



October 17, 2017

Northam leads Gillespie, 48%-44%, in tightening race

Summary of Key Findings

- 1.** Democrat Ralph Northam's 4-point lead over Republican Ed Gillespie is the slimmest since the Wason Center's September 25 benchmark survey.
- 2.** While Northam's vote has ranged between 47% and 49%, Gillespie's vote has increased from 41% to 44%.
- 3.** As Gillespie's share increased and Northam's decreased in this poll, the gap is within the poll's margin of error for the first time in this tracking series.
- 4.** Democratic candidates lead Republican candidates in the generic House of Delegates ballot test, 48% to 40%.

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Analysis

Three weeks before Virginians choose their next governor, current Democratic Lieutenant Governor Ralph Northam maintains a lead in a tightening race with former Republican National Committee Chair Ed Gillespie. Northam's lead stands at 4% (48% to 44%), according to a Wason Center survey of likely voters. Libertarian Cliff Hyra polled at 3%, with 5% undecided.

This is the first poll in the Wason Center's tracking series in which Northam's lead is within the survey's margin of error. In the benchmark poll, released September 25, Northam's lead stood at 6% (47% to 41%), and it grew to 7% (49% to 42%) in the first tracking poll, released October 9. The current survey is also the first in which Northam's share shrank as Gillespie's increased.

"With even a weak third-party candidate on the ballot, the winner may not cross the 50% mark," said Rachel Bitecofer, assistant director of the Wason Center. "But there's plenty of room and time left for Northam to close the deal or for Gillespie to close the gap."

In a generic House of Delegates test ballot, Democratic candidates continue to lead Republican candidates, 48% to 40%. The Democrats' lead in the generic ballot has fluctuated between 7% and 11% since the Wason Center's benchmark poll.

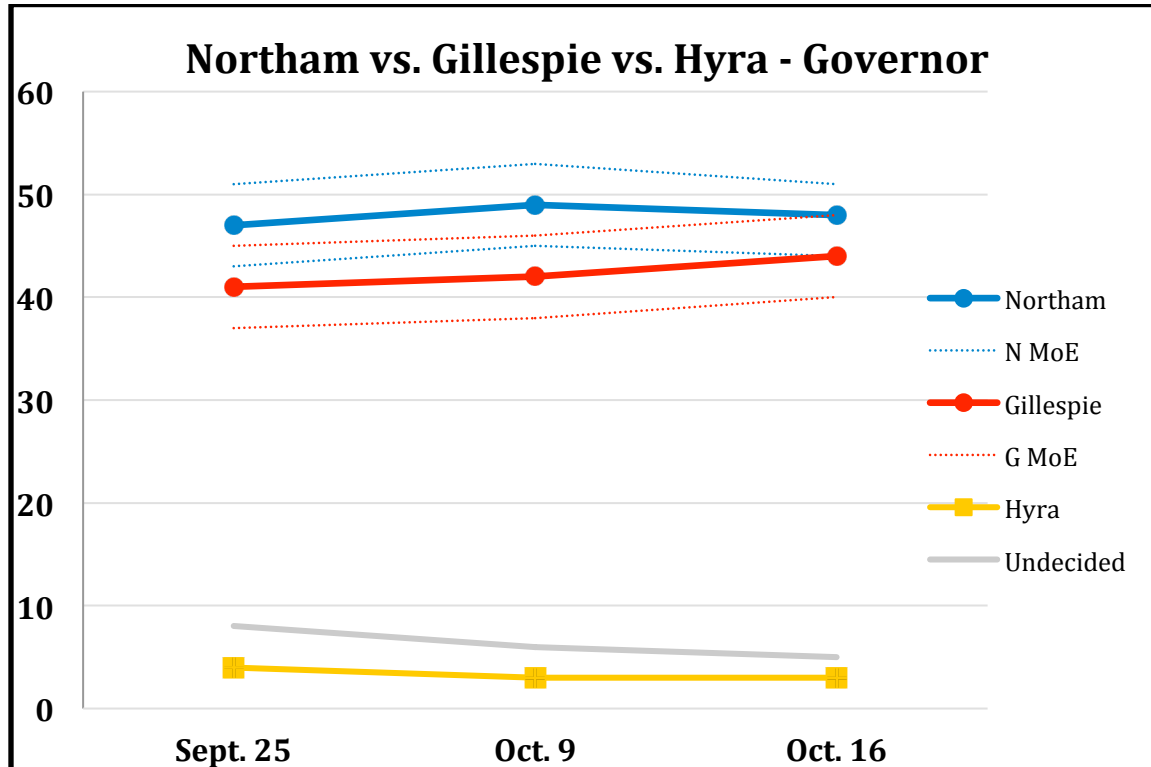
This poll did not assess the races for Lieutenant Governor or Attorney General, but those will be included in the Wason Center's remaining two tracking surveys before the election. Election Day is Nov. 7.

The Wason Center surveyed 1,085 registered voters, including 642 who were determined to be likely voters, October 9-13. The results reported here are of those 642 likely voters, which carry a margin of error of +/- 4.2% at the 95% level of confidence. Likely voters are registered voters with a history of voting in recent statewide elections, who also say they definitely or probably will vote in the upcoming election.

Q3: If the election for governor were being held today and the candidates were [RANDOMIZE NAMES] for whom would you vote? Which one are you leaning toward right now?

Q4: [If undecided or refused] Do you think by the time Election Day comes you might end up voting for either...

	9/25	10/9	10/17
Ed Gillespie	41	42	44
Ralph Northam	47	49	48
Cliff Hyra	4	3	3
Undecided/Dk/Ref (vol)	8	6	5



Q9: In addition to the election for governor, there will also be elections for all 100 House of Delegates seats in November. Thinking about just the House of Delegates, if the election for the House of Delegates were held TODAY, would you vote for [RANDOMIZE NAMES]

	9/25	10/9	10/17
Democratic candidate	47	49	48
Republican candidate	40	38	40
Undecided/Dk/Ref (vol)	13	12	12

Demographics

EDUC:

High school or less	12
Some college	19
Vocational or technical training	2
College graduate	38
Graduate study or more	28
Dk/ref (vol)	1

RACE:

White	72
Black or African American	20
Other	9

MIL OR RETIRED MIL IN HOUSE:

Yes	33
No	67

AGE:

18-24	6
25-34	14
35-44	17
45-54	22
55 & older	42

PARTYID:

Republican	31
Democrat	34
Independent	30
No preference (vol)	3
Other party (vol)	1
Dk/ref (vol)	1

[IF OTHER THAN REP OR DEM ABOVE]

PARTLEAN:

Republican	44
Democratic	35
Independent	21

IDEOL:

Strong liberal	7
Liberal	10
Moderate, leaning liberal	25
Moderate, leaning conservative	20
Conservative	20
Strong Conservative	10
Dk/ref (vol)	8

INCOME:

Under \$25,000	5
\$25-\$49,999	9
\$50-\$74,999	18
\$75-\$99,999	14
\$100,000-\$149,999	20
Over \$150,000	23
Dk/ref (vol)	12

REGION (defined by DMA):

Northern Virginia	33
Richmond/Central	22
Hampton Roads	24
South/Southwest	21

SEX (interviewer coded):

Male	49
Female	51

How the survey was conducted:

The results of this poll are based on 1,085 interviews of registered Virginia voters, of which 642 were determined to be likely voters in the upcoming November election (registered voters who have voted in recent statewide elections, who also say they definitely or probably will vote in the upcoming elections), including 309 on landline and 333 on cell phone, conducted October 9-13, 2017. Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding. The margin of error for the likely voter model is +/- 4.2 % 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 45.8% and 54.2%.** The margin of error is higher for subgroups. All error margins have been adjusted to account for the survey's design effect, which is 1.19 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 21%. Five callbacks were employed in the fielding process. Live calling was conducted by trained interviewers at the Wason Center for Public Policy Survey Research Lab at Christopher Newport University. The data reported here are weighted using an iterative weighting process on sex, age, race and region of residence to reflect as closely as possible the demographic composition of likely voters in the November 2017 Virginia elections.