

September 30, 2020



To: Interested Parties

Fr: ALG Research

Re: Recent polling in North Carolina Senate race

The results of statewide polling commissioned by Piedmont Rising in North Carolina finds that Senator Thom Tillis is deeply unpopular and is trailing Cal Cunningham by a significant margin as the campaign enters its final weeks. Tillis continues to face major vulnerabilities for his health care record. A majority of voters believe it is a major issue that Tillis wants to eliminate protections for pre-existing conditions, and they move away from Tillis in the Senate vote upon learning that he plans to confirm someone to the Supreme Court who could strike down this law.

The following are key findings from a poll of N=822 North Carolina voters conducted online September 22-28, 2020, just days after the passing of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

Key Findings

- **Cal Cunningham looks strong headed into the final month of the campaign.** In a head to head match up, Cunningham leads Tillis by 12%, 53%-41%. Cunningham leads with independents 53%-20% and 56%-34% with women. Governor Roy Cooper leads Dan Forest 53%-43% and Joe Biden leads Donald Trump 50%-47%.
- **Tillis is deeply unpopular and is underwater in both his personal popularity and job rating.** Tillis is in a weakened position in the final weeks of the campaign, as just 35% of voters view him favorably and 54% view him unfavorably. Among independents, Tillis's popularity is only 25% favorable versus 60% unfavorable. His job rating is similar with voters, earning 39% approval and 53% disapproval.
- **North Carolina voters want the winner of the presidential election to fill Justice Ginsburg's Supreme Court seat.** By a four-point margin (48%/44%), North Carolina voters prefer that the winner of the election nominate the next justice rather than President Trump nominating someone, including 52% of independents and 50% of women.
- **When voters hear an argument about the importance of not rushing a lifetime appointment, support expands towards waiting and letting the winner of the presidential election choose.** After testing balanced statements – one in favor of confirming President Trump's nomination, and another for waiting, support for waiting expands to 49% in favor of letting the winner decide, while only 43% support the Senate confirming Trump's nominee.

- Specifically, the language that moved support was:
There are people who say that this is a lifetime appointment on the highest court, and we cannot rush this through for partisan benefit. Previous confirmations have taken 78 days to nominate, investigate, hold hearings, and confirm nominees. There are too many important issues facing the court like healthcare and women's rights, and we need to ensure whoever is confirmed protects these values. The last time a vacancy happened in an election year, the Senate refused to consider any nominations until after the election, and we need to do the same thing now.
- **Tillis is vulnerable for supporting a nominee who will take health care away from millions of North Carolinians.** Out of several messages tested about Tillis's support for confirming Trump's Supreme Court nominee, the strongest attack centered on health care, with particular attention on pre-existing conditions. It weaves together Tillis's own voting record to eliminate protections with pre-existing conditions with his support for someone who would strike down the law protecting coverage. Again, the message resonated among key subgroups:
 - 65% of Independents found this message convincing with 41% rating it very convincing. Among Democrats 82% found this message convincing with 69% rating it very convincing.
 - 54% of white women found this message convincing with 38% rating it very convincing. Among non college educated white women the numbers are similar with 53% finding it convincing and 38% rating it very convincing.
- Specifically, the language that moved support was:
Thom Tillis voted 7 times to eliminate protections for people with pre-existing conditions and allowed drug companies to raise prescription drug prices. Now, he is trying to confirm someone to the Supreme Court who would strike down the law protecting coverage. This would put insurance coverage at risk for 1.7 million North Carolinians living with common health conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease, even in the middle of a pandemic (41% very serious doubts).
- **After hearing more about Tillis's record, voters believe his record on pre-existing conditions is a major issue.** Following the messaging, 59% of voters, including 38% of Republicans, believe that Tillis's support for eliminating protections for pre-existing conditions is a major issue for them. A majority (51%) also believe that his support for confirming a justice to the Supreme Court before the November election is a major issue.