



Forecasts for the 2008 General Election in South Dakota

Between September 3 and September 9, 2008, 14 expert observers of South Dakota state politics predicted the winners of statewide races and ballot questions and corresponding margins of victory in an online survey. Three participating experts were professors, one was a lobbyist, and ten were state legislators. Seven experts identified as Republicans, six identified as Democrats, and one was unaffiliated.

The election forecasts reflect collective expert judgments that are derived, in part, from weighting each expert's predictions by an objective estimate of his or her likely prediction accuracy and combining these weighted predictions. The forecasts also account for experts' own voting preferences, eliminating that potential source of bias.

The table below shows the forecasts for the statewide races and ballot questions. With one exception, all winner forecasts are very highly reliable representations of expert opinion in South Dakota. That is, each forecast is estimated to reflect the aggregated opinion of similar expert political observers who did not participate in the survey with a confidence level of greater than 99%. The exception is the forecast for Initiated Measure 9, which met all but one of the criteria for the very high reliability classification. The share-of-vote forecasts do not have formal reliability classifications. However, in prior research with similar expert panels, election forecasts of both winners and winners' shares of the vote have been remarkably accurate. For example, forecasted shares of the vote based on aggregated expert judgments previously have tended to be within 5 percentage points of the actual share of the vote.

Race/ballot question	Forecasted winner	Forecasted share of vote
US President/Vice President (in SD)	McCain/Palin	53.5% ^a
US Senator	Johnson	55%
US Representative	Herseth Sandlin	59%
Public Utilities Commissioner	Hanson	57.5% ^b
Constitutional Amendment G	Yes	52%
Constitutional Amendment H	No	52.5%
Constitutional Amendment I	No	53%
Constitutional Amendment J	No	57%
Initiated Measure 9	No	52%
Initiated Measure 10	No	59%
Initiated Measure 11	Yes	51%

^aBased on assumption that third-party candidates receive a negligible share of vote; actual forecast is a 7% margin of victory for McCain/Palin over runner-up ticket.

^bBased on assumption that third-party candidate receives a negligible share of vote; actual forecast is a 15% margin of victory for Hanson over runner-up.

Titles of ballot questions:

- Constitutional Amendment G: An Amendment to the South Dakota Constitution, to repeal certain reimbursement restrictions for travel by legislators to and from a legislative session.
- Constitutional Amendment H: An Amendment to the South Dakota Constitution, to repeal certain provisions relating to corporations.
- Constitutional Amendment I: An Amendment to the South Dakota Constitution, to provide for a maximum of forty legislative days a year.
- Constitutional Amendment J: An Amendment to the South Dakota Constitution, to eliminate term limits for legislators.
- Initiated Measure 9: An Initiative to make certain securities practices and transactions unlawful.
- Initiated Measure 10: An Initiative to prohibit tax revenues from being used for lobbying or campaigning, to prohibit governmental bodies from lobbying, to prohibit government contractors from making campaign contributions, to prohibit government contracts when the contractor employs a legislator or legislative staff member, and to require contracts with governmental bodies to be published.
- Initiated Measure 11: An Initiative to prohibit abortions except in cases where the mother's life or health is at a substantial and irreversible risk, and in cases of reported rape and incest.

For more information on each ballot question, visit

<http://www.sdsos.gov/electionsvoteregistration/electvoterpdfs/2008SouthDakotaBallotQuestionPamphlet.pdf>.

Eleven of the expert respondents were invited to participate in a second round of the survey between October 15 and October 21. Three experts responded. Their second round predictions were very similar to their first round predictions. After incorporating these revised predictions, none of the forecasted winners changed, and the forecasted share of vote changed negligibly for only three ballot measures and one race.

For more information about the methodology underlying the forecasts and about Interdisciplinary Scientific Research, visit <http://electionforecasting.interscientific.net/faq.html>.

The time- and date-stamped version of the initial forecast, produced in mid-September, is available at <http://electionforecasting.interscientific.net/SD2008Forecast.html>. Software accessible through this page can be used to verify the time- and date-stamp independently.

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For license details, visit <http://electionforecasting.interscientific.net/SD2008Forecast.html>.

