

These early polls aren't worth the fuss

BY VIC BERARDELLI
SPECIAL TO THE BDN

Do not pay attention to the early polls. The real shakedown for viable candidates won't come until January on the eve of the New Hampshire primary, when voters will make more serious choices.

A Public Policy Polling poll released this week has Bernie Sanders leading among "usual" Democratic primary voters in New Hampshire over Hillary Clinton, 42 to 35 percent, with Jim Webb at 6 percent, followed by Martin O'Malley at 4 percent and Lincoln Chafee at 2 percent.

Among Republicans, Donald Trump leads with 35 percent, followed by John Kasich at 11 percent, Carly Fiorina at 10 percent, Jeb Bush at 7 percent, Scott Walker at 7 percent, Ben Carson at 6 percent, Chris Christie at 4 percent, Marco Rubio at 4 percent, Ted Cruz at 4 percent, Rand Paul at 3 percent, Rick Perry at 2 percent, Lindsey Graham at 1 percent and Rick Santorum at 1 percent.

Polling history indicates that the summer before actual voting season is a chance for likely voters to vent, but their choices change dramatically when their decisions count.

In 2008, the last open-seat election, the early polls were



Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump speaks at the Grand River Center in Dubuque, Iowa, on Tuesday.

quite different from the voting shakeout.

On Sept. 7, 2007, a Washington Post/ABC poll had Rudy Giuliani leading the GOP field with 28 percent, following by Fred Thompson at 19 percent, John McCain at 18 percent, Mitt Romney at 10 percent, Mike Huckabee at 5 percent, Sam Brownback at 2 percent and Ron Paul at 1 percent.

Among Democrats, Hillary Clinton led Barack Obama 42-27 percent, with John Edwards at 14 percent, Joe Biden at 3 percent, Bill Richardson at 2 percent, Dennis Kucinich at 2 percent, Chris Dodd at 1 percent, and Mike Gravel at 1 percent.

By January 2008, on the

eve of the New Hampshire primary, McCain led the GOP field at 28 percent; Huckabee moved up to 20 percent, and Romney hit 19 percent; Giuliani dropped by 13 points to 15 percent; Thompson dropped to 8 percent; Paul stayed even at 1 percent; and Brownback registered zero.

On the Democratic side, Clinton still led with 42 percent; Obama jumped 10 points to 37 percent, and Edwards dipped to 11 percent.

The actual primary vote was very different from the early polls. Clinton edged Obama by almost three percentage points, 39.1 to 36.5 percent, followed by Edwards, 16.9 percent; Richardson, 4.6 percent; Kucinich, 1.35 percent; Biden,



Presidential hopeful Bernie Sanders hugs his wife, Jane, at the end of a speech in Portland in July.

0.22 percent; and Gravel, 0.14 percent.

On the GOP side, the primary result was quite different from the September poll.

Giuliani, who led in September with 28 percent, only got 8.7 percent of the real vote; Thompson, who was second in the September poll at 19 percent, finished with only 1.23 percent of the vote. McCain, who was at 18 percent in the September poll, won the primary with 37 percent of the vote. Romney jumped from 10 percent in the early poll to take 31.6 percent of the vote. Huckabee moved up to take 11.2 percent of the real vote, while Paul went from 1 percent in the early poll to 7.8 percent of the vote.

What this means is that early polls do not translate to votes.

Many factors are in play. Closer to the election, candidates' organizations are tested as they comb the hustings for voters. And, even then, the primaries are not predictive of the general election outcome in November.

Ron Schmidt, associate professor of political science at the University of Southern Maine, explained it best: "The people who show up in primaries tend to be the very, very motivated and usually committed to one candidate or another. That's not necessarily the people who show up on Election Day in November."

In 2010, with an open guber-

Clinton's email trouble explained, or, why emailgate matters

BY JOHN R. SCHINDLER
LOS ANGELES TIMES

Hillary Rodham Clinton's effort to quash the rising scandal over her misuse of email when she was secretary of state has so far backfired spectacularly. Instead of cutting the story short, she has fanned the flames, and now even some of her backers in the Democratic Party are worried about the trajectory of this drama, which threatens to derail her presidential candidacy.

For readers who've mostly ignored emailgate — assuming it would disappear — and now feel the need to catch up, here's a primer on why it matters.

It's difficult to avoid the suspicion that Clinton, after the scandals that rocked her husband's presidency during the 1990s, simply did not want to leave behind a paper trail (or e-trail). And so, as secretary of state, she tried to skirt federal records law by employing her own IT systems and servers, and by exclusively using a personal email address.

This maneuver, however, created a far bigger problem than the one she intended to avoid, because a large portion of what any secretary of state does is classified to some degree. High-level diplomacy is inherently a secret matter and always has been.

Clinton partisans, betting on the public's ignorance in these matters, have argued that the federal government over-classifies intelligence, and that this is therefore no big deal. Allow me to shed some light.

It is true that deciding what is unclassified versus confidential, the lowest level of government classification, can be subjective. Similarly, the line between what's considered confidential versus secret, the next highest classification level, can get blurry. But top secret information, the highest classification level, is an entirely different matter.

After inspecting just 40 "unclassified" emails that Clinton provided to investigators, the Office of the Inspector General of the Intelligence Community determined that two of them should have been designated top secret/special intelligence. They contained information based on intercepted foreign communications, and



Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton talks about her strategy for rural America during a campaign stop at the FFA Enrichment Center at the Des Moines Area Community College in Ankeny, Iowa, on Thursday.

included what spies call "sources and methods."

In case it isn't obvious from the label, that doesn't mean scheduling details — whom the secretary of state met for lunch, for instance. A "source" could mean a human spy; a "method" could mean data hacking. We don't want foreign countries to discover these particulars.

It's no wonder that U.S. spy agencies are angry about this security breach, because it's their data that Clinton staffers mishandled.

But it gets worse. Because top secret information travels on entirely separate systems throughout the federal government, it is virtually impossible that a Clinton staffer blithely or unknowingly pasted a top secret paragraph into an unclassified email.

On the contrary, it seems increasingly likely that Clinton's staff was engaged in a systematic effort to take details off classified IT systems and strip them of proper classification markings (every paragraph in an intelligence report is classified separately) before sending them out electroni-

cally. This was not only a violation of numerous federal regulations, but also a crime — a felony when it involves top secret information.

Many difficult questions now present themselves, and presumably the FBI is asking them. Did Clinton staffers in the State Department violate federal laws systematically and independently? If not, who told them to do this?

Clinton has trotted out a range of excuses, none of which hold much water for anybody familiar with federal classification realities. Even if Clinton was only the recipient, not the sender, of top secret information, she should have reported the problem at once.

Everybody who obtains top secret/special intelligence clearances — pretty much every senior official inside the Beltway and most of their personal staffs — receives training in the handling of this valuable information.

Most worrying is the fact that, for several months, Clinton's personal server was wholly unencrypted. Given the high value of any secretary of state — the world's top diplomat — to dozens of foreign intelligence agencies worldwide, it's a safe bet that Russian and Chinese spies were reading her correspondence.

Secretary of State John F. Kerry recently acknowledged that he assumes those countries are reading his unclassified emails. And only a decade ago, Russian intelligence got caught planting a bug in State Department headquarters, just down the hall from the secretary's office. Moscow and Beijing may know more about Clinton's activities at Foggy Bottom than Congress ever will.

This scandal isn't going away anytime soon. Investigators have examined only one-fifth of the emails that Clinton handed over to them, so the true number of her "unclassified" emails that were actually classified may be in the thousands. Although it's premature to discuss prosecutions, Clinton's staff may well have engaged in conduct that lands less exalted citizens in prison.

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And I'm willing to bet that recovering addicts and family members of those addicted are not praying for a military intervention. They need and deserve recognition, support, treatment — along with the enforcement of laws.

Drug addiction is a scourge but has the potential to bring people together to fight against it. There's no bright line or political party separating addicts from nonaddicts. Every leader in every community must be summoned to take note and take charge.

Do you believe addicts on the street corners of Portland or Bangor have a right to beg for money to support their habit?

Mike: I don't believe there is an unfettered right to solicit people in public areas for personal gain, whether you are selling sandwiches or supporting habits. But panhandling is a topic for another day.

But if we are enlisting every leader, how do our comedic leaders assist in finding solutions? Tobacco usage declined after states sued suppliers, worked on treatment and, most importantly, social norms changed and stopped many from ever using in the first place. Can Eric Cartman save the day, stopping hippies and drugs alike?

Cynthia: There's nothing funny about addiction, but there's plenty of comic material in the government's response to it.

LePage and King in competing jumpsuits declaring "mission accomplished" might be funny in the 2018

natorial seat in Maine and seven Republican and four Democratic candidates, a total of 25,950 votes were cast in the Penobscot County primary. In November, 61,317 votes were cast. An entirely different and larger electorate decided who would be in office.

And the great unknown at this stage are the unenrolled independents who will turn the general election. They are not factored into the early polls, which concentrate on the registered Democrats and Republicans.

But they will look at the nominees from a different perspective. They are mostly free thinkers who go back and forth between parties, and they dislike both parties as organizations. So they're watching all of the pre-primary polling with an "is that the best you got?" cynicism. So enjoy The Donald's latest television show and Bernie mania for the entertainment. But if polling history holds true, they won't be a factor next spring.

Vic Berardelli of Newburgh is a retired political consultant and author of "The Politics Guy Campaign Tips — How to Win a Local Election." Now an unenrolled independent, he was a Republican State Committeeman and former member of the Republican Liberty Caucus National Board.

U.S. Senate race.

Mike: Addiction is never funny, but when drug use is a natural punchline to a "South Park" sketch or a John Oliver rant, we've moved it further away from social acceptance. We've already made headway with prescription drug abuse, which in part led to this increase in heroin use. Preventing abuse before it begins remains the most effective course of action.

And if 2018 is LePage v. King, do Democrats run a candidate? And who might it be?

Cynthia: LePage fiercely defends his right to speak (about House Speaker Mark Eves, for instance) and his rights to bear arms. Health care and access to medical treatment are as important or more so.

If he is serious about responding to the heroin epidemic, LePage would expand treatment options and stop demonizing people with whom he disagrees. Pretending the Legislature doesn't exist because it wants to expand Medicaid to treat addicts and make naloxone more accessible is as sophomoric as "South Park."

As for a Democrat challenging King in 2018? Ha! Good one.

Mike: I didn't expect the question to be a punchline.

Republican Michael Cianchette is former chief counsel to Gov. Paul LePage, a Navy reservist who served in Afghanistan and in-house counsel to a number of businesses in southern Maine. Democrat Cynthia Dill is a civil rights lawyer with the Portland firm Troubh Heisler and a former state senator. Follow her on Twitter at @dillesquire.

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It had never really gotten that bad, but I'd made bad decisions, acted poorly and treated people I loved — and some I didn't — even more poorly. And so it hadn't gotten too bad — yet.

And while it hasn't been easy, it has been rewarding. Replacing drinking in part with running and shedding the additional calories helped me shed about 50 pounds and feel exponentially healthier. And, my God, I've saved thousands of dollars — without exaggeration — and I've focused much of my newly acquired bandwidth on my business and my family.

The former is growing, thankfully, but the benefits to the latter are the most rewarding. My wife told me on a recent morning, "in the past year we have had so many great memories that weren't impaired by booze. I am so grateful."

That's hugely rewarding, considering if there is anyone who has proven himself a master at taking an other-

wise nice event and dampening it with booze-soaked depression or undertow, it's this guy right here.

Beyond all that, though, I just feel better. Awkward or not, this sobriety thing appears, in my case, very much worth the journey.

I appreciate the support from friends, family and readers. If you're thinking you need to pump the brakes a bit or give it a try, I encourage you to do so.

By no means do I purport to be a model for how to approach the process. Recovery comes in many different shapes, sizes, philosophies and tactics. But as someone who used to fear that going without, so to speak, was something that might leave me as less of a person or with a dampened personality, I have learned the opposite to be true.

Alex Steed has written about and engaged in politics since he was a teenager. He's an owner-partner of a Portland-based content production company and lives with his family, dogs and garden in Cornish.

Bangor

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and staff needs to be dedicated to this important task.

— Because Bangor is a center of health care delivery, Medicaid expansion in Maine under the Affordable Care Act would be the single-most impactful thing that could be done for this region's economy. There is no sound economic argument against bringing \$1 million a day in federal money to Maine to help shore up our health care system.

— A local minimum wage ordinance is the wrong way to address a legitimate national concern. Bangor

should drop this idea.

— A national park for the Katahdin area is an economic winner for that region and the Bangor region as well. Fears of its impact on timber harvesting, meanwhile, are way overblown.

— Can we somehow make the site of the dormant asphalt tanks on the Bangor Waterfront into open space? Meanwhile, is the vacant lot at the corner of Railroad and Main streets really helpful as open space? Maybe it should be offered up for the development of shops and restaurants, etc.

— The best long-term opportunity the Bangor region has for economic growth is the R&D activity at the university. Bangor needs to be-

come a friendly place for entrepreneurs ready to commercialize new technologies. That means continuing to build our lifestyle amenities and creating more resources and support for tech start-ups.

— The above imperative suggests that public investment in high-speed broadband Internet capacity would be a smart strategy for the Bangor region.

— We should stop stressing over the myth that our young people are leaving and focus instead on our strengths, including our good public schools and public safety record. We are a great community for people 30 and older who want to raise kids and enjoy an outdoor-oriented lifestyle.

We don't need to attract people in their 20s if we are drawing more experienced people in their 30s.

Truth be told, I have received much more than I've given to Bangor. I learned a great deal turning around and then leading a chamber organization as its CEO. But you can't do this job without caring about the community. I'm thrilled to have been a part of the mojo. Even though I'll be in Portland, I'll be rooting for Bangor to continue its winning streak.

John Porter became president and CEO of the Bangor Region Chamber of Commerce in January 2010. His last day on the job was Aug. 28.