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**BI-PARTISAN SURVEY SHOWS DEAD HEAT IN U.S. SENATE RACE;
HICKENLOOPER FAR OUTPACING HIS GUBERNATORIAL RIVALS.**

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A recently conducted survey of Colorado voters conducted by the bi-partisan research team of Lori Weigel of Public Opinion Strategies (R) and David Metz of Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (D) highlights two very different races at the “top of the ticket” in Colorado.¹ The results of the survey show a dead heat for U.S. Senate with Republican Ken Buck and Democratic incumbent Michael Bennet’s support within margin of error of the other (43% Bennet and 40% Buck). The data also shows how general antipathy toward both parties is having an impact on electoral politics this year, as a Libertarian candidate garners 5% of the vote – greater than the margin between the two major party candidates.

“The anti-Washington sentiment and general political environment would seemingly be working against Bennet,” stated Lori Weigel. “Incumbents tend to receive what they see in the polling, with undecided voters more likely to opt for change. However, this year, with disgust at politics and both parties running high, we have the potential for relatively unknown third party candidates to siphon off enough votes to change traditional campaign dynamics.” “Bennet first had to make his case with members of his own party – and he did that convincingly, according to this data,” explained David Metz. “Now, he has to do the same thing with the voters that will be the deciding factor in November: Independents, suburban voters, and seniors, in particular.”

The gubernatorial race appears to be a foregone conclusion, barring a fundamental shift in the race dynamics. Democrat John Hickenlooper is capturing 48% of the statewide vote, compared to just 25% opting for Republican Dan Maes and 15% selecting Tom Tancredo, running on the American Constitution Party label. Whether Tancredo is siphoning off GOP support that could have been available, or whether Maes’ self-inflicted wounds have boosted Tancredo’s support is open to interpretation. However, the former Congressman’s presence on the ballot and Maes’ continued problems appear to have all but sealed Democratic retention of the Governor’s mansion.

“There are still two months to go and the past few weeks’ revelations clearly show anything can happen in Colorado politics. But this data shows John Hickenlooper in a commanding position to keep a Democrat in the statehouse in one of the most competitive states in the country,” commented David Metz. Lori Weigel added “This is going to be one of the strongest years for the GOP nationally in decades, which will make Colorado’s Governor’s race stand out even more as an aberration.”

¹ **Methodology:** From August 28 - September 1, 2010, Public Opinion Strategies and FM3 completed 500 telephone interviews with registered voters throughout Colorado. Data shown is among the 473 who indicated they are very or somewhat likely to vote in November. The margin of sampling error for the statewide sample of likely voters is +/- 4.51%; margins of error for subgroups within the sample will be larger. Interviews were distributed proportionally throughout the state and are representative of active voters.

Specific insights into the **SENATE** race, based on the survey findings, include:

- **Gender gap.** There’s a significant gender gap, with men preferring Buck by a 9 point margin and women voters opting for Bennet by a 15 point margin. Currently, 46% of men choose Buck, compared to 37% for Bennet. Among women, 35% choose Buck, and 50% prefer Bennet.
- **Up in the air.** While Independents prefer the incumbent right now, more of them are undecided. Two-in-five Independent voters are choosing Bennet while 32% select Buck, and 6% opt for Libertarian candidate Stringer. More than one-in-five say they are completely undecided. In past election polling we have conducted, we often see up to 20% of the electorate waiting to decide until Election Day, so these voters may be up in the air for a long time.
- **Intensity gap.** Fully 85% of Democrats are backing Bennet, and indication that he solidified his base following a contentious primary battle. Three-quarters (76%) of GOP voters are backing Buck.
- **The battle for the ‘burbs.** The most evenly divided area of Colorado is in the suburbs. Among voters who describe where they live as suburban, 42% choose Bennet and 40% Buck, well within margin of error.
- **Latino voters’ interesting dynamics.** While a significant majority of 61% of Latino voters choose Bennet, 26% prefer Buck. However, Latino voters are one of the most definitive groups in their support for Bennet (47% say they will “definitely” vote for him). White voters are evenly divided between the two candidates (42% Bennet and 42% Buck).
- **Predictable dynamics by region.** As opposed to six years ago when former Senator Salazar captured significant support in rural areas of the state, rural voters are solidly behind Buck. In fact, most regional distinctions are fairly predictable based on past elections:

% Voting for...			Difference (<i>Bennet minus Buck</i>)
	Bennet	Buck	
Denver	47%	28%	+19%
North Suburbs	50%	32%	+19%
Southwest Suburbs	43%	49%	-6%
Western Slope	33%	44%	-11%
Eastern Plains	31%	53%	-22%
CO Springs/Pueblo	30%	56%	-26%
Urban voters	48%	38%	+10%
Rural voters	27%	46%	-19%

Specific insights into the **GUBERNATORIAL** race based on the survey findings, include:

- **Defections in the ranks.** Even before all of the prominent withdrawals of endorsements, rank and file Republicans’ support for their party’s nominee was tepid. Just 50% of Republicans say they would vote for Maes if the election was being held today, while 24% defect to Tancredo and 12% to Hickenlooper. This stands in stark contrast to Hickenlooper’s support within his party, as 84% of Democrats choose their party’s nominee for Governor.
- **As many Independents choose Tancredo as choose Maes.** While a majority of Independents select Hickenlooper (53%), the remainder are split between Tancredo (17%), Maes (17%) and being undecided (9%).
- **Hickenlooper has double digit leads among nearly all significant sub-groups that decide Colorado election.** Whether it is seniors (45% Hickenlooper, 35% Maes, 11% Tancredo), suburban voters (47% Hickenlooper, 24% Maes, 16% Tancredo), or any of a myriad of sub-groups we examined, Hickenlooper has double digit leads.
- **Hickenlooper has significant leads in all but the Colorado Springs/Pueblo region and the Western Slope.** Any region lying mostly in the Denver media market is decidedly for the current Denver Mayor (50% Hickenlooper, 22% Maes and 17% Tancredo in the Denver media market.

<i>% Voting for...</i>			
	Hickenlooper	Maes	Tancredo
Denver	63%	14%	15%
North Suburbs	52%	19%	18%
Southwest Suburbs	49%	28%	15%
Western Slope	33%	33%	12%
Eastern Plains	40%	30%	16%
CO Springs/Pueblo	52%	34%	3%
Urban voters	56%	23%	15%
Rural voters	25%	29%	24%

- **Tancredo’s support is reminiscent of the Perot vote of the 90’s.** Tancredo’s support tends to be higher among younger men (22% men under the age of 55), among Whites (16%) and in rural areas (24%). This profile recalls the “angry white men” who were the focus of much attention in the 1990’s.