands among Independents, as 91% say they've heard about his actions to criminalize women's health care and 60% say it makes them less likely to support Parson next year. Parson even has problems among Republicans from this issue - 20% of Republicans and 20% of Trump voters say that the women's health care criminalization will make them less likely to support the Governor. Parson's actions have put him at odds with voters and plaster him with the extremist label. This could drastically alter the environment next year in the race for Governor.

Moving Into Next Year

This poll reinforces the DGA's excitement about the Missouri governor's race and emphasizes the unique ability Nicole Galloway has to make this race competitive and win. Our 2019 successes in Kentucky and Louisiana proved our ability to succeed when we have better candidates, the right message, and the funds to communicate – even when Donald Trump uses his entire political operation to win a race. These results show the race in Missouri starts close and moves quickly to a jump ball, that Parson is vulnerable and unknown, and Galloway has a uniquely appealing cross-party appeal. And with Parson pushing to criminalize women's health care being a huge self-inflicted weakness for the Governor, especially among Independents and a fifth of Republicans, we start the race in a competitive position and are well positioned to go on offense heading into 2020.