

Poll Shows How Rauner Risks Being Trump-ed by Quinn

Written by Rich Miller
Sunday, 29 June 2014 10:03

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It occurred to me when I was recently in Chicago that the media furor about Donald Trump's insistence that he be allowed to hang 20-foot-high letters spelling out his name on his new skyscraper is pretty much the mindset behind Governor Pat Quinn's campaign to tag "Billionaire Bruce Rauner" as a rich, out-of-touch, right-wing white guy.

So I commissioned a poll. While a majority actually agree that Trump had the right to hang his letters, he's not popular here and voters don't think that people like him can understand regular folks.

The June 25 *Capitol Fax/We Ask America* poll of 1,033 likely Illinois voters found that just 38 percent have a favorable view of Trump, while 42 percent have an unfavorable opinion of him. His numbers were worse in Chicago and suburban Cook County, where voters are far more Democratic and where the recent "giant letters" controversy was centered.

Just 23 percent of Chicagoans and 25 percent of suburban-Cook residents had a favorable view of Trump, versus the 52 percent of Chicagoans and 56 percent of suburban-Cook residents who had an unfavorable view. His favorable-versus-unfavorable ratings were 27-46 among African Americans and 38-43 among whites. His highest favorable ratings were among Republicans (53-23), Downstaters (47-34), collar-county residents (44-38), and independents (43-37). The poll had a margin of error of 3.05 percent.

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But a large majority agreed with Trump when asked: “This month, Chicago’s mayor and many others criticized Mr. Trump for placing what they called ‘garish’ 20-foot-tall letters spelling out his name on his new downtown Chicago skyscraper. Trump said it was his right to do so.”

The poll found that 61 percent of Illinoisans sided with Trump, while just 29 percent sided with Trump’s critics. Democrats were split 44-45 on the issue, and 47 percent of African Americans sided with Trump – as did 57 percent of Chicagoans, 56 percent of suburban-Cook residents, 69 percent of collar-county residents, 61 percent of Downstaters, 80 percent of Republicans, and 65 percent of independents.

“Despite the relatively low opinion many have of Mr. Trump, most believe he has the right to put his name in ego-sized proportion on his own building,” explained We Ask America pollster Gregg Durham. “They’re able to separate their personal feelings about the man from the larger question concerning his rights.”

But I also wanted to test not just Trump, but people *like* Trump – as in Rauner. So we came up with this question: “Do you think that wealthy people like Mr. Trump are able to understand the problems of everyday folks?”

To perhaps no one’s surprise, just 32 percent of Illinoisans said those types of people can understand regular folks, while 55 percent said they couldn’t.

The differences were most pronounced among Democrats, at 18 percent “can understand” versus 72 percent “cannot understand,” Chicagoans at 21-63 and African-Americans at 26-58.

A 47-39 plurality of Republicans and a 45-44 split of suburban collar-county residents agreed that people like Trump can understand regular folks, which probably shows you more than anything else just how ingrained this mindset is.

Recall that a plurality of independents had a favorable viewpoint of Trump and a strong majority supported his right to hang those huge letters. But just 35 percent of independents said that Trump and those like him can understand their problems, while 51 percent said they can’t.

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Downstaters leaned toward liking Trump and strongly supported his right to hang his letters, but a mere 27 percent said wealthy people like Trump can understand the problems of everyday folks, while 59 percent said they can't.

And the same goes for whites, who didn't care for Trump but backed his sign decision. Just 32 percent said Trump and folks like him can understand their problems, while 57 percent of whites said they cannot.

Taken in this context, it's easy to understand Rauner's endlessly repeated emphasis on his \$18 watch and his Harley Davidson motorcycle.

It also helps explain Rauner's announcement last week that he was supporting some long-time liberal populist proposals to close several "corporate loopholes" and to slap an inheritance tax on the transfer of yachts and jets to surviving spouses.

Rauner cannot risk being Trump-ed by Quinn. On the other hand, Quinn apparently believes he needs to paint Rauner as a local version of the cartoon character that Trump has become. It obviously works well here.

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