

Poll Shows Daley Vulnerable to Bank Attacks

Written by Rich Miller
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Governor Pat Quinn is leading his sole Democratic-primary rival, and challenger Bill Daley will have some serious problems with his blue-chip résumé, according to a new Capitol Fax/We Ask America poll.

The poll of 1,394 likely Democratic primary voters found Quinn leading Daley by five points, 38-33. That's exactly where the two stood in a January poll. A June poll had Daley leading Quinn by a point, 38-37, but since then Quinn has made some popular moves, including vetoing legislative salaries out of the budget and using his veto powers to rewrite the concealed-carry bill.

The most recent poll was taken July 17, a day after Attorney General Lisa Madigan shook up the race by announcing her decision not to run for governor. It had a margin of error of 2.6 percent. Cell phones made up 28 percent of those called.

Twenty-eight percent of likely primary voters were undecided, suggesting that there is plenty of room for movement by either man and possibly an opening for someone else to enter the race.

According to the poll, Quinn leads among women by seven points (38-31) and among men by two points (40-38). Quinn has a 47-27 lead among African Americans and a 45-36 lead among Latinos. Daley leads 37-35 with white Democrats. Daley leads by only a point in the suburban

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collar counties and by six points Downstate; Quinn has a 15-point lead in Chicago and a nine-point lead in Cook County.

But a question crafted to mimic a campaign attack shows a potentially killer Daley weakness. Daley was the Midwest chair of JPMorgan Chase – a “too big to fail” bank – when it received \$25 billion in federal bailout money, according to the CNN Money Web site. The company also agreed to settle with the federal government on federal mortgage-fraud and wrongful-foreclosure charges.

Because I wanted to see how Democratic voters would react to attack rhetoric, the question I posed was neither fair nor balanced. Campaigns do this sort of thing all the time to see where their weaknesses are, so it’s not a radical concept by any means.

Daley has several very big negatives, according to people in both parties who have polled or focus-grouped the race. His family’s Chicago legacy is one of Daley’s biggest liabilities and, I’m told, the easiest to understand. His bank’s investment in the hugely controversial Chicago parking-meter deal is another big hit. Daley’s lead role in the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement doesn’t play well with labor-union members. But after consulting several political pros, some of whom have been (or may eventually be) involved in attacking Daley, I decided to go with a question about JPMorgan Chase.

It is, as I said, not a fair question, but with Quinn undoubtedly planning a brutal populist assault on Daley, it’s probably close to something you’ll eventually see in an ad, although I didn’t include the fact that Daley’s bank bought a fleet of new jets a few weeks after receiving its federal bailout, nor could I use faces and voices of Illinoisans who were wrongly foreclosed upon.

“Would you be more likely or less likely to vote for a Democratic gubernatorial candidate who ran a major bank that received federal bailout money, foreclosed on large numbers of Illinois homeowners, and engaged in predatory subprime mortgage lending?” voters were asked.

Unsurprisingly, that question moved the needle in a big way. According to the poll, a whopping 73 percent of Democrats were less likely to vote for the candidate. Results such as that indicate the issue has major traction. Just 16 percent said it didn’t make any difference, and another 11

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percent said it made them more likely to vote for the candidate – possibly a negative reaction to the harsh nature of a question about a fellow party member.

The question proved “devastatingly effective,” said pollster Gregg Durham. The responses “will certainly give Mr. Quinn a political harpoon that could cause significant damage.”

Yes, Quinn has serious problems. That’s why the incumbent is only receiving the potential votes of 38 percent of his own party members. The June poll found that a mere 33 percent of Democrats approved of his job performance, for crying out loud.

Incumbents with lousy poll numbers such as Quinn have no other choice but to attack, attack, attack. And Daley will definitely provide a target-rich environment for the governor.

Rich Miller also publishes Capitol Fax (a daily political newsletter) and CapitolFax.com.