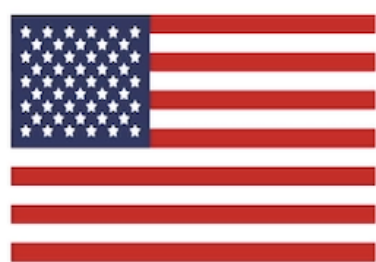


STETSON UNIVERSITY
Center for Public Opinion Research



**MIDTERM
ELECTIONS
2024**



STETSON
UNIVERSITY



STETSON UNIVERSITY
CENTER FOR PUBLIC
OPINION RESEARCH

For Immediate Release

Poll: Republicans Hold Double-Digit Leads in Florida Governor, U.S. Senate Races

*Donalds leads Jolly 51%-39% and Moody leads Nixon 51%-40%;
40% of Floridians say cost of living/inflation is their top voting issue*

DELAND, Fla. (Sept. 23, 2026) — A new statewide survey from Stetson University's Center for Public Opinion Research (CPOR) finds Republican candidates holding double-digit leads in Florida's 2026 races for governor and U.S. Senate as voters prepare for the November general election.

The survey of 830 Floridians, conducted Sept. 14 - 21, finds Republican Byron Donalds receiving 51% support compared with 39% for Democrat David Jolly in the race for governor. In the U.S. Senate race, Republican Sen. Ashley Moody receives 51% compared with 40% for Democrat Angie Nixon. The results include voters who initially said they were undecided but indicated a preference when asked which candidate they leaned toward.

In the race for governor, Donalds leads Jolly by 12 percentage points, with 5% supporting another candidate and 5% remaining undecided. A majority of 60% say they are voting more for their candidate, rather than against the opponent, 19%, or about equally, 20%.

The Senate race shows a similar pattern. Moody receives 51% of the vote compared with 40% for Nixon, a difference of 11 percentage points. Another 3% support a different candidate and 5% remain undecided. Similarly, 56% state they are voting more for their candidate, instead of against the opponent, 21%, or about equally, 22%.

The results closely track CPOR's spring survey. Moody's support is unchanged at 51%, with Nixon moving from 38% to 40%; Donalds ticks from 47% to 51% against Jolly's steady 39-40%. None of these shifts exceeds the surveys' margins of error, suggesting a stable race in which summer campaigning has done little to move the fundamentals, even as the pool of undecided voters has begun to shrink.

The stability also reflects a separate question measuring whether voters know each candidate, and whether they reject them outright. In the Senate race, Moody is the best-positioned candidate tested: 47% of Floridians say they know her and could vote for her, 29% reject her, and 19% don't know who she is. Nixon faces a different challenge, name recognition: 32% of Floridians have never heard of her, while 25% know her and reject her, and just 35% know her and could support her.

The governor's race shows a more symmetric pattern of rejection. About a third of Floridians reject Donalds (32%) or Jolly (34%) outright, and each remains unknown to a sizable share:

21% for Donalds, 25% for Jolly. Still, Donalds holds the edge in openness: 41% say they could vote for him, compared with 35% for Jolly.

"Republicans hold double-digit leads in both statewide races, and notably, majorities on both sides say they're voting for their candidate rather than against the opponent," said Kelly Smith, PhD, an associate professor of political science at Stetson. "That suggests these leads rest on genuine support, not just negative partisanship, which matters for how durable they may prove in the final stretch."

Beyond the candidate matchups, the survey also points to the issues shaping voters' decisions heading into November. Cost of living/inflation ranks as the top concern, with 40% of voters identifying it as the issue that matters most when deciding how to vote in the 2026 Florida elections. Threats to democracy rank second at 10%, while housing affordability ranks third at 9%.

Approval ratings offer another look at how Florida voters view current state officials. Gov. Ron DeSantis receives an approval rating of 53%, while 43% disapprove, and 5% said they haven't heard enough to judge his performance. For U.S. Senator Moody, 50% approve of her job performance and 32% disapprove, though nearly one in five Floridians (19%) say they haven't heard enough about the recently appointed Senator to say.

The survey also asked Floridians about a proposed constitutional amendment concerning property taxes. Respondents were told that the proposal would raise the homestead exemption for non-school taxes to \$150,000 in 2027 and \$250,000 in 2028 and would place restrictions on how local governments may use property-tax revenue. When asked how they would vote if the election were held today, 51% say they would vote yes on the amendment (still below the necessary 60% even within the margin of error), 25% would vote no and 24% are not sure.

"The property-tax proposal gives us another important measure of how Floridians are thinking about the decisions in front of them this November," Smith said. "The level of support, opposition, and uncertainty will be worth watching as voters learn more about what the amendment would change."

The findings point to a clear Republican advantage heading into November. Donalds and Moody hold double-digit advantages built on affirmative support rather than opposition to their rivals, and no single bloc of undecided voters is large enough to close the gap on its own. The open question is turnout, and whether the property-tax amendment, currently short of the 60% needed to pass, draws voters to the ballot who reshape the electorate.

Methodology

The CPOR September 2026 Survey collected 830 responses from Florida adults via an online non-probability sample from Qualtrics's panels from Sept. 14-21, 2026. The sample was weighted by age, race, ethnicity, education, gender and region to reflect the Florida adult population. Likely voters were identified using a modeled turnout score incorporating past voting behavior and engagement indicators. The margin of error is ± 4 percentage points for the full sample and ± 4.3 for likely-voter estimates. For crosstabs, see the full report on our website or contact cpor@stetson.edu.

About Stetson University's Center for Public Opinion Research (CPOR)

Founded in 2022, [the Center for Public Opinion Research](#) is an independent, non-partisan survey research center of Stetson University. The purpose of CPOR is to produce knowledge about how the

public thinks about politics, the economy and other social issues. Stetson's CPOR also advances students' education in the dynamic science of survey research and social science methodology.

About Stetson University

Founded in 1883, [Stetson University](#) is the oldest private university in Central Florida. Stetson offers a relationship-rich education with immersive experiences that ready students for success in their lives and careers. Stetson University is ranked among the Best Colleges in America by U.S. News & World Report, The Wall Street Journal, Forbes, The Princeton Review and others.

Contact: Kelly B. Smith, PhD
Associate Professor
Department of Political Science
Stetson University
ksmith33@stetson.edu