

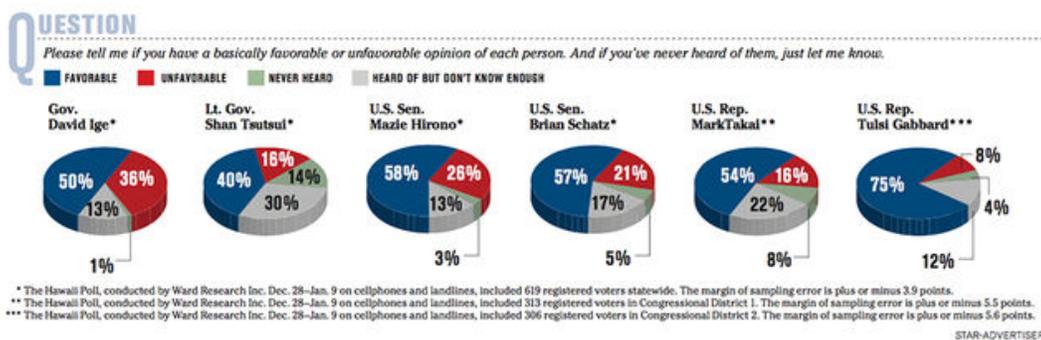


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Hawaii News

41% of voters denounce Ige's work

By Kevin Dayton
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About half of Hawaii voters have a favorable impression of Democratic Gov. David Ige, but just one year into his administration, a significant chunk of people say he is not doing a good job.

A statewide survey of registered Hawaii voters found that 48 percent approve of the job Ige is doing, while 41 percent disapprove.

Hawaiian voters are most critical of Ige, with more than half of the Hawaiians surveyed saying they don't approve of his job performance. A significant number of Filipino-American voters are also displeased, with 44 percent saying they disapprove of the job Ige is doing.

Japanese-American voters tend to be considerably more pleased with the performance of the governor, with 67 percent statewide saying they approve of the job Ige is doing.

The Hawaii Poll, conducted Dec. 28-Jan. 9 by Ward Research Inc. on cellphones and landlines, included 619 registered voters statewide. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 3.9 points.

Ige said he is not surprised at the results.

"There's lots of challenges that I hear in the community each and every day as we're out meeting and talking with people," Ige said in an interview Friday. "We have been working to make things right, to make things happen."

Colin Moore, director of the Public Policy Center at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, said Ige's job disapproval numbers appear to be driven in part by unhappiness with Ige's support for construction of the Thirty Meter Telescope on Hawaii island, and by concern over the problem of homelessness.

Ige supports development of the \$1.4 billion telescope, but that project is opposed by most Hawaiian voters. Most of the Hawaiians surveyed also contend the homelessness problem has gotten worse over the past year.

Moore said Ige's job approval rating after a year in office "isn't terrible, but it's nothing to be superproud of," particularly considering Ige's very strong showing in his dramatic 2014 primary election victory over fellow Democrat former Gov. Neil Abercrombie.

"In a one-party state where he overwhelmingly defeated an incumbent governor, I would have expected his number to be a bit better than this," Moore said. The administration still hasn't faced a major public policy crisis, "so if this represents a trend and he doesn't turn these numbers around, particularly on homelessness, I expect him to kind of continually slowly decline."

Ige said the homeless and TMT issues are complex, lingering problems. "Those are two of the top-of-mind issues that we definitely walked into," he said.

"You know, there's lots of challenges when I walk into the office, things that have been persistent in our community for a long time that we've been focused on working on, and there are no easy answers," he said. "It's really about working through the challenges one at a time."

Despite some voters' unhappiness with Ige's job performance, 50 percent of those surveyed said they have a favorable overall opinion of the governor, while 36 percent said they have an unfavorable opinion of him.

Again, Ige was most popular with Japanese-American voters, with more than two-thirds reporting they have a favorable opinion of him. He was least popular with Hawaiian voters, with 53 percent of Hawaiians saying they have an unfavorable opinion of Ige.

The poll found 40 percent of voters statewide have a favorable opinion of Lt. Gov. Shan Tsutsui, but another 44 percent said either they have never heard of Tsutsui or they do not know enough about him to have an opinion.

Tsutsui is better known and better liked on the neighbor islands, where 46 percent said they have a favorable opinion of him. Tsutsui grew up on Maui and still lives there.

The poll showed that U.S. Rep. Tulsi Gabbard is by far the most popular member of Hawaii's delegation to Congress, with three-quarters of the registered voters in her rural Oahu and neighbor island congressional district reporting they have a favorable opinion of her.

Gabbard, a Democrat, enjoys a rare degree of bipartisan support. Eighty percent of those voters in her district who usually vote for Democratic candidates reported they have a favorable opinion of her, while 71 percent of those who tend to vote for Republicans said they have a favorable opinion of Gabbard.

That portion of the poll included 306 registered voters in Congressional District 2. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 5.6 points.

Gabbard said in an emailed statement that "I am grateful and humbled by the continued support of the people I serve, and will always work to make sure their voice is heard in our nation's capital."

Democratic U.S. Sens. Brian Schatz and Mazie Hirono both have relatively high approval ratings, with 58 percent of the voters statewide reporting they have a favorable view of Hirono, and 57 percent reporting a favorable view of Schatz.

Another 21 percent said they have an unfavorable view of Schatz, who is running for re-election this year, and 22 percent of the voters said either they have never heard of Schatz or don't know enough about him to form an opinion.

"We've had a productive year for Hawaii, and I'm honored by the support from the community for my efforts," Schatz said in a written statement in response to the poll results.

That portion of the poll was conducted statewide and included 619 registered voters. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 3.9 points.

U.S. Rep. Mark Takai, who represents urban Honolulu, earned a favorable opinion from 54 percent of the voters polled. Takai, who was elected to Congress in 2014, remains the least-known member of the Hawaii delegation, with 30 percent of the

voters in his district reporting either they have never heard of him or don't know enough about him to form an opinion.

"It is an honor to fight for Hawaii in Washington and I look forward to continuing our work this year to strengthen our national security, support local entrepreneurs and innovators, help students struggling to pay their student loan bills, and build an economy that gives every family a chance to get ahead," Takai said in a written statement.

That portion of the Hawaii Poll included 313 registered voters in Congressional District 1. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 5.5 points.

[Hawaii Poll — Favorability](#)