

Election Time: Researchers Must Think Beyond the Poll Numbers

By Howard Fienberg, PLC, MRA Director of Government Affairs

With the 2010 election cycle in its final weeks, there are many hundreds of races across the country to watch. Rather than sifting and sorting poll data and turnout models, how about taking a break from the numbers and looking at the election's impact on the profession in which you work?

There are a few races that could resonate for researchers working in and with certain states. For instance, in Kansas, Attorney General (AG) Steve Stix (D) faces a difficult election campaign to retain his position. He was appointed as AG by former Governor and current Health & Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius. AG Stix drafted and pushed the Robo-call Privacy Act (S.B. 456) – legislation covered in MRA's [February Legislative Update](#) that would have required all calls using CATI or autodialers to disclose their sponsorship and other details. The Act would have irreparably biased research calls in Kansas.

In the case of another Attorney General, Connecticut's Richard Blumenthal (D), the profession may similarly fare better in the legislature – because, in this case, AG Blumenthal is running for election to an open seat in the U.S. Senate instead of re-election as AG. In Connecticut, the AG was a big proponent of S.B. 270, legislation [MRA testified against](#) and ultimately helped to defeat, which would have required public disclosure of incentives paid to healthcare providers in Connecticut for participating in pharmaceutical and medical device marketing research. While MRA is not aware of the positions on this issue of candidates George Jepsen (D) and Martha Dean (R), the newcomer who wins will bring their own fresh perspectives to the position. However, Blumenthal may win his election to the Senate, where he could potentially pursue this or other issues to the detriment of the research profession at the federal level.

On a more optimistic note, MRA has been able to meet with dozens of Congressional and Senate candidates this year, introducing them to the profession and our issues. After many of these candidates win this fall, we may have a far more receptive audience in the halls of the U.S. Capitol in 2011-12 than we've seen in a long time.

So, don't forget to vote, including absentee if you are attending the MRA First Outlook Conference– and feel free to contact your Director of Government Affairs, [Howard Fienberg](#), to talk about legislation, regulation... and politics!

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U.S. Research Industry Remains Steady

The U.S. marketing research industry received good news during the second quarter of 2010. The Research Industry Index (RII) results maintained the significant increase seen for the first quarter of 2010. The index remains at 98. In contrast, the index hit an all time low of 84 for the first quarter of 2009.

According to Ken Roberts, president-elect of the Marketing Research Association, and author of the RII report, this good news continues to be fueled by medium to large size firms. Many larger firms (revenues over \$5 million) report increase revenues, which have lead to increased hiring. Most business owners (regardless of revenues) are very optimistic about their business prospects.

The RII is a composite score based on reported changes in key business metrics (RFPs, projects and staffing levels), as well as changes in business owners' perceptions of the health of their business. The base period (Index = 100) is the fourth quarter of 2007. 200 senior executives from both end users and marketing research firms participated in the most recent wave of the survey.

Interviewing was conducted online, via a survey hosted by Authentic Response. Reporting was completed by Cooper Roberts Research.

To view the results from the latest survey, visit <http://www.mra-net.org/resources>