

Republicans Look Strong In Congressional Poll

Pollster Says Political Climate Working Against Democrats

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DURHAM, N.H. -- The Democratic congressional candidates in New Hampshire may have a lot of work to do if they want to claim victory in November, according to a new poll.

Based on 444 likely voters sampled, University of New Hampshire pollster Andy Smith said things aren't looking good for the Democrats. The Granite State Poll has a margin of error of 4.7 percent.

In the Senate race, most eyes are on Democratic U.S. Rep. Paul Hodes versus Republican Kelly Ayotte. The poll shows Hodes with 33 percent support compared to Ayotte's 41 percent.

But Smith said that even more concerning for Democrats is that even though Hodes leads his other contenders, he never breaks 40 percent.

Hodes gets 38 percent against Republican Ovid Lamontagne's 29, 36 percent against Republican Jim Bender's 27 and 34 percent against Bill Binnie, who trails him by 4 points.

"Here he is, a two-term congressman running in his third race, not able to crack 30 percent against any Republican and not even 40 percent against three unknown Republicans," Smith said.

In the 1st Congressional District, Smith said incumbent Democrat Carol Shea-Porter has a lot of work to do. She is behind every one of her Republican challengers.

The candidate with the most name recognition going up against her is former Manchester Mayor Frank Guinta, who leads Shea-Porter 43 to 33 percent.

Lesser known Republican candidates are also leading Shea-Porter. Rich Ashooh gets 36 percent of the vote to Shea-Porter's 33 percent, and Bob Bestani leads 36 to 32 percent.

"Again, the same bad political environment that's there for Democrats nationwide, we're seeing in the 1st District, which is a more Republican district," Smith said.

In the 2nd Congressional District, Smith said name recognition works for Republican Charlie Bass,

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who has 37 percent of the vote against Democrat Katrina Swett's 30 percent.

Bass also is getting 39 percent support against Ann McLane Kuster's 28 percent.

"Now, again, Bass doesn't crack 40 percent against either of those candidates, so a lot of the voters still haven't made up their mind," Smith said.

Also in the 2nd Congressional District, Republican Jennifer Horn is holding her own against Democratic contenders. The poll shows Horn at 28 percent to Kuster's 25 percent. And Horn falls slightly behind Swett, getting 26 percent to Swett's 30 percent.

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