

## Gubernatorial Candidate's Spending Pushes His Numbers

Written by Rich Miller  
Sunday, 30 June 2013 05:26

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Back in early February, not a single person picked Bruce Rauner's name in a Paul Simon Public Policy Institute poll surveying likely Republican primary voters.

Other polls taken since then have shown retired financier Rauner in the low single digits in his bid for governor.

But Rauner has been dumping money into Downstate TV, the Fox News Channel in the Chicago area, and Chicago and Downstate radio. As a result, he appears to be moving some numbers.

A Capitol Fax/We Ask America poll taken June 20 of 1,310 likely Republican gubernatorial primary voters found Rauner at 12 percent. The poll was taken almost two weeks after Rauner began running ads.

Twelve percent was enough for third place. It's tough at this point to gauge just where Rauner's ceiling is. He could zoom way up like the unknown wealthy candidate Jack Ryan did in the 2004 Republican U.S. Senate primary, taking over first place in January and never relinquishing it. Or he could top out like Ron Gidwitz did in the 2006 Republican gubernatorial primary. Like Rauner, Gidwitz started running TV ads in July the year before the election and spent millions, but after an early rise, he stopped moving and ended up at just 11 percent.

Rauner's "angry outsider" and anti-public-employee-union messages may play well with the base, but he also has pro-choice leanings, won't say where he stands on gay marriage, and has close ties to Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel – none of which will be loved by conservative Republicans. If any of his competitors exploit those weaknesses, Rauner's rise could be stopped in its tracks.

Also, just 700,000 to 800,000 people tend to vote in GOP primaries, so the party's old guard tends to have a significant say in the outcome. And, right now, the old guard is mostly with state Senator Kirk Dillard.

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But the poll has Dillard in last place – barely – among the four gubernatorial candidates tested.

However, pollster Gregg Durham cautioned against reading too much into the results. “There isn’t a single result in here that I would consider as a trend, indication of strength, or hint of weakness,” Durham said after he conducted the poll. “It’s just too early.” And with the poll’s margin of error of 2.8 percent, it’s impossible to say for sure that Dillard is in fourth place.

The poll has Treasurer Dan Rutherford in first, with 22 percent; state Senator Bill Brady places second with 18 percent; then Rauner stands at 12 percent followed by Dillard with 11. Another 38 percent said they were undecided. Possible gubernatorial candidate Dan Proft was not tested.

Rutherford has carefully built a statewide-campaign infrastructure for the past two decades, culminating in 2010 with his state-treasurer win. Brady is on his third race for governor, and his name recognition is still pretty strong after his 2010 loss to Governor Pat Quinn in the general election. Dillard has been a state-party fixture for years and came up fewer than 200 votes shy of winning the 2010 Republican primary.

Except for Rauner, it’s difficult to tell at this point how the candidates are doing with their fundraising. Most candidates in both parties are taking advantage of an obscure but important state law that allows them to hold off reporting contributions until after they deposit the checks. Until they start spending money in a big way and need that cash immediately, we won’t be able to track most candidate fundraising between quarterly finance reports. Rauner needs access to his cash because he’s spending so much.

Dillard is reportedly telling people that he’s on track to raise \$200,000 to \$300,000 this quarter, while Rutherford apparently plans to report \$1 million in the bank at the end of this quarter. But beyond that, we really don’t know what’s going on.

Also, Rauner has been careful not to go above the \$250,000 self-funder ceiling, which would break the contribution caps for all candidates running for governor.

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State law is a bit vague on whether a busted cap in one primary would apply to the other, but the executive director of the Illinois State Board of Elections told me last month that his interpretation of the law is that if a candidate in one party busts the cap, then all candidates in all parties for that particular office are no longer constrained by the state's contribution caps.

The poll, by the way, had Rutherford ahead in Downstate counties and in suburban Cook, while Brady led in the suburban collar counties and Chicago.

*Rich Miller also publishes Capitol Fax (a daily political newsletter) and [CapitolFax.com](http://CapitolFax.com).*