

**For immediate release:**

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Survey: Nielson Brothers Polling (NBP) Statewide Survey, Oct. 31 - Nov. 4, 2012

Subject: Major South Dakota General Election Races and Ballot Issues

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**Romney and Noem Extend Leads, Fiegen/McGovern Race Tightens, *Initiative 15*  
Opposition Builds**

The final Nielson Brothers Polling (NBP) 2012 South Dakota general election survey finds Public Utilities Commission (PUC) candidates Kristie Fiegen and Matt McGovern to be involved in the most competitive statewide race. Also, *Initiated Measure 15 (IM 15)*, which had a comfortable lead in early NBP surveys, falls behind as election day nears.

In the final NBP tracking survey of likely South Dakota voters, conducted from October 31 to November 4, the race for PUC has tightened again. Democrat McGovern is in a statistical dead heat with Republican incumbent Fiegen (41.9 to 41.6 percent, respectively). Libertarian Russell Clarke receives 6.7 percent of support, with 9.8 percent "undecided."

Republican candidates have extended their leads in other major races. Presidential candidate Mitt Romney appears poised to win in South Dakota, as he holds a 11.9 percent advantage over Democrat Barack Obama (53.2 to 41.3 percent), with 5.6 percent still "undecided." Republican Representative Kristi Noem appears headed for reelection to the US House, as she extends her lead to 12.7 percent over Democratic challenger Matt Varilek (53.9 to 41.2 percent) with 4.9 percent "undecided." In the other race for PUC, incumbent Republican Chris Nelson maintains a large lead over Democrat Nick Nemec 59.2 percent to 27.6 percent, with 13.2 percent "undecided." NBP also asks whether voters support the Republican or the Democratic state senate candidate in their legislative district. The generic Republican senate candidates hold a 46.7 to 34.7 percent advantage, with 18.6 percent "undecided."

In evaluating President Obama's job performance, 45.7 percent of respondents say they approve (26.9 percent "strongly approve," and 18.8 percent "somewhat approve"). Of the 54.3 percent who disapprove, 43.7 percent "strongly disapprove." Representative Kristi Noem's job approval is at 55.4 percent, with 28.7 percent saying they "strongly approve," and 26.7 percent saying they "somewhat approve." 44.6 percent disapprove of Noem's job performance, with 25.8 percent saying they "strongly disapprove."

As with previous NBP surveys, both *Referred Laws 14* and *16* appear to be in danger of falling. *Referred Law 14* still struggles to pick up support. 27.6 percent of respondents say they will vote for this law -- which would transfer 22 percent of the contractors' excise tax from the state's general fund to a Large Project Development Fund. 42.4 percent say they will vote against it, and 30.0 percent of respondents remain "undecided." *Referred Law 16* also trails in support with

28.2 percent of respondents saying they will vote for it, and 53.8 percent planning to vote against it. 18.1 percent of respondents remain “undecided” about *RL 16* -- which would establish programs for teacher scholarships and bonuses, standardize teacher and principal evaluations, and eliminate tenure requirements.

Opposition to *Initiated Measure 15 (IM 15)* continues to build as support weakens. *IM 15* has now fallen behind, as 38.9 percent say they will vote for it and 49.0 percent say they will vote against it. 12.1 percent say they are “undecided.” Democratic support for *IM 15* -- which raises the state sales tax one percent to bolster education and Medicaid -- decreases in this survey to 48.1 percent, while Democratic opposition climbs to 40.2 percent. Opposition among Republicans (55.1 percent against) and Independents (51.3 percent against) remains strong.

When asked about the direction of South Dakota, 52.5 percent say the state is going in the “right direction.” 28.8 percent say “wrong direction,” and 18.7 percent say they are “undecided.” 61.8 percent of Republicans say “right direction,” compared with 42.5 percent of Democrats answering the same.

“PUC candidates Kristie Fiegen and Matt McGovern appear to be in the most competitive statewide race,” says Paul Nielson, President of Nielson Brothers Polling. “Chances appear to be dimming for *Referred Laws 14* and *16*, and even *Initiated Measure 15* suddenly looks vulnerable,” adds Nielson.

NBP surveyed a random selection of likely South Dakota voters from October 31 through November 4, 2012. The number of responses ranged from 658 (with a 3.82 percent margin of error) for the question on the direction of South Dakota, and 633 (3.90 percent margin of error) for the presidential job approval question, to 558 (4.15 percent margin of error) for the question on *RL 16*.

NBP thanks all who responded to our surveys and who showed interest in our work. We look forward to continuing our study of public opinion concerning political and social issues. Interested parties may contact NBP with regard to questions and answers on past and future public surveys. For more information contact [nbpolling@gmail.com](mailto:nbpolling@gmail.com), or call 605 496-0911.