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Suffolk Poll: Immigration, Border Security Emerging as Top Voter Issues in Massachusetts

BOSTON—Three out of four Massachusetts voters say immigration and control of US borders are very pressing problems, putting those issues at the Bay State’s political forefront along with fears about the future of democracy and China’s expanding power across the globe, according to a new Suffolk University poll.

When asked to think about their vote for president and choose “the most important issue facing the country today,” 27% of voters chose “the future of American democracy,” followed closely by “immigration and border security” (25%). Trailing were issues such as the economy (18%), climate change (6%), and healthcare, gun control, and abortion, which all garnered less than 6% each.

The poll comes at a time when Massachusetts has seen a rise in homelessness, driven in part by newly arrived migrants.

So far, voters mostly approve of the approach state lawmakers have taken to temporarily shelter migrants, who had been living at Terminal E at Logan Airport, at the Roxbury Recreational Complex (RCC), by a 49%-40% margin. Nearly 62% of voters approve of issuing temporary work visas for those migrants being housed at the RCC, while 32% opposed them.

“Massachusetts voters told us they see immigration as a major issue in the 2024 election, and it is certainly an issue to watch between now and November,” said David Paleologos, director of the Suffolk University Political Research Center. “The majority of voters support a temporary work visa as a way for migrants to start a new life while they are here, work to support their family, pay taxes, and be accounted for within the communities they are living in.”

If the presidential election were held tomorrow, the poll showed that President Joe Biden has the support of 70% of Massachusetts voters who intend to vote in the Democratic primary, and in a general contest would defeat former President Donald Trump 45%-26%. Among Republican

primary voters, Trump continues to be the leading primary candidate with a comfortable lead over his closest GOP rival, Nikki Haley, 55%-38%.

The poll of likely voters also revealed continued economic anxiety, with nearly half of respondents saying that they have seen no improvement in their day-to-day lives, despite strong economic indicators and declining deflation. Voters also expressed concern over a number of global issues—including conflicts between Ukraine and Russia, and Israel and Hamas—but voters ranked “China’s expanding power across the globe” as the “biggest threat to US interests” in the poll.

Voters approve of Healey, Warren

A year into her tenure, Governor Maura Healey continues to enjoy solid support, with 54% of voters approving or strongly approving of her performance. On a national level, Senator Elizabeth Warren seems poised for a strong re-election bid this fall, recording both a 54% favorability and job approval rating.

Methodology

The Suffolk University statewide survey of 1,000 residents was conducted February 2-5, 2024, and is based on live interviews of registered voters in Massachusetts who indicated they were very or somewhat likely to vote this November. Each area’s quota and demographic information—including party affiliation, gender, race, and age—were determined from presidential exit polls and 2022 census data. The 14 Massachusetts counties were grouped into four general regions. The margin of sampling error for results based on the total sample is +/-3.1 percentage points. Poll students Samuel Kluger and Steven Murnane contributed questions for this survey under the direction of Adjunct Professor Mikaela Linder. Marginals and full cross-tabulation data are posted on the [Suffolk University Political Research Center](#) website. For more information, contact David Paleologos at 781-290-9310, dpaleologos@suffolk.edu.

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