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Austin's Grassroots Survey shows Primary Contest for Mayor Largely Undecided

(Erie, Pa) May 5, 2017 - - Mayoral candidates Merski and Breneman have released poll and survey results that show favorable conclusions to the Democratic Primary race for Mayor. However, numbers are inconsistent between each. For example: Breneman's survey reported 64% of the voters were undecided, whereas Merski's poll reported 9% of voters were undecided.

The purpose of Lisa Austin's campaign data collection was to examine the question: What are the attitudes of likely Democratic voters in the city of Erie, Pennsylvania towards mayoral candidate Lisa Austin to consider voting for her on May 16?

Design:

In a non-scientific survey using non-probability sampling of likely Democratic registered voters put together by Survey Director Jordan Lander, volunteers from Austin's grassroots campaign canvassed voters using their lists of registered, likely Democratic voters. Beginning February 14, 2017 through Sunday, April 30, 2017, campaign volunteers knocked on doors and/or called 1,058 likely Democratic voters.

Volunteers outlined Lisa Austin's strengths as a candidate and her decade-long work as a private citizen to address issues of job creation, education, planning, zoning, safety, transit and community engagement. Volunteers then asked the question: Would you consider voting for Lisa Austin for Mayor on May 16?

Descriptive Calculations:

Lisa Austin showed a 4:1 favorable to unfavorable rating; 76% said they might or will vote for Austin, whereas 24% said they would vote for another one of the seven other mayoral candidates.

Table 1. Summarized below are the responses to the survey question. The margin of error is +/- 3.0% (95% confidence interval).

Question: Would you consider voting for Lisa Austin for Mayor on May 16?

Question Response:	Voters	Percentage
Support Lisa Austin		
Yes	231	22%
Maybe	575	54%
No	252	24%
Sums of the above	1058	100%

Conclusion:

Lisa Austin's numbers are favorable when considering that the opposition (24%) is split among six other candidates. While voters in this unofficial survey were asked a leading question (*Will you vote/support Lisa Austin for Mayor on May 16?*), the results showed that over half of the responses are "undecided" -- similar to results by another campaign survey. Campaign volunteers also reached almost three times as many voters as the previously published poll and survey. This suggests that the primary race for mayor is wide open since most voters are undecided -- information that the public deserves to know.

The Lisa Austin for Mayor campaign intends to be open and transparent with the methodology involved, including how the data was collected. While the data from this grassroots survey may show favorable results for Lisa Austin in the race for the Democratic candidate for Mayor of the City of Erie, it is important to note that the winner will be decided by those who come out to vote at the polls on May 16. This race will be decided by the majority of undecided voters.

"Internal polls should always be taken with a grain of salt. Campaigns typically commission a comprehensive poll and publicly release only the most favorable results. They are often used to win over donors, consolidate their support early in the primary, and gain media coverage." *Paul Engelkemier, Managing Editor, PoliticsPA.com*

While PoliticsPA requested a full copy of the Merski poll results, his campaign provided some additional numbers beyond the one-page memo, but declined to release the full results as reported on PoliticsPA.com on March 29, 2017.

In a report by Jaclyn Seymour on April 24, 2017 on yourerie.com, Joseph Morris, Director of Mercyhurst University's Center of Applied Politics, says, "Both the Merski Campaign poll and the Breneman Campaign poll have left a whole host of

methodological questions unanswered. As someone who does polls for a living, I am interested in learning how data is collected, and having questions I have about the data answered. Both cases, that did not happen."

Morris says polls are done for several reasons including to gage public opinion on certain issues, campaign strategies and tactics. Morris says, "You release the poll results. Not surprisingly they're favorable to your campaign and suddenly everyone's talking about you."

To date, the Austin for Erie Campaign has made 5,269 attempts to contact voters by either phone, door-to-door, or mail.

This is anyone's race and the campaigning to win the undecided votes will continue until the primary. We look forward to all voters, including Lisa Austin's supporters, coming out to vote on May 16th.

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