

# **THE WMUR / UNH POLL**

**University of New Hampshire Survey Center**

## **DOWN TO THE WIRE**

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DURHAM, NH -- Heading into the final weekend of the campaign, New Hampshire Governor Jeanne Shaheen holds a narrow lead over her Republican rival, Congressman John Sununu, in the race for U.S. Senate.

These findings are based on the latest **WMUR / UNH Poll**, conducted by the University of New Hampshire Survey Center. The WMUR / UNH Poll is sponsored by WMUR-TV of Manchester, New Hampshire. Six hundred eighty (680) New Hampshire likely voters were interviewed between October 23 and October 29, 2002 (margin of sampling error, +/-3.8 percent). (For more detailed results, visit the Survey Center web site at [www.unh.edu/survey-center](http://www.unh.edu/survey-center) and click on Press Releases.)

## **U.S. SENATE**

The race for U.S. Senate in New Hampshire is heading down to the wire. Jeanne Shaheen currently leads John Sununu in a very close race that may determine control of the U.S. Senate. In the most recent WMUR / UNH Poll, 46 percent of likely November election voters favor Shaheen, 42 percent favor Sununu, 2 percent favor Libertarian Ken Blewens, 2 percent favor some other candidate, and 7 percent are undecided. Shaheen pulled ahead of Sununu for the first time in a WMUR / UNH Poll released earlier this month when she led 47 percent to 44 percent. There has been little change since then.

## **SWING VOTERS**

New Hampshire has many more registered Republicans (37 percent of all registered voters) than Democrats (26 percent of registered voters), so Democratic candidates are at a significant disadvantage that can only be overcome by winning the Independent, or swing vote. Swing voters are those voters who do not consistently vote for either Democratic or Republican candidates. "In the last several weeks, Shaheen has actively pursued swing voters by emphasizing her political independence and her pro-choice position" said Andrew Smith, Director of the UNH Survey Center. "This has paid off in that she now leads Sununu by 44 percent to 34 percent among swing voters."

## **THE BOB SMITH FACTOR**

The write-in campaign for Bob Smith, who Sununu defeated in the September primary election, continues to be a thorn in the side of the Sununu campaign. While the write-in campaign is showing little direct impact in the race, some disgruntled Smith supporters are still backing Shaheen. Voters who voted in the New Hampshire Republican Senate primary in September were asked if they had voted for Smith or Sununu. Among self-identified Republicans who voted for Smith in the primary, 14 percent say they plan to vote for Shaheen in November. While this is a small percentage, representing just over 1 percent of the total vote, it is considerable less than the 26 percent of Republican Smith voters

who said they would vote for Shaheen in a WMUR / UNH Poll earlier this month. Another way Smith voters can hurt Sununu is by simply not voting in the Senate race. Three percent of Republicans who voted for Smith in the primary say they will skip the Senate election but vote in other races. Finally, there is the write in effort itself and 2 percent of all likely voters say they plan to vote for a candidate not officially listed on the ballot, which would include Smith.

Between voters who favor another candidate, Republican Smith voters who plan to vote for Shaheen, and Smith voters who plan to skip the election, the impact of Smith’s failure to support Sununu is at least 3 percent, almost the margin between the two candidates.

**ISSUES**

Because both Sununu and Shaheen are so well known to New Hampshire voters, the race is one of party identification and personality rather than specific issue positions. When asked why they plan to vote for her, Shaheen voters cite that they like her better (22%), her experience and record as governor (20%), general agreement with her on issues (17%), that they dislike Sununu (16%), and that she is a Democrat (10%). The main reasons Sununu voters say they are voting for him include that they generally agree with him on the issues (24%), they dislike Shaheen (24%), they like him better (18%), that he is a Republican (16%), and his experience and record in Congress (10%).

Abortion has played a large role in the final weeks of the campaign with Shaheen emphasizing her pro-choice, and Sununu’s pro-life position. This is designed to attract both Republican and Independent women who are pro-choice and there is some evidence in the latest WMUR / UNH Poll that this strategy is paying off. Currently, 14 percent of Republican women and 43 percent of Independent women say they plan to vote for Shaheen.

**SUB-GROUP ANALYSIS**

Shaheen gets her strongest support from Democrats and supporters of legal abortions. Sununu’s strongest support comes from Republicans, abortion opponents, and gun owners.

Sununu is leading Shaheen 49 percent to 39 percent in the 1<sup>st</sup> Congressional District, which he represented for 6 years, while Shaheen leads in the second district by 54 percent to 36 percent.

There is also a gender gap in this race. Shaheen holds a 52 percent to 37 percent advantage among women while Sununu holds a 48 percent to 40 percent advantage among men.

**U.S. Senate Election - Sununu vs. Shaheen**

	Registered Voters			Likely Voters		
	Oct. '01	Feb '02	Apr. '02	June '02	Oct. 3-8	Oct. 23-29
<b>Shaheen (D)</b>	38%	42%	42%	42%	47%	46%
<b>Sununu (R)</b>	50	49	50	51	44	42
<b>Blevens (L)</b>	-	-	-	-	1	2
<b>Other</b>	3	4	2	3	3	2
<b>Undecided</b>	9	6	6	4	6	7
<b>(N)</b>	(505)	(554)	(526)	(529)	(590)	(648)

**Why Favor Sununu?  
(Likely Sununu Voters)**

	<u>Oct. '02</u>
Agree with him on the issues (in general)	24%
Dislike Shaheen	24
I like him better	18
I'm/He's a Republican	16
His experience, past record	10
Shaheen will raise taxes	3
Shaheen did not fix education funding	2
Pro-life	2
Other	1

(N=274)

**Why Favor Shaheen?  
(Likely Shaheen Voters)**

	<u>Oct. '02</u>
I like her better	22%
Her experience, past record	20
Agree with her on the issues (in general)	17
Dislike Sununu	16
I'm/She's a Democrat	10
Pro-Choice	8
Want Democrats to control the Senate	3
Environmental position	2
Other	1
Don't know	1

(N=294)

**WMUR / UNH Poll Methodology**

These findings are based on the most recent WMUR / UNH Poll conducted by the University of New Hampshire Survey Center from October 23 to October 29, 2002. A random sample of 680 likely voters in New Hampshire was interviewed by telephone. In 95 of 100 cases, the statewide estimates will be accurate to plus or minus 3.8 percent. Results reported for other subgroups have potential for somewhat larger variation than those for the entire population.

The data have been weighted to adjust for numbers of adults and telephone lines within households, likelihood of voting in the November election, respondent sex, and region of the state. In addition to potential sampling error, all surveys have other potential sources of non-sampling error including question order effects, question wording effects, and non-response.

Respondents to the WMUR / UNH Poll were asked:

- "I'd like you to think about the election for your representative to the U.S. Senate. As of today, do you plan to vote for John Sununu, the Republican candidate ... Jeanne Shaheen, the Democratic candidate ... Ken Blevens, the Libertarian ... or do you plan to skip the election for U.S. Senate at this time?"
- "Why do you plan to vote for (Jeanne Shaheen/John Sununu)?"

**U.S Senate - Likely Voters**

<b>STATEWIDE</b>	<b><u>Sununu</u></b> <b>42%</b>	<b><u>Shaheen</u></b> <b>46%</b>	<b><u>Blevins</u></b> <b>2%</b>	<b><u>Other</u></b> <b>2%</b>	<b><u>Undecided</u></b> <b>7%</b>	<b><u>(N)</u></b> <b>648</b>
Registered Democrat	14	81	0	1	4	171
Undeclared	29	52	5	3	10	243
Registered Republican	76	15	1	2	6	234
Core Republican	88	3	2	3	5	232
Swing Voter	34	44	4	3	15	188
Core Democrat	3	94	0	0	3	223
Democrat	7	88	1	0	4	260
Independent	26	39	6	5	24	96
Republican	80	11	2	3	4	280
Smith Primary Voter	52	33	4	3	7	108
Sununu Primary Voter	78	15	1	2	5	156
Will vote unless emergency	36	47	2	4	10	109
Will definitely vote	44	46	2	2	6	532
Extremely interested in election	48	43	3	3	3	177
Very interested	42	49	2	1	7	318
Somewhat interested	37	47	0	2	14	139
Not very interested	40	23	7	28	3	14
1st District	49	39	2	3	7	328
2nd District	36	54	2	2	7	320
Northern NH	39	56	0	0	4	95
Western NH	37	49	1	7	7	62
Central/Lakes	38	49	2	3	8	115
Hillsborough County	47	41	3	0	10	182
Seacoast	44	44	3	3	5	195
18 to 29	40	45	4	1	9	179
30 to 45	42	50	2	1	5	248
46 to 64	45	45	0	4	6	109
65 and over	44	44	0	3	9	98
5 years or less in NH	52	33	6	0	9	78
6 to 10 years	37	55	0	0	8	65
11 to 20 years	34	52	2	5	8	122
More than 20 years	44	46	2	2	6	375
Male	48	40	3	2	7	310
Female	37	52	1	3	7	338
Abortion always legal	30	61	2	2	5	323
Legal in some cases	54	34	1	1	10	239
Always illegal	64	17	6	5	7	50
Gun owning household	50	39	2	3	5	248
No guns in household	37	52	2	1	8	379