



Kansas Speaks 2014

*Prepared for the
Citizens of Kansas
by*



Fort Hays State University

Design and Graphs by





Introduction

Dr. Gary Brinker, *Director*

The Docking Institute of Public Affairs is a social research center sponsored by and housed on the campus of Fort Hays State University. Our primary mission is to provide cutting-edge research services to the various state government agencies, as well as non-profit organizations, working to maintain a high quality of life for Kansans at highly competitive costs. The Institute also pursues a public affairs mission oriented around promoting democracy and a well-informed electorate. One of our most valuable contributions to this goal is our annual statewide public opinion survey, Kansas Speaks. Unlike many opinion surveys that disseminate their results, but neglect reporting the methods used to conduct the survey, Kansas Speaks is conducted by academics highly trained in scientifically-valid data collection. The study interviewed random households in Kansas selected by a professional sampling vendor. The questionnaire is designed to solicit unbiased opinions of elected officials' job performance and controversial legislation. Although the Docking Institute was named, in part, after the husband of Democratic nominee for Lieutenant Governor Jill Docking, the Institute is a non-partisan entity unaffiliated with any political party or candidate. We receive no financial support outside of the University. The purpose of the survey is to let our legislators, as well as all engaged Kansas citizens, know how the people really feel about the quality of life in Kansas and the effectiveness of our public policies.

Traditionally, Kansas Speaks had been conducted slowly over the entire summer. This year, in an attempt to get a "snapshot" of Kansans' opinions during the weeks immediately preceding the election, Kansas Speaks was conducted over a relatively short period in late September. So our results reflect the opinions of Kansans as we approach an election with several close races and widely seen as a referendum on the new direction that Governor Brownback and conservative legislators have recently taken on both economic and social issues. The results shown in this insert are some

of the more interesting findings of the study. The entire results of the survey can be viewed in the full report, available through the Kansas Speaks tab on our website: www.fhsu.edu/docking. Our hope is that our research will be used by legislators to structure policies compatible with views expressed by the majority of Kansans.

Survey Methodology

Dr. Jian Sun, *Principal Investigator*

To assess attitudes and opinions of Kansans, the Docking Institute has surveyed a random sample of residents age 18 and older in Kansas every year since 2009. In previous years, thousands of Kansas residents were contacted, and each year answers from more than 900 people were collected. In 2014, the Docking Institute purchased from Scientific Telephone Samples a random sample consisting of Kansas landline telephone numbers and cellphone numbers. From September 10th to September 27th, a total of 1,777 Kansas residents were contacted and 952 of them completed the survey, resulting in a 53.6% response rate. The margin of error was 3.2% at the 95% confidence level. A margin of error of 3.2% means that there is a 95% probability that findings among the sample vary no more than +/-3.2 % from the value that would be found if all adult Kansas residents were surveyed, assuming no response bias. In 2014, the survey had higher response rates among Kansas residents who are white, non-Hispanic and those over 55. Therefore, the overall population estimates are biased toward the opinions of white, non-Hispanic and older Kansans.

The questionnaire was developed with the assistance of Dr. Chapman Rackaway, Docking Institute Senior Policy Fellow and Professor of Political Science at Fort Hays State University. The survey questions measure what the researchers deemed the most substantive indicators of satisfaction with state government and policies.

A State Divided

By Dr. Chapman Rackaway, *Senior Policy Fellow*

Talk among pundits about national politics has recently focused strongly on polarization, working from a theory that the public is deeply divided ideologically and leaving little middle ground in politics. While political scientists differ on the causes and degree of that polarization, many scholars and experts believe the public has become more polarized in the last decades. Results from the 2014 Kansas Speaks survey suggest that our state is also more divided along ideological lines than in the past.

Kansans remain unified in thinking that Kansas is a good place to live, a consistent finding with previous years' results of the Kansas Speaks survey. More than eighty percent of respondents to the survey said that Kansas was a good place to live or better. Ambivalence rules when looking at the Kansas economy, as more than seventy percent of respondents indicated they thought the economy was good or fair. Most responses clustered in the middle. But that is where the agreement ends.

Kansans are not satisfied with their elected representation, at either the state or the national level. Just over 33% of respondents said they approved of Governor Brownback's job performance, while almost half of all respondents disapproved. The numbers were slightly better for Senator Pat Roberts, split 35% approve to 45% disapprove, but President Obama's ratings were the worst, at 30% approve to 59% disapprove. Less than fifteen percent of all respondents were neutral or undecided on any of the officials, so the results strongly suggest most Kansans have clear ideas regarding their elected officials, and they are sharply divided on those views.

The division and dissatisfaction also show through when we turn to Kansans' views on the efforts of Governor Brownback, Republican state leaders, and Democratic state leaders to improve the Kansas economy. Just one-third of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with either Governor Brownback's or Democrats' efforts to better the economy. Roughly an equal

number of respondents were dissatisfied or highly dissatisfied with all three's efforts, with fewer expressing neutral opinions than either satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

Taxes and spending, the dominant issues of the 2014 gubernatorial campaign, show a great divide among Kansas Speaks respondents, as well. Exactly half of respondents to Kansas Speaks 2014 said that taxes and spending should be lower, and those respondents particularly thought taxes should be lower on individuals and small businesses, but also believed taxes should be higher on corporations and high-income earners.

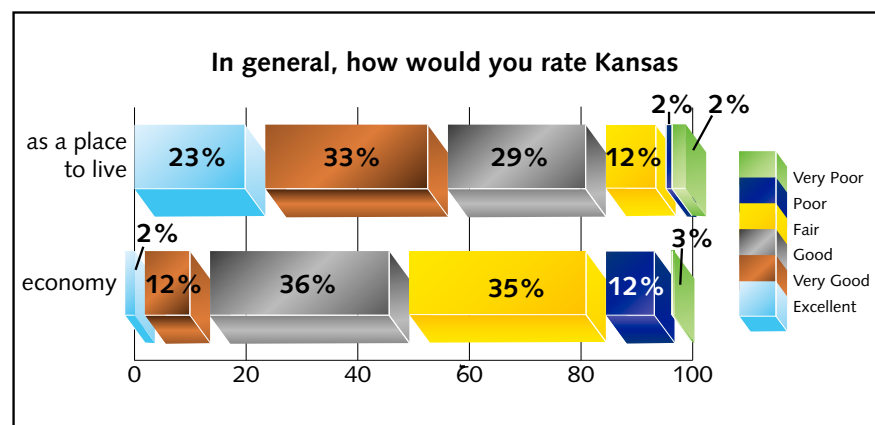
Neighboring Colorado provided an opportunity to gauge Kansans' views on marijuana as well. Colorado's recent decriminalization of marijuana prompted the Institute to ask if Kansans favored keeping the current felony-level punishment for possession of marijuana for any purpose, altering the punishment to misdemeanor level, decriminalizing possession but not allowing retail sales of marijuana, or a similar policy to Colorado with decriminalization and retail sales that allow for the collection of state taxes. For Kansans, the response depends on their party identification. Republicans tend to favor maintaining the status quo, while Democrats favor some form of decriminalization.

One more point of division exists among those with differing views on immigration. Secretary of State Kobach has established a national reputation as a leader on the immigration issue, but his controversial stands have earned him as many detractors as followers. Even more so than partisanship, respondents' intention to vote for Kobach or his opponent were related to their views on immigration. Around three-quarters of all respondents who wanted to deport most or all undocumented immigrants stated their intention to vote for Mr. Kobach, while a nearly equal number (around seventy percent) of respondents who wanted to deport few or no undocumented immigrants showed support for his opponent, Jean Schodorf.

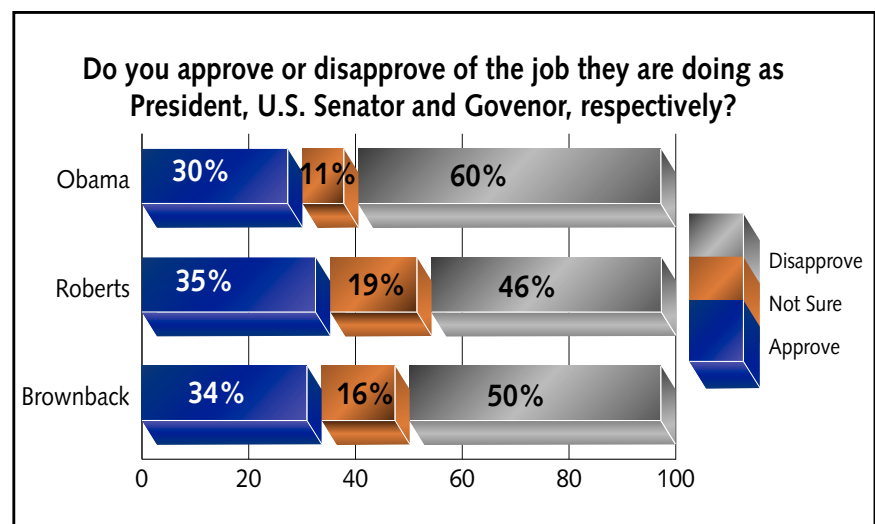
From candidate preferences to policy stands, Kansans spoke in 2014 to show a sharp divide in their views on government.



Survey Results

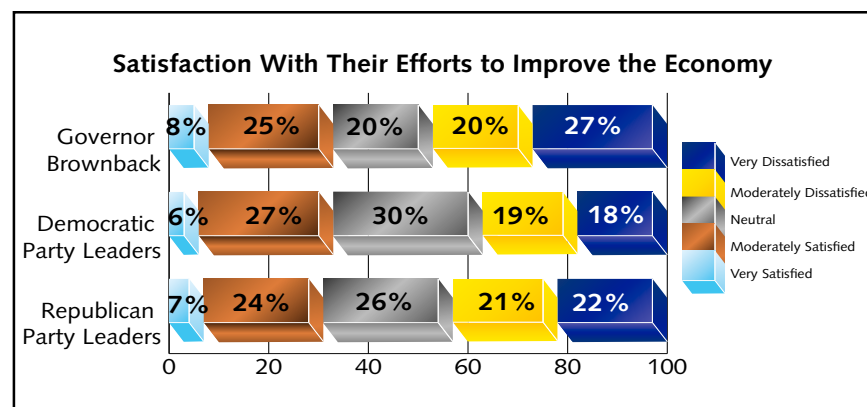


Although close to half of Kansans are apparently concerned about the state economic conditions, saying they feel the economy is, at best, fair, most still feel Kansas is an “excellent” or “very good” place to live. Only 4% of respondents said they felt Kansas was a “poor” or “very poor” place to live, while over 15% characterized the economy as “poor” or “very poor.” Only 14% of respondents rated the Kansas economy as “very good” or “excellent.”

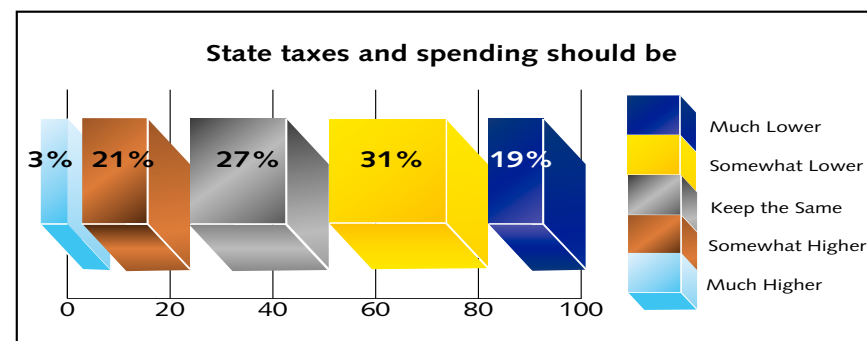


Respondents were asked if they approve or disapprove of the job performance of President Obama, Senator Roberts and Governor Brownback. The results show significant disapproval for all three, with President Obama garnering

the lowest approval and highest disapproval. Senator Roberts fared best among the three, with the highest approval and lowest disapproval. Exactly one-half of respondents disapprove of Governor Brownback, with one-third approving of his job performance.

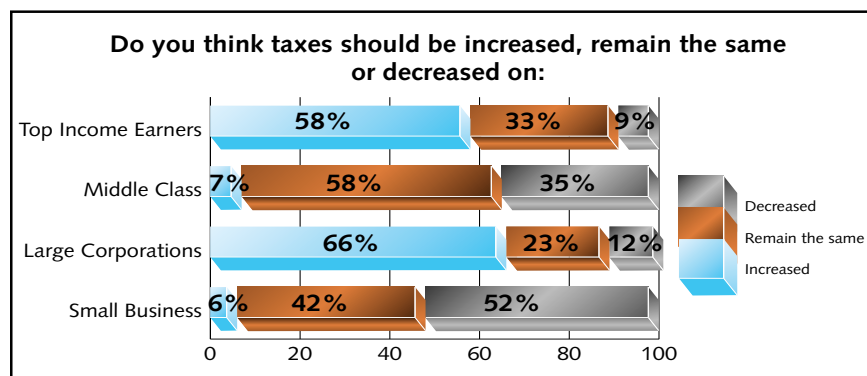


The results suggest that respondents held the Governor and leaders of both major parties about equally responsible for the state of the Kansas economy, with the Governor’s ratings being slightly more polarized. Respondents were more likely to be dissatisfied with the Governor’s efforts to improve the economy, but were also slightly more likely to be satisfied, when compared to party leaders. Respondents were more likely to be dissatisfied than satisfied with all three.

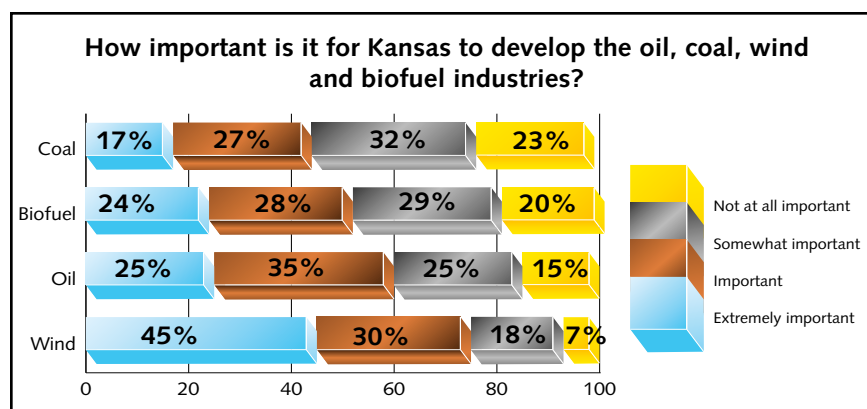


When asked about spending and taxation in general, half of respondents said they want lower taxes and spending, while just

over one-fourth favor the current levels. Just under one-fourth said the State needs to increase taxes and spending, though most of these respondents favor moderate increases.

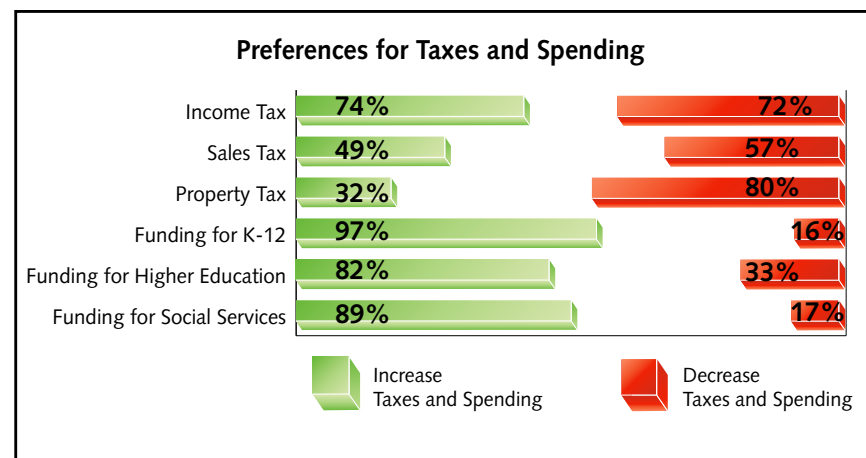


Tax policy is complicated because tax rates can vary depending on the taxpayer's income or the size of the business being taxed. Respondents were asked their opinions on how certain categories of people and businesses should be taxed. Over half of respondents indicated that they felt that the very highest income earners were not paying their fair share, while almost two-thirds said taxes should be higher for large corporations. Half of respondents favored lowering taxes on small businesses, while one-third want lower taxes on the middle class.



Respondents were asked the degree to which they feel each of the four main types

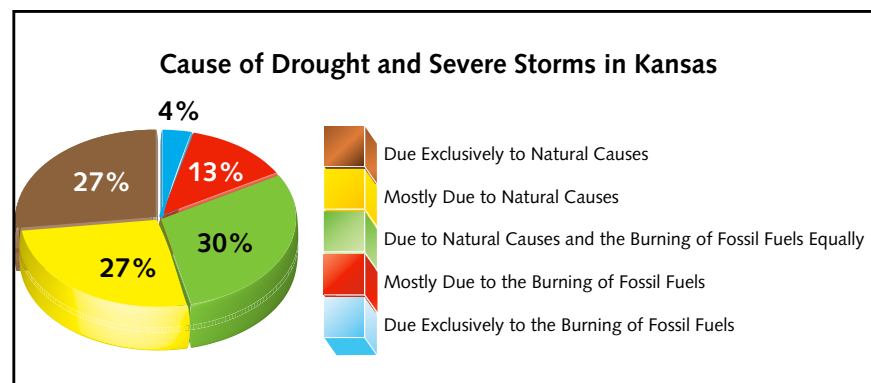
of energy produced in Kansas should be developed. As has been typical over the past several years, wind energy comes in as the most important energy source that should be developed in Kansas, with three-quarters of respondents saying wind is "important" or "very important." Over half of respondents said it was similarly important to develop oil production, with biofuel rating close to oil in importance. Less than half thought it "important" or "very important" to develop coal production, with almost one-third saying coal production is "not important at all."



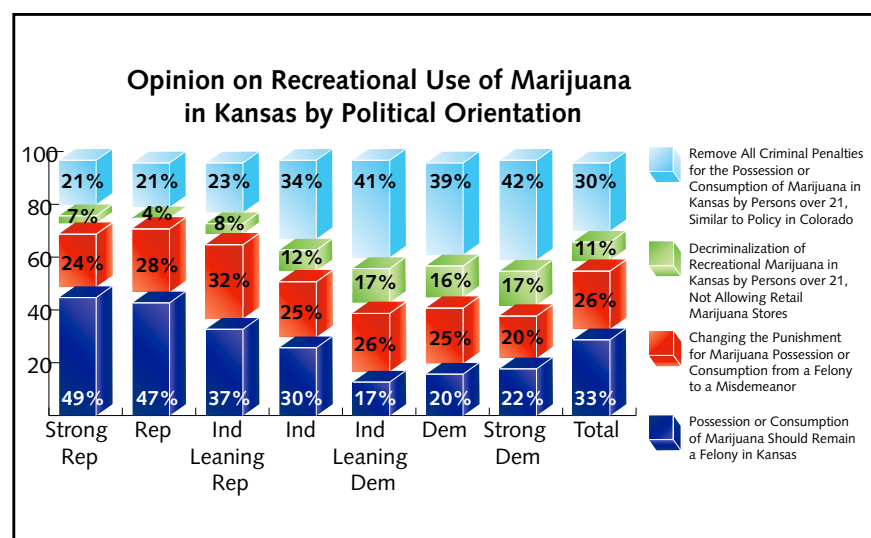
Among only those respondents who preferred much or somewhat higher taxes and spending, higher percentages of respondents favored increased spending than increased taxes. Almost all (97%) of respondents favored increased funding for K-12 schools, and 74% favored higher income taxes. Less than a third (32%) of respondents expressed support for higher property taxes, and 82% supported increased spending for state colleges and universities. Among only those respondents who preferred much or some-



what lower taxes and spending, 33% favored decreased funding for state colleges and universities and 80% favored reduction in property taxes.

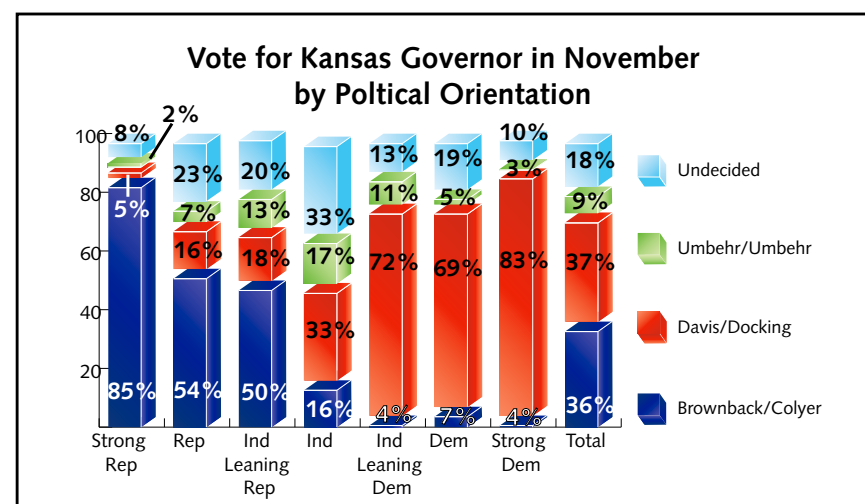


When asked if they believe the drought and severe storms recently experienced in Kansas were due to extensive burning of fossil fuels or natural causes, 54% of respondents thought the drought and severe storms were due exclusively or mostly to natural causes, while only 17% felt the erratic weather pattern was due exclusively or mostly to the burning of fossil fuels.



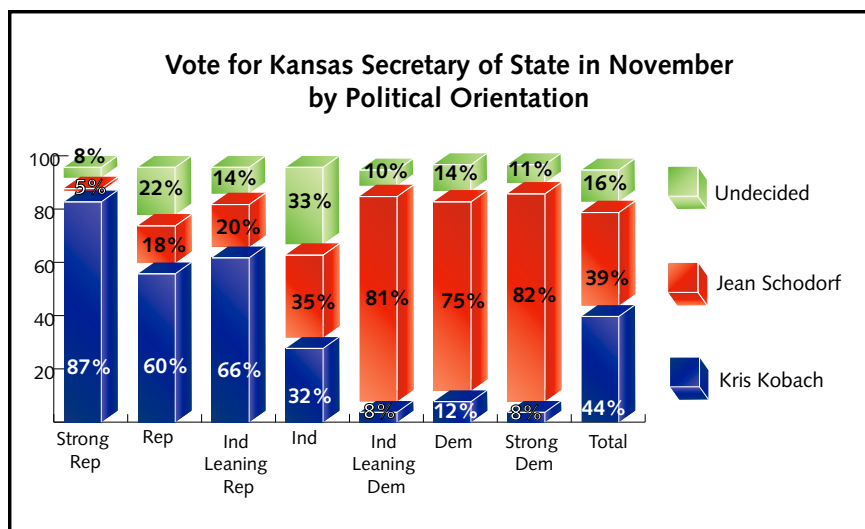
Colorado recently legalized the recreational use of marijuana by adults over the age of 21. The survey asked about respondents'

policy preferences for the recreational use of marijuana in Kansas. Overall, 59% of respondents wanted to criminalize possession or consumption of marijuana in Kansas as either a misdemeanor or felony, 11% preferred decriminalization of possession or consumption of recreational marijuana by person over 21, and 30% preferred a policy similar to the one in Colorado to allow the sale of recreational marijuana with a state tax. The support for criminalization was higher among Republican respondents and those leaning Republican, with more than two-thirds favoring punishing possession or consumption of marijuana as a misdemeanor or felony. Less than 50% of respondents who were Democrats or leaning Democrat supported criminalization.



When asked about their voting choice for the gubernatorial election in November, 36% of respondents indicated that they would vote for the incumbent Republican governors Sam Brownback and Jeff Colyer, 37% said they would vote for the Democratic

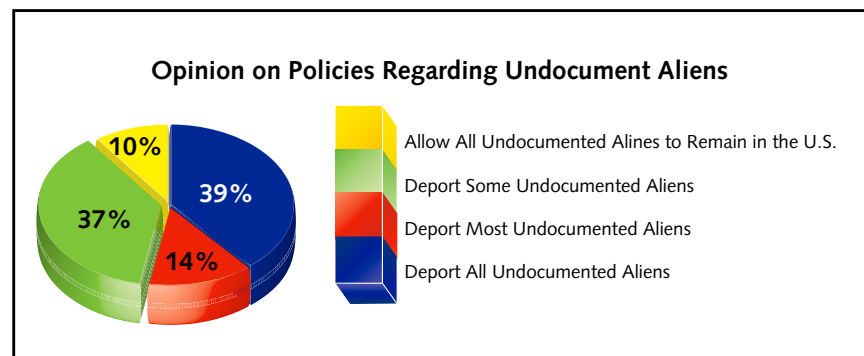
nominees Paul Davis and Jill Docking, 9% would vote for the Libertarian nominees Keen Umbehr and Josh Umbehr, and 18% had not decided. Support for Brownback and Colyer was higher among Republican respondents and those leaning Republican, and Davis and Docking received higher support among Independent voters, Democratic respondents, and those leaning Democratic.



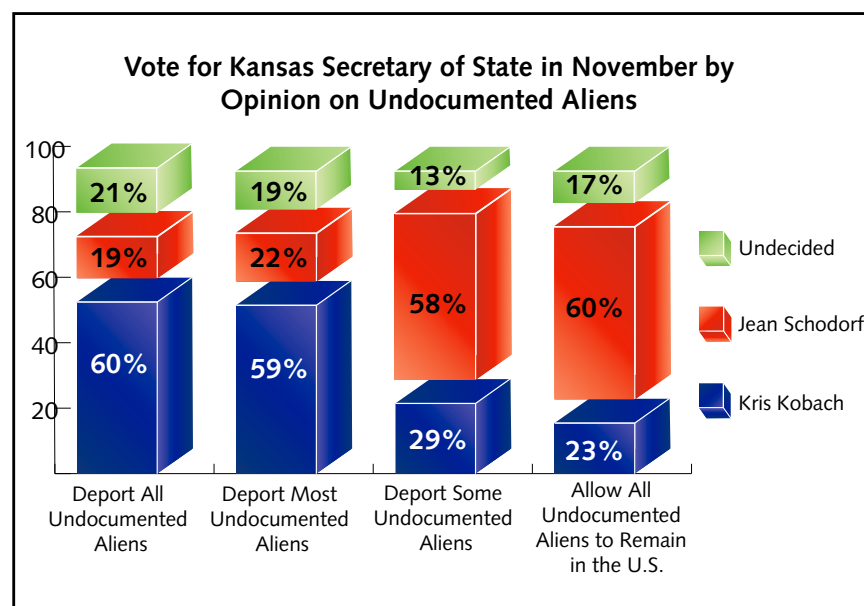
When asked about their choices in the Secretary of State election in November, 44% of respondents said they would vote for the incumbent Secretary of State, Kris Kobach, 39% said they would vote for the Democratic candidate Jean Schodorf, and 16% had not decided. Again, Republican respondents and those leaning Republican were more likely to vote for Kris Kobach, and Democratic respondents and those leaning Democratic were more likely to vote for Jean Schodorf.

Respondents were asked about their opinion on policies regarding undocumented aliens. Thirty nine percent (39%) of respon-

dents supported deporting all undocumented aliens, 14% supported deporting most undocumented aliens, 37% supported deporting some, and 10% favored allowing all undocumented aliens to remain in the U.S.



Those who supported deporting all or most undocumented aliens were more likely to vote for Kris Kobach in the Secretary of State election in November, with about 60% of them saying they would vote for Kris Kobach in the coming election. About 60% of those who supported allowing undocumented aliens to remain in the U.S. and deporting some undocumented aliens indicated that they would vote for Jean Schodorf.



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