

To: Interested Parties  
From: John Malloy, Deputy Director, Data & Analytics; Planned Parenthood Votes  
Re: The Role of Reproductive Health & Rights in the 2017 Virginia Governor's Race



## Overview

Planned Parenthood Votes, working with Clarity Campaign Labs, conducted a survey of 2,118 voters in Virginia about the forthcoming Governor's race on October 25 - 26th. This poll was aimed at learning more about the effect of abortion messaging on candidate support. The poll was conducted via IVR calls to landline phones and live operators to cell phones. The poll structure was based on a treatment vs. control approach, with four split samples who received different treatments. One half of poll respondents received candidate specific messaging about abortion prior to being asked who they were supporting in the Governor's race, and one half received candidate-specific messaging about abortion following the vote choice question.

It's worth noting that this research presented reproductive health care framing to a full Likely Voter Universe, as opposed to traditional tactics of targeting reproductive health care messaging to voters who are likely to be receptive. Additionally, this research was gathered following significant reproductive health care communication with pro-reproductive health care voters, as well as broadcast reproductive health care messaging from the Northam campaign. While we did not gather data earlier in the cycle to support this, it is likely that the persuasive effect of reproductive health care messaging is already baked into the vote choices of pro-reproductive health care voters.

This research produced five important findings:

1. Reproductive health care & rights are important to Northam supporters in the final days of the campaign.
2. High favorable opinions of Planned Parenthood are held by likely Virginia voters.
3. Messaging on reproductive health care builds support for Northam among Black voters.
4. One and a half weeks out from Election Day, the Governor's race is close.
5. Planned Parenthood advocacy and political organizations important messengers in the final days of the Virginia campaign.

## Democratic leaning voters & Northam Supporters are motivated by reproductive health care & rights

Among voters with partisanship scores between 60 and 79, or Lean Democrats, Lieutenant Governor Northam saw a net +4 pt increase in support with reproductive health care messaging. Among strongly Democratic voters (those with scores between 80 and 100), Northam saw a small increase in support of net +1 point, among a group that already favored Northam by a margin of 82 points.

Northam supporters are overwhelmingly pro-reproductive health care, with 78% saying that abortion should be legal in all or most cases, as compared to 14% believing that some or many restrictions should be placed on a woman's right to choose. Ed Gillespie's supporters are less consolidated on this issue, with 21% saying that abortion should be legal in all or most cases, as compared to 73% believing that some or many restrictions should be placed on a woman's right to choose.

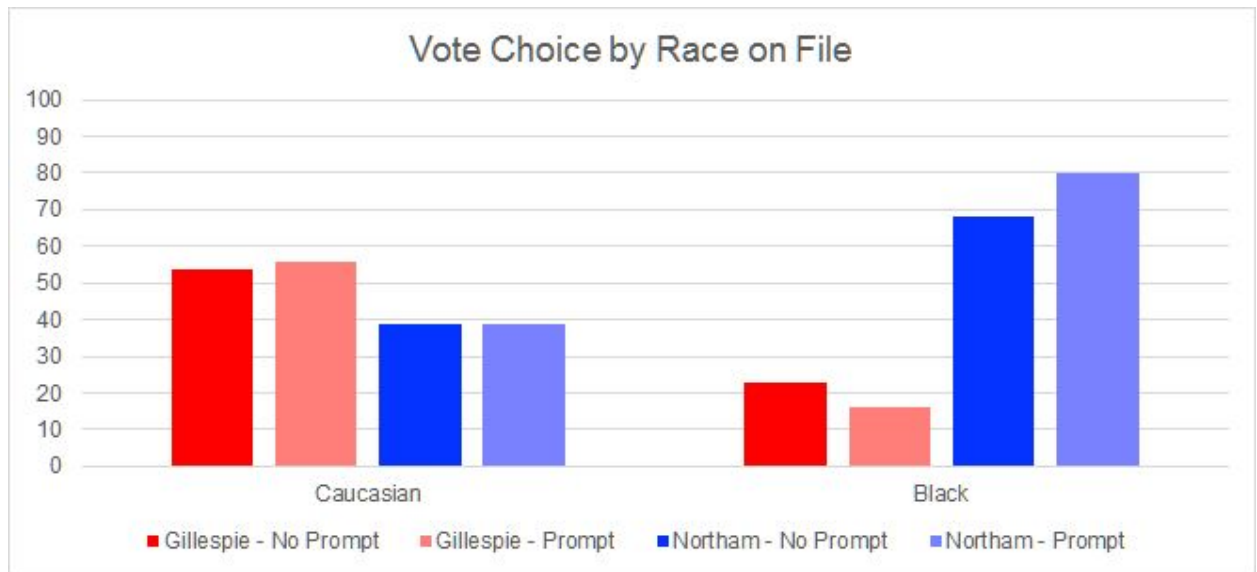
Importantly, Northam support is remarkably solid when reproductive health care messaging is introduced. Only 1% of Northam supporters shift their support to Gillespie when prompted with pro-reproductive health care messaging, while 2% of Gillespie supporters shift their support to Northam when prompted with pro-reproductive health care messaging.

## Planned Parenthood advocacy & political organizations play a crucial role in the final days of the race

Planned Parenthood advocacy & political organizations are relevant and important messengers in the closing days of the race. Likely voters have a favorable view of Planned Parenthood by 16 pts. Planned Parenthood enjoys wide popularity among Northam voters, with a +67 pt net favorability, only 5 pts less than Lieutenant Governor Northam's own net favorability of +72 pts among his voters. Planned Parenthood also enjoys a net +36 pt favorability rating among Black likely voters, matching Lieutenant Governor Northam's net favorability with the same group.

### Messaging on Reproductive Health Care & Rights builds support for Northam among Black voters

While late messaging on abortion and reproductive health care & rights causes backlash among middle-partisanship voters, it creates strong positive movement among Black voters. In the unprompted sample, Black voters support Northam by a 45 pt margin, 68% - 23%. When Black voters are prompted with reproductive health care messaging, they support Northam by 64 pts, 80% - 16%. This indicates a significant opportunity to shore up support among Black voters in the final days of the campaign.



### Virginia Governor's Race within Margin of Error

On the conventional survey (with vote choice occurring before messaging), we have the head to head at 44% Gillespie, 43% Northam, and 3% Hyra. When leaners are pushed and Hyra voters allocated to the major party candidate his supporters say they'd otherwise vote for, it's 46% Gillespie, 45% Northam, 1% strong Hyra.

We believe that the race is close, within the margin of error, but there's some reason to suspect we may be understating the Northam vote. We asked all four splits a favorability battery before the head to head vote. 18% of respondents who answered our previous questions hung up during the favorability battery, before recording a preference for Governor. The average partisan score of people who hung up during the favorability battery was 56.8%. The average partisan score of people who answered the previous questions was 46.9%, ten points less Democratic. It's possible that a survey without a favorability battery would have been a point or two more favorable to Northam, but still resoundingly within the survey's margin of error.

### Conclusions

Reproductive health care & rights messaging is salient and important in the closing days of the 2017 Virginia Governor's race. While most mid-partisanship voters do not move towards Northam when they receive reproductive health care messaging, this messaging produces strong suggestive movement towards Northam among Black voters (Net +19 pts), voters over the age of 65 (Net +8 pts), Lean Democrats (Net +4 pts), and Lean Republicans (Net +2 pts). Planned Parenthood advocacy & political organizations are important & credible voices to carry this messaging to voters.

### Additional Survey Information

Planned Parenthood Votes' survey was conducted by Clarity Campaign Labs. The survey was conducted by phone with 2,118 voters in Virginia, with IVR calls placed to landlines and live-operator calls placed to cell phones. The sample was pulled from the Virginia voter file.

Following a question about vote likelihood and a favorability battery on Donald Trump, Ralph Northam, Ed Gillespie, and Planned Parenthood, one half of voters (Splits A & C) were read a positive choice-related message about Ralph Northam (1) and the other half (Splits B & D) were read a negative choice-related message about Ed Gillespie (2). Voters in Splits A & B were asked their vote choice *after* hearing the choice messaging, and voters in Splits C & D were asked their vote choice *before* hearing choice messaging. For analysis, we grouped splits A & B together and splits C & D together. Splits A & B contained observations from 1,032 voters, with a margin of error of  $\pm 3.1\%$  at a 95% confidence interval, and splits C & D contained observations from 1,086 voters, with a margin of error of  $\pm 3.0\%$  at a 95% confidence interval.

Message 1: "Supporters say that Ralph Northam, the Democratic candidate for Governor, is a champion for women's health care. He spoke out against unnecessary abortion restrictions and voted against a bill that would block coverage for abortion in health care plans. Northam trusts women to make their own health care decisions."

Message 2: "Opponents say that Ed Gillespie, the Republican candidate for Governor, is bad for Virginia women. He wants to see abortion banned, wants to defund Planned Parenthood, and chaired the RNC when its platform called for the overturning of Roe v Wade. Ed Gillespie doesn't trust Virginia women to make their own health care decisions."