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Student-run Utah Colleges Exit Poll accurately predicts SLC mayoral race

PROVO, Utah - According to the Utah Colleges Exit Poll, in Salt Lake City's nonpartisan mayoral election Tuesday, Nov. 4, Democratic incumbent Rocky Anderson won support from more than three-quarters of Democratic voters and overcame a large advantage by Democratic challenger Frank Pignanelli among Republicans to narrowly win re-election.

Although this was not a partisan race the exit poll results revealed a clear partisan division. Ninety-one percent of self-identified "Strong Republicans" and 78 percent of other Republicans supported Pignanelli while 78 percent of "Strong Democrats" and 77 percent of other Democrats voted for Anderson.

"Pignanelli did as well as any Republican might hope among Republican voters," said Kelly Patterson, chair of the Political Science Department at Brigham Young University and director of the exit poll. "The Pignanelli campaign faced a real challenge in attempting to motivate Republican voters to the polls while not alienating Democrats. They just fell a little short."

In addition to partisan affiliation, the memory of the Main Street Plaza issue had some lingering effects on voters and led to a pronounced division of the vote by religion.

"Active" members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints overwhelmingly (85 percent) supported Pignanelli. "Active" includes voters who self-identified as "very active" or "somewhat active" in the practice of their religion. The exit poll showed that these voters made up 40 percent of all voters.

Salt Lake voters who affiliate with other denominations heavily supported Anderson with Catholic and Protestant support for Anderson at 71 percent and those of other religions at 84 percent. Voters with no religious affiliation constitute nearly 30 percent of the turnout on Election Day and these voters also heavily supported Anderson (81 percent).

"Voters' partisan and religious affiliations had a large effect on voting behavior Tuesday," said Quin Monson, assistant director at the Center for the Study of Elections and Democracy at BYU and co-director of the exit poll. "Mayor Anderson has some work to do to bridge this religious divide. Without the Main Street Plaza issue to contend with, he would have easily glided to re-election."

Mayor Anderson's closer-than-expected victory was underscored by a breakdown of the general election vote by the primary vote. Not surprisingly, Anderson and Pignanelli each maintained very strong support among voters who supported them in the primary, but a large proportion (90 percent) of Republican Molonai Hola's supporters voted for

Pignanelli. This meant that had only primary election voters come out to vote on Tuesday, Pignanelli would have won the election. Of those that voted Tuesday, 32 percent did not vote in the October primary and Anderson won 66 percent of these voters.

Founded more than 20 years ago by David Magleby, the Utah Colleges Exit Poll has established a tradition for accuracy. The 2003 edition was the first for the exit poll in local elections. Interviewers worked to survey voters in 45 Salt Lake City polling places throughout the day Tuesday. Although the race initially appeared to be "too close to call," the margin widened throughout the evening, and at the 9 p.m. conclusion of the KBYU broadcast, BYU's exit poll team correctly projected Anderson the winner with 53.8 percent compared to 46.2 percent for Pignanelli. These results closely matched the actual results from the race.

"The success of this project is entirely due to the students. They were incredible," said Patterson. "The continued accuracy of this poll reflects the hard work and diligence of all the students involved." The student-led poll involved more than 250 volunteer interviewers, mostly undergraduates from political science classes at BYU. Students at BYU in political science and statistics wrote the questions, recruited and trained interviewers, and designed the sample.

Under the direction of Howard Christensen, chair of the BYU Department of Statistics, sampling experts randomly selected 45 polling places in Salt Lake where student interviewers asked voters to fill out one of three questionnaires. More than 3,500 Salt Lake City voters responded to the survey with student interviewers staffing the polling places from 7 a.m. until 7 p.m. and calling in results throughout the day and even during the television broadcast.

While the results for mayor at 8 p.m. were "too close to call," or within the survey's margin of sampling error, updated numbers available just before 9 p.m. enabled the exit poll analysts to project an Anderson victory. The margin of sampling error for the updated 9 p.m. estimate was plus or minus 3.25 percentage points. With this margin of error there would have been only one chance in 100 of incorrectly projecting the winner.

Source: Quin Monson, 801-422-8017

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KBYU Utah Colleges Exit Poll 2003 Salt Lake City Mayoral Vote*

		All voters	Anderson	Pignanelli
Gender (%)	Male	48	54	46
	Female	52	52	48
Age (%)	18-24	7	53	48
	25-34	19	60	40
	35-44	18	59	41
	45-54	20	58	42
	55-64	16	49	51
	65+	20	39	61
Party Affiliation (%)	Strong Democrat	24	78	22
	Other Democrat	26	77	24
	Independent	14	58	42
	Other Republican	19	22	78
	Strong Republican	17	9	91
Ideology (%)	Strong Conservative	11	17	83
	Moderate Conservative	29	22	78
	Middle of the road	19	53	47
	Moderate Liberal	27	78	22
	Strong Liberal	15	90	10
East/West Side (%)	East of State Street	67	58	42
	West of State Street	33	41	59
Religion (%)	Catholic	9	71	29
	Protestant	8	71	29
	Active LDS	40	15	85
	Not Active LDS	5	57	43
	Other Religion	10	84	16
	No Religion	29	81	19
Issues influential on vote (average) 1=least influential 5=most influential	Affordable Housing	3.17	3.36	3.00
	Downtown Development	3.82	3.96	3.71
	West side Development	3.35	3.37	3.33
	Main Street Plaza	3.43	3.27	3.64
	Crime/gangs	3.56	3.55	3.55
	City taxes	3.40	3.34	3.41
Agreement with Main St. Plaza Settlement (%)	Strongly Agree	35	23	77
	Agree	27	57	43
	Disagree	17	77	23
	Strongly Disagree	18	78	22
	Don't Know	4	70	30
Nordstrom (%)	Stay downtown	49	48	52
	Allowed to Move	31	59	41
	Don't Know	20	56	44
Primary Vote Choice (%)	Anderson	43	96	4
	Pignanelli	33	8	92
	Hola	24	11	90
Voted in Primary (%)	Did not vote in primary	32	66	34
	Voted in Primary	67	47	53

* unweighted data as of 8:40pm November 4, 2003. Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding.

Exit Poll Election Night Accuracy

		Anderson	Pignanelli
Mayor	Exit Poll 8pm ^a	52.8	47.2
	Exit Poll 9pm ^b	53.8	46.2
	Actual Results ^c	53.6	46.4

		For	Against
Proposition 1	Exit Poll 8pm ^b	73.5	26.5
	Actual Results ^c	70.7	29.3
Proposition 2	Exit Poll 8pm ^b	62.2	37.8
	Actual Results ^c	61.0	39.0
Proposition 3	Exit Poll 8pm ^a	52.0	48.0
	Actual Results ^c	49.7	50.3
Proposition 4	Exit Poll 8pm ^b	72.8	27.2
	Actual Results ^c	71.1	28.9
Proposition 5	Exit Poll 8pm ^b	55.4	44.6
	Actual Results ^c	51.2	48.8
Proposition 6	Exit Poll 8pm ^b	73.2	26.8
	Actual Results ^c	72.1	27.9

^a “too close to call”

^b projected winner

^c For actual results see: <http://www.co.slc.ut.us/cl/electiondiv/results/cfm/2003mungen.cfm>