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# Results and Analysis of The Inaugural Southern Illinois Poll

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## Paul Simon Public Policy Institute

June 23, 2010

Dear Friend of the Paul Simon Institute:

Attached you will find Paper #20 in The Simon Review series. This paper is by Visiting Professor Charles W. Leonard and it presents the results of the first Southern Illinois Poll which we recently completed. This poll covers the eighteen southern-most counties of Illinois, and it gives a comprehensive overview of public opinion in our area.

We at the Institute hope for this inaugural poll of Southern Illinois to be the first in a series of polls we do periodically to document the contours of opinion in our region and to describe and explain the changes which will take place in it.

Dr. Leonard also contrasts the recent poll results for Southern Illinois with those we obtained in a similar statewide poll we took in October of last year. Some distinct differences and interesting similarities are evident as the results for the two different geographical areas are compared. Here, too, we will have the ability to compare and contrast statewide results with local results as we conduct these polls repeatedly over time.

I am pleased to provide these results to you in the printed version. You can also obtain a copy of this paper by going online at our web-site at [thepaulsimoninstitute.org](http://thepaulsimoninstitute.org). Charles Leonard can be reached at [cleonard@siu.edu](mailto:cleonard@siu.edu) and I can be reached at [dyepsen@siu.edu](mailto:dyepsen@siu.edu) if you have any questions. We hope you enjoy reading this paper and participating in all of the activities of the Paul Simon Institute.

Sincerely,

David Yepsen  
Director

# *The Simon Review*

## **Results and Analysis of The Inaugural Southern Illinois Poll**

By Charles W. Leonard  
Visiting Professor  
Paper #20  
June 2010

A Publication of The Paul Simon Public Policy Institute  
Southern Illinois University Carbondale

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## **I. Introduction**

In April 2010, The Paul Simon Public Policy Institute fielded the inaugural Southern Illinois Poll. We surveyed 401 registered voters in the region on political, public policy, and cultural issues in order to begin building an opinion database on this sparsely populated, relatively little-studied corner of the state. We hope to field a new Southern Illinois poll every spring.

Conducting a Southern Illinois poll begs the question: What is “Southern Illinois”? There is not single, obvious boundary that separates the plains of central Illinois from the rolling, wooded hills of the southern part. We could emulate the sociologist John Shelton Reed’s examination of American “southern-ness” and check the business listings for instances of “Southern” in business names.<sup>1</sup> Or perhaps we could emulate the apocryphal story of the politician who got in his car in Springfield and drove south, stopping periodically to ask if he was in Southern Illinois yet.

The consensus among colleagues we consulted here at Southern Illinois University Carbondale was that locals generally think of Southern Illinois as that part of the state generally south of Interstate 64. We further decided to exclude the St. Louis-area “Metro East” counties from our study, mostly because the urban and suburban nature of Madison and St. Clair Counties makes them culturally different from the rural and small-town feel of the rest of Southern Illinois. This decision, ironically, excludes the area of our sister university, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville.

This left us to study the 18 southernmost Illinois counties: Alexander, Franklin, Gallatin, Hamilton, Hardin, Jackson, Jefferson, Johnson, Massac, Perry, Pope, Pulaski, Randolph, Saline, Union, Washington, White, and Williamson.

The poll of 401 registered voters in the 18-county area of southernmost Illinois was taken April 5 to 13 and has a margin of error of plus or minus 4.9 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level. The margin for error will be larger for subgroups. Interviews were conducted for the Institute by Customer Research International of San Marcos, Texas. It reports no Illinois political figures as clients and was paid with non-tax dollars from the Institute’s endowment fund.

## **II. Profile of the Southern Illinois Voter**

Southern Illinoisans won’t be surprised by the demographic profile of respondents to the Southern Illinois Poll: they are older than average, overwhelmingly white and Christian, and more likely to be conservative and Republican than liberal and Democratic. They favor passage of a law to allow residents to carry concealed weapons and have a favorable view of the National Rifle Association. They are more likely than citizens in the rest of the state to oppose gay marriage and abortion.

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<sup>1</sup> Reed, John Shelton. 1982. *One South: An Ethnic Approach to Regional Culture*

While the average age in most southern Illinois counties is higher than elsewhere in the state, that does not explain how the median age of voters in our sample was 60. Voter registration rates and geographic mobility of younger voters resulted in a sample that was skewed toward older residents. For example, nationwide, 79 percent of adults 55 and older are registered to vote, compared with 58 percent of those 18 to 24.<sup>2</sup> And because younger voters are more likely to change residences than younger ones, interviewers were less likely to find working phone numbers for younger voters. Although phoning took place while classes were in session at Southern Illinois University, it is not likely that many SIU students were in the sample, given that many are registered at addresses outside of Southern Illinois.

Six in ten respondents (61.3%) live in Illinois' 12<sup>th</sup> Congressional District, represented by Democratic Representative Jerry Costello. A little over a third (36.6%) live in the 19<sup>th</sup> District, represented by Republican Representative John Shimkus. Just 2% of respondents live in Republican Representative Tim Johnson's 15<sup>th</sup> District, which spiders along the sparsely inhabited Ohio River bottomlands at the eastern edge of Southern Illinois.

Almost all our respondents identified themselves as white (93.4%) and as Christian (92.0%). Four in ten (42.1%) of the total sample described themselves as evangelical or "born again" Christians. About half (51.4%) said they attend church once a week, and another one in eight (13.0%) said they attended almost every week. Among those claiming a religious affiliation, about a third (32.2%) said they were Baptists, 14.1% were Roman Catholics, 10.6 percent were Methodists, and 8.9 percent were Lutherans. The rest were split between a wide variety of Protestant denominations.

Most voters (54.9%) in our Southern Illinois sample were conservative. One in five (19.7%) described themselves as very conservative, and another third (35.2%) said they were somewhat conservative. A quarter (24.2%) said they were moderate, and fewer than one in five (17.2%) described themselves as very or somewhat liberal. Though the tilt was not as steep as the conservative/liberal balance, our respondents were more likely to describe themselves as Republicans (47.4%) than as Democrats (33.9%).

### Social Issues

Given our sample's age, political conservatism and religiosity, it is not surprising to find Southern Illinois voters more likely than those statewide to oppose abortion and gay marriage. Almost three in ten (28.9%) said abortion should be illegal under any circumstances, as opposed to 17.8% who said so in the Institute's statewide poll in the fall of 2009. Only 9.0% said it should be legal under any circumstances, compared with 28.3% statewide. Southern Illinois voters were more likely than those statewide to say it should be legal under certain circumstances (58.9% vs. 51.0%).

The differences were more striking regarding attitudes toward recognition of same-sex unions. While almost three in ten statewide (29.3%) said gays should be allowed to

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<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2006. "Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2004," p 2.

legally marry, just one in five (20.0%) Southern Illinois voters said so. Similarly, over a third (35.3%) in our statewide poll said gays should be allowed to form civil unions, only a quarter (25.2%) said so in the Southern Illinois poll. Very nearly half (48.6%) of voters in this poll said there should be no legal recognition of same-sex unions, compared with just three in ten (31.1%) statewide.

As one would expect in a conservative, rural part of the state, Southern Illinois voters appear supportive of gun rights. A comfortable majority (56.6%) favored a proposal to allow Illinoisans to carry concealed weapons. Southern Illinois Republicans overwhelmingly favor the proposal (71.6%), while Democrats oppose (55.9%).

Field work was conducted shortly after Congress passed the health care reform bill, so we asked Southern Illinois voters whether they approved. By almost two to one, our respondents felt the bill was a “bad thing” (52.6%) rather than a “good thing” (26.7%). One in five voters (20.7%) had no opinion.

### Feelings toward Groups

We can learn a lot about any group of voters by how they feel toward other groups. In our early attempt to typify Southern Illinois voters, we wanted to learn how they felt about, for example, government entities in Washington, about people from Chicago, and about institutions such as labor unions and the National Rifle Association.

Using a question construction that political scientists call a “feeling thermometer,” the poll asked respondents to describe their feelings toward groups or institutions on a 100-point scale, with ratings between zero and 49 representing “cool” feelings, a rating of 50 describing a neutral feeling, and ratings between 51 and 100 describing “warm” feelings.

Unsurprisingly, given the majority-positive response on the concealed-carry question, feelings were positive toward the National Rifle Association, with almost half giving “warm” responses, and with the average “temperature” of 65.1. Almost as many (40.6%) had favorable feelings toward labor unions, and another quarter (28.2%) were neutral, for an average rating of 53.3. This might at first seem surprising in an overwhelmingly conservative, largely Republican electorate, until one remembers the area’s long history of coal mining, manufacturing, and unionized trades.

Feelings toward the US Congress were chilly, consistent with numerous national polls showing widespread dissatisfaction: fewer than one in five (19.2%) had warm feelings toward the institution, with an average “temperature” of just 36.4. Feelings toward the US Supreme Court, on the other hand, were largely positive: 43.4% had warm feelings, with an average rating of 56.5.

Voters in Southern Illinois felt good about “people from Southern Illinois.” More than three-fourths (77.8%) gave warm ratings, with an average rating of 78.7. Similarly, people in the region had warm feelings for Southern Illinois University, with 69.9% giving warm ratings, with a mean “temperature” of 72.6.

If anything is surprising in the “feeling thermometer” list it is the frigid feeling Southern Illinois voters have for “people from Chicago.” Only 17.2% gave “warm” responses, with an average rating of just 38.8—roughly equivalent to their negative feelings toward Congress!

### **III. Direction and Quality of Life**

The Institute’s Fall 2009 statewide poll showed Illinoisans generally pessimistic about the direction of their country and their state, but it was somewhat surprising to see how much more pessimistic Southern Illinois voters were. For example, last fall’s statewide poll showed 42.3% of Illinoisans saying the country was heading in the right direction; in spring 2010, only 22.7% of Southern Illinois voters thought the U.S. was heading in the right direction.

More glaring still was the difference in “right direction” responses regarding the state of Illinois. While ‘09’s statewide 21.8% “right direction” response seemed grim, Southern Illinois’ 6.5% “right direction” response is almost breathtakingly low. 85.3% of the registered voters in our sample said the state was off track and heading in the wrong direction.

Responses return to the expected pattern when we asked whether things in the respondent’s “city or area of the state” were going in the right direction. Almost half (47.6%) said things closer to home were going in the right direction. This was slightly less than the 52.0% “right direction” response we got in the statewide sample.

Anecdotally, we hear Southern Illinoisans tout the quality of life as a reason for living here. It was surprising, then, to see that just over a third (36.4%) said “the overall quality of life in your area” was excellent or good, compared with a solid majority (54.7% excellent/good) who said so last fall in the statewide poll. In that survey, perceived local quality of life was highest among residents of the Chicago suburbs (64.3% excellent/good), almost 30 percentage points higher than what we registered in Southern Illinois in spring 2010.

#### Aspects of Quality of life

In the past two statewide Simon Institute surveys, we have asked respondents about “quality of life” issues such as education, public safety, and infrastructure. Our studies have shown that a majority of Illinois voters think the quality of such things is at least average, with large pluralities saying the quality of such things is excellent or good. This is ironic, since voters overwhelmingly say they get a not-so-good or poor value for the taxes they pay to the state of Illinois.

Overall, Southern Illinoisans appear less satisfied with the following aspects of their quality of life than voters in our statewide samples.



Southern Illinois voters sampled were somewhat less likely to say the quality of the environment was “excellent” than voters statewide (9.0% here vs. 17.0% last fall). That gap was mostly made up in the “good” category, with 54.1% choosing that option vs. 44.5% “good” in the statewide poll.

Respondents in the Southern region were significantly less likely to approve of the quality of infrastructure, such as roads and bridges (26.2% excellent/good) than were voters in the statewide sample (38.6%).

Only about one in ten (10.5%) said the quality of public safety in their area was excellent, compared with more than a quarter (27.6%) in the statewide sample. Half (49.1%) of Southern Illinoisans said public safety was good, and another quarter (26.4%) said it was average.

Southern Illinois voters were significantly less likely (at 7.5%) to say the quality of K-12 education was excellent or good, than were those in our 2009 statewide sample (19.6%). Respondents in the Southern poll were more likely to say the quality was good (36.2%) or average (28.2%).

Not one of the voters in our Southern Illinois survey thought the performance of the local economy was excellent, and only 8% thought it was good, much worse than the still dismal 22.6% of the voters in our fall '09 statewide survey who said the performance of their local economy was either excellent or good. Almost six in ten (59.2%) Southern Illinoisans said the performance of the local economy was not-so-good or poor.

Surprisingly, in an area known for its natural beauty and outdoor-sports way of life, Southern Illinois voters' perception of the quality of parks and recreation was not appreciably better than that shown in our fall '09 statewide poll. In Southern Illinois, 10.5% said the quality of parks and recreation in their area was excellent, compared with 30.4% in the statewide poll. Four in ten (44.4%) in Southern Illinois said the quality of parks and recreation was good, compared with a similar number (39.9%) statewide.

#### **IV. Budget and Spending Issues**

On most of the budget and spending items in the Southern Illinois poll, voters' opinions looked much like those of Illinois voters statewide. They oppose cuts in all of the big-ticket categories in the state budget; they believe the massive budget problem can be solved by cutting “waste and inefficiency;” and they oppose measures that could raise revenues to plug the budget hole. They were, however, slightly more likely to support an income tax hike and a sales tax increase than were voters statewide last fall.

A glaring difference existed on Southern Illinoisans' perception of whether their area gets its “fair share of state spending.” Statewide, voters were a lot more likely than Southern Illinois voters to say their area got more than its fair share (8.8% vs. 1.7%), or to say their area got “about the right amount” (37.9% vs. 11.5%). A striking eight voters in ten

(80.5%) said their area gets less than its fair share, twice the number we saw in the statewide poll (39.3%).

- In the statewide poll, the sample size of which allowed for some geographic breakdowns, residents of the Chicago suburbs were most likely to say their area got about the right amount of state spending (47.6%). Among “downstate” residents—which in that sample meant everyone not in Chicago or its suburbs—almost six in ten (57.8%) said their area got less than its fair share. This suggests that Southern Illinoisans are even more pessimistic than small-town and rural residents in Central and Northern Illinois.

### Value of Services for Taxes Paid

Southern Illinois voters fit the pattern we have seen in our last two statewide surveys: they feel they get a worse value for the taxes they pay to the state than they do for the taxes they pay to the federal government or to the local government. This is a fairly clear measure of dissatisfaction with Illinois. In most surveys voters tend to feel better about the taxes they pay to the state than those they pay to Washington.

One in six (16.7%) said they got an excellent or good value for the taxes they pay to the federal government, while about one in eight (12.2%) felt they got an excellent or good value for the taxes they pay to the State of Illinois. Almost three in ten (28.6%) said they got an excellent or good value for the taxes they pay to their local governments.

### Solution to the Budget Crisis

As in our two previous statewide surveys, we informed Southern Illinois respondents that the state has a multibillion-dollar budget deficit, and we read to them “three statements that people have made about how to fix the deficit”: to take in more revenue, to cut waste and inefficiency in government, or a combination of budget cuts and revenue increases. They were asked which statement came closest to their own view. Results were not statistically different from what we found statewide last fall. One in ten (9.7%) said the state needed to take in more revenue, six in ten (60.1%) said cutting waste and inefficiency could fix the problem, and about a quarter (24.4%) said the crisis should be solved with a combination of cuts and revenue increases.

- Democrats in our sample were more likely to favor revenue increases than were Republicans (13.2% vs. 7.4%), and Republicans were somewhat more likely than Democrats to think the problem could be fixed by cutting “waste and inefficiency” (64.7% vs. 55.1%).
- There is a similar pattern in the education crosstabulations. Respondents who have a high school diploma or less are about half as likely as those with a college degree to say a tax increase can fix the problem (6.9% vs. 13.7%). The least-educated group is somewhat more likely than the most-educated group to say the problem can be fixed by cutting waste and inefficiency (66.2% vs. 59.0%).

### Cuts in State Spending

Like voters in our last two statewide polls, Southern Illinois voters oppose, by large margins, cuts in state spending for education, public safety, and natural resources.

Practically nine in ten (87.3%) oppose cuts to K-12 education, two thirds (67.1%) oppose cuts to state universities, and three-fourths (76.3%) oppose cuts to community college education. These large majorities hold across party lines.

Almost eight in ten (78.6%) oppose cuts to spending on public safety, such as state police and prison operations. Nearly six in ten (57.9%) oppose cutting spending on natural resources, such as state parks and environmental regulation.

### Revenue Increases

Majorities of Southern Illinois voters opposed each of the revenue-enhancing measures we tested, whether tax increases or expansion of legalized gambling, just as Illinois voters statewide have done in our polls in the fall of 2008 and fall of 2009.

Support for an increase in the state income tax rate was somewhat higher (38.9%) in the Southern Illinois Poll than in the fall poll (32.1%). This could be due to natural statistical variance, to a dawning realization of the severity of the state's fiscal problems, to the lower income tax rate in the spring survey ("increase from 3 percent to 4 percent" in the spring vs. "increase from 3 percent to 4.5 percent" in the statewide fall poll), or some combination.

Southern Illinois voters were also more likely than voters statewide to favor an increase in the state sales tax rate—though just a third favored it (33.2%) as opposed to about one in five (21.4%) statewide.

Voters in the Southern Illinois Poll were less likely than voters statewide last fall to favor expanding the sales tax to cover services (36.2% vs. 44.1%). They were slightly less likely than voters in the statewide poll to favor an expansion of legalized gambling (40.1% vs. 44.5%).

## **V. Fall Election "Horse Race" and Approval of Public Officials**

Though a survey of voters in Southern Illinois in April doesn't do much to tell us the outcome of a statewide election in November, it is nevertheless interesting and demonstrative of the conservative, Republican-leaning electorate south of Interstate 64.

In our poll, State Senator Bill Brady, the Republican candidate for governor, led incumbent Governor Pat Quinn by almost two to one (48.6% to 25.4%) with about one on five (19.2%) either undecided or unable to offer an opinion.

Similarly, U.S. Congressman Mark Kirk of Illinois' 10<sup>th</sup> District, the Republican candidate, led Democratic State Treasurer Alexi Giannoulias in the race for U.S. Senate by 42.1% to 24.7%.

We tested approval ratings of President Barack Obama, Governor Pat Quinn, Southern Illinois' two members of the U.S. House of Representatives, and Illinois House Speaker Michael Madigan. We tested approval ratings for Obama, Quinn, and Madigan in our fall 2009 statewide Simon Poll.

President Obama's approval ratings in white, conservative, Republican Southern Illinois are quite low—almost the exact flipside of what we found for the president in our statewide poll. In the Southern Poll, 36.7% approved of the job the president was doing, compared with 59.6% who disapproved. Statewide last fall, 62.7% approved of the president's job performance and 34.6% disapproved.

Governor Quinn's approval fared significantly worse in Southern Illinois in the spring than it did statewide in the fall: 30.9% approved of his performance and 54.6% disapproved. Statewide last fall 58.1% approved and 29.4% disapproved.

Voters with opinions on the matter approved of the performance of both of Southern Illinois' members of the U.S. House, though large percentages were unsure. For example, 45.1% approved of the job Congressman Jerry Costello (D-12) was doing, 24.2% disapproved, and three in ten (30.7%) didn't know.

- Within the 12<sup>th</sup> District, 56.5% approved of Costello's job performance and 26.4% disapproved.

Similarly, Congressman John Shimkus (R-19) enjoyed favorable ratings from 41.9% and disapproval from just 15.5%. Four in ten (42.6%) did not know enough to rate him.

- Within Shimkus's district, 55.8% approved of his performance and 19.0% disapproved.

While Illinois House Speaker Mike Madigan is a lightning rod for critics and is in many respects the most powerful person in Springfield, he is unknown to many voters (37.9%) in the Southern Illinois poll, compared to his 17.1% "don't know" in the statewide poll last fall. In Southern Illinois, 38.7% disapproved of his job performance and 23.4% approved. Statewide 40.4% approved of Madigan's performance.

## **VI. Guns and Hunting**

Hunting and gun ownership are an integral part of life in much of rural and small-town America. The Simon Institute's Southern Illinois Poll shows that is very much the case here. Three respondents in ten (30.4%) said they or someone in their household had gone hunting in the past 12 months. Among those households that included a hunter, deer were

the most frequent prey (83.6%), followed by turkey (33.6%), rabbit (16.3%), and duck (12.2%).

Of those who had a household member hunting deer, eight in ten (79.1%) reported that at least one of those hunts was successful.

We also asked about a measure introduced by Rep. John Bradley (D-Marion) that would allow Illinoisans to carry concealed weapons. A substantial majority (56.6%) favored the measure, 37.4% opposed it, and 6% were undecided.

There were a number of interesting crosstabular differences on the concealed-carry issue—bearing in mind that the relatively small sizes of subgroups limits our ability to come to firm conclusions. Among them:

- A slight majority (50.4%) of Jerry Costello’s Southern Illinois constituents favored concealed-carry, versus two-thirds (66.0%) of John Shimkus’s.
- Related, only four in ten Democrats (40.4%) supported concealed carry, as opposed to seven in ten Republicans (71.6%).
- Seven in ten men (69.7%) favored the concealed-carry bill, while women were evenly divided (47.9% favor, 45.4% opposed).

In a question on the “feeling thermometer” list, Southern Illinois voters were a lot more likely to register “warm” feelings toward the National Rifle Association (47.9%) than “cool” feelings (15.7%).

## VII. Media Usage

We asked Southern Illinois voters whether on a “typical day” they got their news from each of a dozen sources, including local daily and weekly newspapers, local and network TV news, radio stations, and nontraditional sources such as *Oprah* or late-night comedy shows.

The data suggest that Southern Illinois voters are heavy media users: Nine in ten (92.5%) say they get information from the local TV news on a typical day. Two-thirds say that on a typical day they also get news from a cable channel such as CNN or Fox, as well as from an evening broadcast network telecast (68.1% and 65.1%, respectively).

Substantial proportions, though fewer than half of the voters in the sample, get news on a typical day from the print version of a local weekly paper (44.9%), radio news programs (42.4%), and morning shows such as *Good Morning America* or *The Today Show* (41.9%). About a third of the voters sampled (34.2%) say they get news from an online version of a newspaper or other Internet source.

Significant numbers of voters in the region get news from nontraditional sources such as late-night programs like *The Tonight Show* or *The Daily Show* (25.2%), or daytime shows such as *Oprah* (15.5%). Only about one Southern Illinois voter in eleven (9.0%) gets news on a typical day from a national newspaper such as *USA Today* or *The New York Times*.

While such heavy media usage seems striking at first, the Institute polled registered voters—not the public at large. Voters are fundamentally different from nonvoters in a number of ways: they tend to be older and more settled than the rest of the population, variables that are associated with greater news consumption. This is particularly true in southern Illinois, which is, on average, older than the rest of the state. Research shows that being a registered voter is also associated with being more attuned with the issues, which helps explain how large majorities of our respondents report being engaged with news on TV, cable, and in the local dailies.

### **VIII. Feelings Toward African Americans**

At the end of the “feeling thermometer” section, we included a set of questions trying to get at Southern Illinois voters’ perceptions of African Americans vis-à-vis other groups in the population. This set of questions was added to give a doctoral student data to complete a dissertation on race and politics.

The series of five feeling-thermometer questions regarding attitudes toward black people were meant to get at respondents’ racial feelings through the back door, so to speak, before finally asking how they themselves would rate blacks on the feeling thermometer.

Though we don’t know how the graduate student saw the result, to us they appeared mixed at best. For example, respondents as a group said people from Southern Illinois would give the same feeling thermometer rating toward blacks as people from Chicago (61.2 average rating vs. 62.3). Anecdotally, many in mostly-white Southern Illinois see Chicago as predominantly black. Chicago certainly is more racially and ethnically diverse than Illinois south of I-64. Could this non-result be evidence of evasion or defensiveness on the part of our virtually all-white sample?

In another pair of feeling-thermometer questions, respondents answered more or less as expected. They said “members of an exclusive country club” would have a lower rating regarding blacks (41.5 average rating), and “proud supporters of Barack Obama” would have a higher opinion (average 68.6).

However, when we asked respondents where they themselves would rate blacks on a feeling thermometer, they came up with a mean rating of 78.1—almost ten points higher than they thought Obama supporters would rate blacks. Given the very low approval rating the first black president enjoys among our sample (only 36.7% approve or strongly approve), it seems unlikely that we were getting a straight answer to this very complicated question.

We also asked how much discrimination against black people there is today, “limiting their chances to get ahead.” Half thought there was either a lot (10.0%) or some (43.4%). Three in ten (29.9%) said there was just a little, and about one in eight (12.2%) said there was none at all.

## **IX. Conclusions**

The inaugural Southern Illinois Poll was a satisfying exercise for Paul Simon Public Policy Institute professors and staff. It has started us on a path to identify and categorize Southern Illinois voters and the policy issues they care about. By juxtaposing the spring Southern Illinois Poll with our annual statewide Simon Poll, which occurs in the fall, we also have an opportunity to reliably compare Southern Illinois voters with those statewide and in Chicago and its suburbs.

Importantly, we see that Southern Illinoisans’ attitudes toward the budget crisis and what to do about it closely mirror what we saw in the fall statewide. Voters are angry about the situation, but unwilling to tolerate either the budget cuts or the revenue increases that will be needed to solve the problem. They continue to believe the popular myth that cutting undetermined “waste and inefficiency” can make the deficit go away.

We also learned that Southern Illinois voters express a lower satisfaction with “quality of life” issues than voters statewide. Despite the relative bucolic calm and the natural beauty that surround them, they are less likely to report that the overall quality of life is excellent or good. They are less likely than those statewide—and those in the Chicago suburbs in particular—to feel that their infrastructure, public safety, education, local economy, and parks and recreation are of high quality. They overwhelmingly feel as though their area of the state does not get its fair share of state revenues.

The initial snapshot—that of an electorate that is older, whiter, more conservative, and more Protestant/Christian than we find in the rest of the state—is not initially surprising. While there were some eyebrow-raisers—such as a pro-union slant and a head-shaking antipathy toward Chicagoans—we saw mostly what we expected to see.

This does not diminish the value of the exercise by any means. It serves as a benchmark against which to gauge future opinion movement. And methodological tweaks to future surveys may also allow us to include more younger voters, which may in turn reveal a less conventionally conservative sample.

We hope that public officials, the media, and others in the public policy community continue to look to the Simon Institute and its surveys for nonpartisan information about the preferences of and mood of the Illinois electorate. We will continue to use our staff’s expertise in journalism and academic political science to refine and improve the Simon Poll and the Southern Illinois Poll. It is also an important part of our mission to use the polls as a laboratory in which to train students in the measurement and interpretation of public opinion, and to provide them an opportunity to devise survey questions that will help them with their own research.

**Paul Simon Public Policy Institute  
Southern Illinois University Carbondale  
The Southern Illinois Poll  
Conducted April 5 – 13, 2010**

1. We would like to know what you think about the direction of the United States of America. Generally speaking, do you think things in our country are going in the right direction, or are they off track and heading in the wrong direction?
 

Right direction	22.7%
Wrong direction	69.8%
Other/Don't know	7.5%
  
2. And what about the direction of the State of Illinois? Generally speaking, are things in Illinois going in the right direction, or are they off track and heading in the wrong direction?
 

Right direction	6.5%
Wrong direction	85.3%
Other/Don't know	8.2%
  
3. And how are things going in your city or area of the state? In general, are things in your city or area going in the right direction, or in the wrong direction?
 

Right direction	47.6%
Wrong direction	41.9%
Other/Don't know	10.5%
  
4. Regardless of what you think about the direction in your part of the state, tell us what you think about the overall quality of life in your area. Taking everything into account, would you say the overall quality of life in your area is...
 

Excellent	4.5%
Good	31.9%
Average	35.9%
Not so good	18.5%
Poor	9.2%
  
5. Next, we'd like to know what you think about a proposal to allow Illinoisans to carry concealed weapons. Would you
 

Strongly favor	25.7%
Favor	30.9%
Oppose	22.2%
Strongly oppose	15.2%
Other/DK	6.0%



Now I'd like for you to tell me how well some elected officials are performing their jobs. For each one that I read, please tell me if you strongly approve, somewhat approve, somewhat disapprove, or strongly disapprove of the job that official is doing. If you haven't heard enough information to evaluate that person, just tell me that. First is . . . (rotate)

6. President Barack Obama. Do you strongly approve, somewhat approve, somewhat disapprove, or strongly disapprove of the job President Obama is doing?

Strongly approve	17.5%
Somewhat approve	19.2%
Somewhat disapprove	14.0%
Strongly disapprove	45.6%
Other/Don't know	3.7%

7. Illinois Governor Pat Quinn. Do you strongly approve, somewhat approve, somewhat disapprove, or strongly disapprove of the job Governor Quinn is doing?

Strongly approve	3.7%
Somewhat approve	27.2%
Somewhat disapprove	25.2%
Strongly disapprove	29.4%
Other/Don't know	14.5%

8. US Congressman Jerry Costello. Do you strongly approve, somewhat approve, somewhat disapprove, or strongly disapprove of the job Jerry Costello is doing?

Strongly approve	11.2%
Somewhat approve	33.9%
Somewhat disapprove	12.5%
Strongly disapprove	11.7%
Other/Don't know	30.7%

9. US Congressman John Shimkus. Do you strongly approve, somewhat approve, somewhat disapprove, or strongly disapprove of the job John Shimkus is doing?

Strongly approve	14.0%
Somewhat approve	27.9%
Somewhat disapprove	8.5%
Strongly disapprove	7.0%
Other/Don't know	42.6%

10. Speaker of the Illinois House of Representatives Mike Madigan? Do you strongly approve, somewhat approve, somewhat disapprove, or strongly disapprove of the job Speaker Madigan is doing?

Strongly approve	3.2%
Somewhat approve	20.2%
Somewhat disapprove	15.5%
Strongly disapprove	23.2%
Other/Don't know	37.9%

Next, I have a few questions about government taxes and services:

11. How good a value would you say you get in terms of services for the taxes you pay to the federal government?

An excellent value	1.7%
Good value	15.0%
A fair value	35.9%
Not so good	20.9%
A poor value	21.9%
Other/Don't know	4.5%

12. And what about the value of services you get for the tax dollars paid to the state of Illinois?

An excellent value	1.2%
Good value	11.0%
A fair value	25.9%
Not so good	28.7%
A poor value	30.2%
Other/Don't know	3.0%

13. How good a value would you say you get in terms of services for the taxes you pay your local governments?

An excellent value	2.7%
Good value	25.9%
A fair value	39.9%
Not so good	14.2%
A poor value	15.5%
Other/Don't know	1.7%

14. And what do you think about government spending in your area of the state? In terms of its share of state spending, do you think your part of the state gets...

More than its fair share	1.7%
About the right amount	11.5%
Less than its fair share	80.5%
Other/Don't know	6.2%

Now we'd like to know what you think of various aspects of the quality of life in your area. For each feature that I read, I'd like for you to tell me if you think it is excellent, good, average, not so good, or poor. First is (rotate items)

15. The quality of the environment, such as clean air and water. In your area, would you say environmental quality is excellent, good, average, not so good, or poor?

Excellent	9.0%
Good	54.1%
Average	29.9%
Not so good	5.0%
Poor	1.7%
Other/Don't know	.2%

16. The quality of infrastructure, such as roads and bridges. Is the quality of infrastructure in your area excellent, good, average, not so good or poor?

Excellent	2.2%
Good	24.4%
Average	38.7%
Not so good	19.5%
Poor	15.0%
Other/Don't know	.2%

17. What about public safety in your area, for example police and fire protection? Would you say public safety in your area is excellent, good, average, not so good, or poor?

Excellent	10.5%
Good	49.1%
Average	26.4%
Not so good	8.7%
Poor	4.5%
Other/Don't know	.7%

18. What do you think about the quality of public education in your area, in kindergarten through high school? Is public K through 12 education excellent, good, average, not so good, or poor?

Excellent	7.5%
Good	36.2%
Average	28.2%
Not so good	11.0%
Poor	12.2%
Other/Don't know	5.0%

19. How well is the economy performing in your area? Would you say the performance of the economy in your area is excellent, good, average, not so good, or poor?

Excellent	0.0%
Good	8.0%
Average	31.2%
Not so good	26.8%
Poor	32.4%
Other/Don't know	1.5%

20. How good are the parks and recreational opportunities in your area? Would you say the quality of parks and recreation in your area is excellent, good, average, not so good, or poor?

Excellent	10.5%
Good	44.4%
Average	24.7%
Not so good	8.7%
Poor	9.2%
Other/Don't know	2.5%

Next I'm going to ask you a few questions about the state of Illinois' budget:

21. The state of Illinois has a budget deficit of over 13 billion dollars. I'm going to read three statements that people have made about how to fix the deficit, and ask you which one comes closest to your views...

Taking in more revenue, such as a tax increase	9.7%
Cutting waste and inefficiency in government	60.1%
A combination of budget cuts and revenue increases	24.4%
Haven't thought much about it	2.5%
Other/don't know	3.2%

There have been a number of proposals to address the state's budget problems by making cuts in state programs and services. I'm going to read several areas where people have suggested that the state could make cuts. For each one that I read, I'd like you to tell me whether you favor or oppose budget cuts in that area, OK? (Repeat if necessary) (rotate choices)

22. Do you favor or oppose cuts in state spending on kindergarten through high school education?

Favor	11.7%
Oppose	87.3%
Other/Don't know	1.0%

23. Do you favor or oppose cuts in state spending on state universities?
- |                  |       |
|------------------|-------|
| Favor            | 24.9% |
| Oppose           | 67.1% |
| Other/Don't know | 8.0%  |
24. Do you favor or oppose cuts in state spending on community colleges?
- |                  |       |
|------------------|-------|
| Favor            | 18.5% |
| Oppose           | 76.3% |
| Other/Don't know | 5.2%  |
25. Do you favor or oppose cuts in state spending on public safety, such as state police and prison operations?
- |                  |       |
|------------------|-------|
| Favor            | 18.0% |
| Oppose           | 78.6% |
| Other/Don't know | 3.5%  |
26. Do you favor or oppose cuts in state spending on natural resources, such as state parks or environmental regulation?
- |                  |       |
|------------------|-------|
| Favor            | 35.2% |
| Oppose           | 57.9% |
| Other/Don't know | 7.0%  |

There have been a number of proposals to address the state's budget problems by finding ways to raise more money to pay for programs and services. I'm going to read several areas where people have suggested that more money could be raised. For each one that I read, I'd like you to tell me whether you favor or oppose raising revenues in that way, OK? (Repeat if necessary) (rotate choices)

27. Do you favor or oppose raising the state income tax rate from 3 percent to 4 percent?
- |                  |       |
|------------------|-------|
| Favor            | 38.9% |
| Oppose           | 58.1% |
| Other/Don't know | 3.0%  |
28. Do you favor or oppose raising the state sales tax rate?
- |                  |       |
|------------------|-------|
| Favor            | 33.2% |
| Oppose           | 64.1% |
| Other/Don't know | 2.7%  |
29. Do you favor or oppose expanding the sales tax to cover services like dry cleaning or haircuts, which are not currently taxed?
- |                  |       |
|------------------|-------|
| Favor            | 36.2% |
| Oppose           | 60.1% |
| Other/Don't know | 3.7%  |

30. Do you favor or oppose a proposal expanding legalized gambling in the state?

Favor	40.1%
Oppose	54.9%
Other/Don't know	5.0%

I'd like to get your feelings toward some groups in the news these days. I'll read the name of a group and I'd like you to rate that group using something we call the feeling thermometer. The feeling thermometer can rate things from 0 to 100 degrees. Ratings closer to 100 degrees mean that you feel favorable and warm toward the group. Ratings closer to 0 degrees mean that you don't feel favorable toward them. Rating the group at the 50 degree mark means you don't feel particularly warm or cold.

<b>Feelings toward Institution or Group</b>	<b>% 0-49 "Cool"</b>	<b>% 50 "Neutral"</b>	<b>% 51-100 "Warm"</b>	<b>Mean Rating</b>
31. The United States Congress	54.4%	27.4%	19.2%	36.4
32. The U.S. Supreme Court	21.4%	35.2%	43.4%	56.5
33. Southern Illinois University	8.2%	21.9%	69.9%	72.6
34. People from Southern Illinois	2.7%	19.5%	77.8%	78.7
35. People from Chicago	48.6%	34.2%	17.2%	38.8
36. Labor Unions	31.2%	28.2%	40.6%	53.3
37. The National Rifle Association	15.7%	27.4%	47.9%	65.1

Next, we want to know how you think *other people* would answer a feeling thermometer question toward blacks or African-Americans.

<b>Group/Individual Feelings Toward Blacks</b>	<b>% 0-49 "Cool"</b>	<b>%50 "Neutral"</b>	<b>%51-100 "Warm"</b>	<b>Mean Rating</b>
38. People from Southern Illinois	14.2%	35.1%	50.7%	61.2
39. People from Chicago	16.0%	30.4%	53.6%	62.3
40. Members of an Exclusive Country Club	37.9%	31.4%	30.7%	41.5
41. Proud Supporters of Barack Obama	14.0%	17.0%	59.0%	68.6
42. Where on a feeling thermometer would you rate blacks?	3.5%	18.5%	78.0%	78.1

We are interested in your opinions on the elections to be held next fall for US Senator from Illinois and for the Illinois governor.

43. First, the election for Governor of Illinois...if the election were held today, would you vote for...

Quinn	25.4%
Brady	48.6%
Whitney	5.2%
Someone else	1.5%
Other/Don't know	19.2%

44. Next, the election for the US Senator from Illinois...if the election were held today, would you vote for...

Giannoulis	24.7%
Kirk	42.1%
Jones	4.5%
Someone else	3.0%
Other/Don't know	25.7%

45. Have you or anyone else living at your address gone hunting in Illinois in the last 12 months?

Yes	30%
No	70%

46. (Among households reporting a hunter) And what were you or your household members hunting for? (Multiple responses allowed)

Deer	84%
Turkey	34%
Rabbit	16%
Duck	12%
Squirrel	9%
Goose	9%
Dove	8%

47. (Of deer hunters) And were any of those hunts successful?

Yes	79%
No	21%

48. We're interested in how people routinely get their news and information. I'm going to ask you about some news sources you might or might not use. On a typical day, do you get news or information from... [INSERT IN ORDER], or do you not get news from this source? On a typical day, do you get news from [INSERT NEXT ITEM], or not?

Source	% Yes
a. The local television news in your area?	92.5%
b. A cable news channel like CNN, Fox News, or MSNBC?	68.1%
c. An evening television news program like <i>NBC Nightly News</i> or <i>CBS Evening News</i> ?	65.1%
d. The print version of a local daily newspaper?	61.3%
e. The print version of a weekly local newspaper?	44.9%
f. A radio news program that you listen to on a car or home radio?	42.4%
g. Morning news shows like <i>Good Morning America</i> or <i>The Today Show</i> ?	41.9%
h. Online versions of any newspaper, or other places on the Internet?	34.2%
i. Late-night comedy programs like <i>The Tonight Show</i> or <i>The Daily Show</i> ?	25.2%
j. Daytime TV shows like <i>Oprah</i> ?	15.5%
k. A national daily newspaper such as the New York Times or USA Today?	9.0%

Next, we are interested in your opinion on some social issues. First: (rotate)

49. Do you think abortions should be legal under all circumstances, legal only under certain circumstances, or illegal in all circumstances?

Legal under any	9.0%
Legal under certain	58.9%
Illegal under all	28.9%
Other/Don't know	3.2%

50. Which of the following three statements comes closest to your position on the legal rights of gay and lesbian couples in Illinois?

Should be allowed to legally marry	20.0%
Should be allowed civil unions	25.2%
Should be no legal recognition	48.6%
Other/Don't know	6.2%



51. How much discrimination against blacks do you feel there is in the United States today, limiting their chances to get ahead?

A lot	10.0%
Some	43.4%
Just a little	29.9%
None at all	12.2%
Other/Don't know	4.5%

52. Would you favor or oppose the government giving grants to religious charities that offer people non-religious social services?

Favor	36.1%
Oppose	52.8%
Other/Don't know	10.9%

53. What about religious charities that offer people social services that encourage them to change religions? Would you favor or oppose the government giving grants to these religious charities?

Favor	10.4%
Oppose	81.5%
Other/Don't know	7.9%

54. Generally speaking, do you think the health insurance reform law that was recently passed is a good thing or a bad thing?

Good thing	26.7%
Bad thing	52.6%
Other/Don't know	20.7%