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McAuliffe running away with Democrats' governor bid; Herring has big lead on Jones for attorney general nod; Rasoul leads crowded lt. gov. field, but most undecided

Summary of Key Findings

1. Six weeks before Virginia Democrats' June 8 primary, nearly half of the Democratic voters surveyed (47%) back former governor Terry McAuliffe for the party's gubernatorial nomination. None of the other four primary candidates reach double-digit support: Lt. Gov. Justin Fairfax (8%); Sen. Jennifer McClellan (6%); former Del. Jennifer Carroll Foy (5%); Del. Lee Carter (1%). Undecided are 27%.
2. Seeking his party's nomination to a third term, Attorney General Mark Herring leads Del. Jerrauld "Jay" Jones, 42% to 18%, with 34% undecided. However, Jones has gained since our February poll, while Herring's support has not changed.
3. Del. Sam Rasoul leads a very crowded Democratic field for the lieutenant governor nomination, but almost two-thirds of Democratic voters surveyed are undecided (64%). Rasoul leads with 12%, and none of the other five candidates who remain in the race top 1-2% support.
4. Enthusiasm is fairly high among Democrats, with 40% indicating they are very enthusiastic to vote in the primary, and 43% saying they are somewhat enthusiastic.

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Analysis

Governor nomination: With just over 6 weeks until Virginia Democrats' June 8 gubernatorial primary, former governor Terry McAuliffe holds a commanding lead. McAuliffe has the support of 47% of Democratic voters, followed by Lt. Gov. Justin Fairfax (8%), Richmond Sen. Jennifer McClellan (6%), former Prince William Del. Jennifer Carrol Foy (5%) and Manassas Del. Lee Carter (1%). More than a quarter of voters remain undecided (27%).

McAuliffe is the best-known candidate in the field, with a favorable/unfavorable rating among Democratic voters of 56% to 14%, while 28% indicated no opinion. Fairfax follows with a closely divided favorable/unfavorable rating of 27% to 26%, with 45% indicating no opinion. Most voters say they have no opinion of McClellan (73%), Carrol Foy (78%) or Carter (86%). Among those who hold an opinion, however, McClellan has a 20% to 5% favorable/unfavorable rating and Carroll Foy has a 15% to 5% favorable/unfavorable.

"Name recognition is a big head start, but it's better when voters' impression is mostly favorable," said Wason Center Academic Director Dr. Quentin Kidd.

Asked for their second choice for governor, Democratic voters are divided, with Fairfax receiving the highest support (11%), followed by McClellan (8%), McAuliffe (8%), Carrol Foy (7%) and Carter (1%).

Lieutenant governor nomination: Almost two out of three Democratic voters (64%) say they are undecided in the crowded contest for the party's lieutenant governor bid, but Del. Sam Rasoul has emerged as the front runner with 12% support. Del. Elizabeth Guzman led the rest with the support of 4% of Democratic voters, but she withdrew from the race while the survey was in the field. None of the remaining candidates received more than 2% support.

Attorney general nomination: Seeking his party's nomination for a third term as attorney general, incumbent Mark Herring (42%) has a solid lead over Norfolk Del. Jerrauld "Jay" Jones (18%), with 34% of Democratic voters undecided. Notably, Jones's support has grown while Herring's support has not changed since our February poll (42% Herring to 3% Jones, 50% undecided).

Enthusiasm: Overall enthusiasm among Democratic voters is fairly high, with 83% surveyed indicating they are very or somewhat enthusiastic to vote in the primary. "This gubernatorial field is the most diverse in the history of the Commonwealth, and that has drawn a great deal of interest in the race" said Wason Center Research Director Dr. Rebecca Bromley-Trujillo.

Q1: Do you approve or disapprove of the way Ralph Northam is handling his job as Governor of Virginia? **[IF RESPONDENT IS UNSURE (“DON’T KNOW”, “DEPENDS”, “NOT SURE”, ETC.) PROBE ONCE WITH: OVERALL do you approve or disapprove of the way Ralph Northam is handling his job as Governor? IF STILL UNSURE ENTER AS DON’T KNOW]**

Approve 83
 Disapprove 12
 Don’t Know 5

Q2: Do you approve or disapprove of the way Joe Biden is handling his job as President? **[IF RESPONDENT IS UNSURE (“DON’T KNOW”, “DEPENDS”, “NOT SURE”, ETC.) PROBE ONCE WITH: OVERALL do you approve or disapprove of the way Joe Biden is handling his job as President? IF STILL UNSURE ENTER AS DON’T KNOW]**

Approve 89
 Disapprove 10
 Don’t Know 1

ENTH: And how enthusiastic would you say you are about voting in the upcoming Democratic Primary? Would you say you are...

	All	Male	Female	White	Black	18-44	45+
Very Enthusiastic	40	41	40	35	48	30	43
Somewhat Enthusiastic	43	40	45	46	38	41	43
Less Enthusiastic	8	7	9	9	7	13	7
Not Enthusiastic	8	12	4	8	7	16	5
Don’t Know	1	1	1	2	0	1	1

Q5: Several people have announced they are running in the Democratic primary for governor of Virginia. As I read their names, please say if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of them, or if you don’t know enough about them to have an opinion **[RANDOMIZE Candidate Names]**.

	Favorable	Unfavorable	No opinion	Dk/Refuse (vol)
Terry McAuliffe	56	14	28	2
Jennifer Carroll Foy	15	5	78	3
Lee Carter	4	6	86	4
Jennifer McClellan	20	5	73	3
Justin Fairfax	27	26	45	2

Q10: If the Democratic primary for governor were being held today and the candidates were....for whom would you vote? [INTERVIEWER: IF RESPONDENT IS UNSURE ("DON'T KNOW", "DEPENDS", "NOT SURE", ETC.) PROBE ONCE WITH: Which one are you leaning toward right now?] [ROTATE NAMES]

	All	Male	Female	White	Black	18-44	45+
Terry McAuliffe	47	49	45	53	37	41	49
Jennifer Carroll Foy	5	6	5	6	3	8	4
Lee Carter	1	1	1	1	2	2	1
Jennifer McClellan	6	5	7	6	9	4	7
Justin Fairfax	8	6	10	6	13	12	7
Someone else (vol)	2	3	1	2	1	2	1
Undecided (vol)	27	25	29	23	33	26	28
Dk/ref (vol)	4	4	3	4	3	5	3

Q11: And who would be your 2nd choice for governor if the Democratic primary were being held today?

	All	Male	Female	White	Black	18-44	45+
Terry McAuliffe	8	9	7	7	12	9	8
Jennifer Carroll Foy	7	8	6	7	8	6	7
Lee Carter	1	1	1	1	3	2	1
Jennifer McClellan	8	10	6	6	8	12	6
Justin Fairfax	11	12	10	10	16	9	11
Someone else (vol)	2	2	2	2	1	2	2
Undecided (vol)	58	53	62	61	48	55	59
Dk/ref (vol)	6	6	6	6	5	6	6

Q12: If the Democratic primary for lieutenant governor were being held today and the candidates were....for whom would you vote? [INTERVIEWER: IF RESPONDENT IS UNSURE ("DON'T KNOW", "DEPENDS", "NOT SURE", ETC.) PROBE ONCE WITH: Which one are you leaning toward right now?] [ROTATE NAMES]

	All	Male	Female	White	Black	18-44	45+
Hala Ayala	2	1	2	2	1	1	2
Elizabeth Guzman	4	4	5	4	5	6	4
Mark Levine	2	3	2	3	2	3	2
Andria McClellan	2	3	2	3	2	3	2
Sean Perryman	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Sam Rasoul	12	13	11	13	11	10	13
Xavier Warren	2	3	1	1	4	3	2
Someone else (vol)	1	1	2	1	1	1	1
Undecided (vol)	64	64	65	63	65	62	65
Dk/ref (vol)	8	8	9	8	11	10	8

Q13: If the Democratic primary for attorney general were being held today and the candidates were....for whom would you vote? [INTERVIEWER: IF RESPONDENT IS UNSURE ("DON'T KNOW", "DEPENDS", "NOT SURE", ETC.) PROBE ONCE WITH: Which one are you leaning toward right now?] [ROTATE NAMES]

	All	Male	Female	White	Black	18-44	45+
Mark Herring	42	47	39	46	38	37	44
Jerrauld "Jay" Jones	18	18	18	16	21	17	18
Someone else (vol)	1	1	2	2	1	3	1
Undecided (vol)	34	30	37	31	37	38	33
Dk/ref (vol)	5	4	5	5	3	6	4

Demographics Full Survey n=806

EDUC: Could you tell me the highest level of school or college you had the opportunity to complete:

High school or less	21
College or more	77
Dk/ref(vol)	3

HISPANIC: Do you consider yourself to be Hispanic or Latino?

Yes	4
No	93
Dk/ref (vol)	4

RACE: Do you consider yourself to be:

White	63
Black or African American	23
Other	14

RELIG: What is your religious preference, are you Protestant, Roman Catholic, Jewish, another religion, or no religion?

Protestant	23
Christian (non-specific)	17
Catholic	12
Jewish	3
Other	12
None	27
Dk/ref (vol)	5

IDEOL: When it comes to your ideology, would you consider yourself to be a...

Very conservative	2
Conservative	8
Moderate	42
Liberal	34
Very liberal	10
Dk/ref(vol)	5

PARTY: In politics today, do you generally consider yourself to be a Republican, a Democrat, or an Independent?

Democrat	4
Republican	64
Independent	26
No Preference (vol)	1
Other Party (vol)	1
Dk/Ref (vol)	4

PARTYLN

Lean Republican	3
Lean Democrat	18
Independent	7
Dk/ref (vol)	4

AGE: (Recorded as exact year of birth)

18-24	2
25-34	5
35-44	14
45-54	35
55 & older	43

INCOME: And, just for statistical purposes, in which of the following categories does your family income fall?

Under \$25,000	2
\$25-\$49,999	6
\$50-\$74,999	12
\$75-\$99,999	14
\$100,000-\$149,999	21
Over \$150,000	29
Dk/ref (vol)	16

CELL/LANDLINE

Cell	47
Landline	53

SEX:

Male	44
Female	56

REGION

Northern	41
Richmond-Central	21
Hampton Roads-East	22
South/Southwest/West	16

How the survey was conducted:

The results of this poll are based on 806 interviews of registered Virginia voters who are likely Democratic primary voters and have indicated they plan to vote in the upcoming June 8 Democratic primary, including 427 on landline and 379 on cell phone, conducted April 11-21, 2021. Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding. The margin of error for the whole survey is +/-3.9% at the 95% level of confidence. This means that if 50% of respondents indicate a topline view on an issue, we can be 95% confident that the population's view on that issue is somewhere between 46.1% and 53.9%. The margin of error for subgroups may be higher. All error margins have been adjusted to account for the survey's design effect, which is 1.3 in this survey. The design effect is a factor representing the survey's deviation from a simple random sample and takes into account decreases in precision due to sample design and weighting procedures. Sub-samples have a higher margin of error. In addition to sampling error, the other potential sources of error include non-response, question wording, and interviewer error. The response rate (AAPOR RRI Standard Definition) for the survey was 11%. Five callbacks were employed in the fielding process. Live calling was conducted by trained interviewers at the Wason Center for Civic Leadership Survey Research Lab at Christopher Newport University. The data reported here are weighted using an iterative weighting process on region, age, race, and sex to reflect as closely as possible the population of Virginia's June 8, 2021 Democratic primary electorate.