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Millsaps College-Chism Strategies Polling Predicted Top Lumumba Finish

Pre-Election Poll Largely Predictive of Outcomes; Did Not Anticipate Magnitude of Lumumba Victory

The Millsaps College-Chism Strategies poll released on April 28 found that mayoral hopeful Chokwe A. Lumumba held a lead over his eight rivals for the Democratic nomination and was likely to finish first in Tuesday's Democratic mayoral primary election. Unofficial results show that Lumumba did finish substantially ahead of his rivals with 55 percent of the vote, avoiding a run-off election later this month.

The Millsaps College-Chism Strategies poll also correctly forecasted Mayor Tony Yarber's fourth-place finish in single digits, showed that Senator John Horhn was in a statistical tie for second place where he ultimately finished, and noted the historical drop off in support for lower third tier candidates that did occur. The poll results did not accurately predict the magnitude of Lumumba's victory, leading to the belief that there would be a run-off.

"Our poll showed that Lumumba was likely to finish first in the Democratic primary, but did not predict the magnitude of his victory," says Dr. Nathan R. Shrader, assistant professor of political science at Millsaps College. During the past several weeks Lumumba successfully consolidated support throughout the City of Jackson, mobilized his own base of voters, pulled in a larger-than-expected share of undecided voters, and successfully persuaded some of the softer supporters of John Horhn and Robert Graham to ultimately vote for him."

Millsaps College and Chism Strategies will be working on a more thorough and detailed analysis of the ward and precinct-level voting patterns as the data becomes available and results are certified.

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The following information provides a preliminary analysis of the polling results.

What Was Called Correctly:

- Polling accurately projected that Lumumba would lead by a comfortable margin and that he would win in five of the seven wards.
- Polling accurately projected that the incumbent Mayor Tony Yarber would finish fourth in single digits.
- Polling had John Horhn in a statistical tie for second place and he finished second.
- Polling noted the historical drop off in support for lower third tier candidates that did occur.

What Was Missed

Polling did not accurately project the magnitude of the Lumumba victory and anticipated a runoff.

Explaining the Results

- **Polling Assumptions about Turnout Ethnicity**
All polls are based on assumptions about turnout by geography, gender, age, and ethnicity. Reliable information about gender and age support for candidates was not available at this early stage, but the precinct-by-precinct results indicate the white vote was significantly less than the 22% assumption in the poll (based upon 2013 and 2014 mayoral election turnout). Sample precinct analysis suggests that it was approximately 20%.
- **Movement among “Soft Supporters” of Graham and Horhn**
Research noted how much more certain of their choice Lumumba supporters were when compared to voters expressing support for Graham and Horhn. The actual election results suggested a sizable defection of these wavering supporters to the momentum of the Lumumba candidacy.
- **Lumumba’s Consolidation of the Early Third Tier Candidate Support**
Polling confirmed that Lumumba was the overwhelming “second choice” among those who didn’t initially support him. Crudup and Yarber finished below their final polling numbers and it appears that a portion of their base stayed home or moved to Lumumba when they came to grips with the prospects for their initial choice.
- **Lumumba’s Overwhelming Growth among “Undecided” Voters**
Rarely does a candidate capture such a large share of voters who are undecided going into the final weekend of the race. The dynamics of the last few days help to explain:
 - TV and radio logs suggest that Lumumba had a significant presence on the airwaves in the final days after lagging behind both Graham and Horhn in media expenditures for the previous month.
 - Lumumba’s digital ad buy targeted young voters. The results from precincts with sizable portions of younger white voters confirm they had a positive impact.

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- Newspaper endorsements were a modest boost. *The Clarion-Ledger* sent a message to older white voters that Lumumba had promise and was not a threat. It did not endear him to white undecided voters in large numbers, but there was no motivational fear either. With younger voters, the *Jackson Free Press* endorsement reinforced a generational appeal.
- The Trump Factor. While national politics was rarely mentioned in this campaign, a wide body of survey research confirms that the current president is extremely unpopular with African-Americans and that national politics plays an increasingly large role in orienting voters in state and local elections. Lumumba was the most striking contrast to Trump among all candidates, and to the extent undecided voters wanted to express a protest vote against the status quo, Lumumba was that vessel.
- Campaign Enthusiasm. All three major candidates had canvassing and poll worker teams, and the consensus is that the Lumumba team was more energetic. Again, history (and a sizable body of research) confirm that other things being equal, voters opt for the more optimistic choice.

Unresolved Questions

It will take more time and detailed precinct analysis before it can be said with confidence if there are other reasons to explain the under-projection of the Lumumba victory margin. Once voter rolls are updated, the gender, race and age turnout results by precinct will be closely examined to adjust the basic assumptions about turnout for future surveys.