

The Fourth of August, 2022

## *To Hawthorn Friends & Family*

### **KS as Bellweather for Abortion Turnout And A Three-Way Senate Race in MO**

I try not to waste your time repeating what has already been said . . . and most of what could be said about Tuesday's primaries in Arizona, Kansas, Michigan, Missouri and Washington has surely been said, repeatedly, by other pundits.

I will only share observations about two items: the turnout impact of abortion in **Kansas** and the under-reported (indeed, nearly ignored by national pundits) emerging three-way U.S. Senate race in **Missouri**.

#### **Kansas – A Turnout Predictor???**

On Tuesday, **908,745 Kansans voted** on a miserably hot day (some of whom set record numbers by voting early and by mail), defeating a state constitutional amendment allowing restrictions/prohibition on abortions.

They defeated the amendment 374,611 (41.22%) Yes to 534,134 (58.67%) No.

That 60-40 defeat reflects current national polling, a defeat in Kansas, a state President Trump carried by 20 and 15 points in the last two elections. Although passing in most of the western counties, the amendment significantly underperformed President Trump in many of those counties.

But it was the **turnout** that was staggering. The total vote on the amendment, 908,745 was a **95% increase** from the total turnout in the 2018 primaries, when only 467,305 Kansans voted.

Was it driven by the abortion amendment? Not only was there nothing else competing as intensely for attention, but **181,385 MORE votes were cast on the amendment than in the two primaries for governor combined**. It is hard to argue anything else drove that turnout.

Three questions occur to us:

1. Will abortion continue to **drive turnout in November . . .**
2. Especially in the 46 states that, as of NOW, **will not have an abortion amendment on the ballot** (although 21 have trigger laws in effect or pending; others are working on ballot measures) - Can candidates and parties figure out how to use the issue, absent a ballot vote, to turnout votes? And if they can . . .
3. Will it **affect partisan voting** enough to make a decisive difference in any of the mid-term elections?

### **The Unreported Three-Way U.S. Senate Race in Missouri**

Almost all the national coverage focused on the winners of the two established parties in Missouri:

- Attorney General **Eric Schmitt** impressively won the **Republican** primary with 45.7% of the vote, outpacing Congresswoman Vicky Hartzler with 22.1%, disgraced former Governor Eric Greitens with 18.9% and Congressman Billy Long's 5.0%, surely ending Greitens' political career and refuting the theory that with enough candidates in the race (there were six others), Greitens would prevail.
- St. Louis beer heiress **Trudy Busch Valentine**, who has never run for public office, took 43.2% to win the **Democratic** primary, beating Bernie Sanders-endorsed Lucas Kunce with 38.4%, along with a host of minor candidates.

Nearly all the national stories focused only on the upcoming duel between Schmitt and Valentine . . . **but there is likely a third, Independent, candidate in the race, former Republican federal official John Wood**, most recently senior investigative counsel for the January 6<sup>th</sup> Committee.

(Paying tribute to the "God who is in the details," let me note there could actually be FIVE candidates on the Missouri ballot, including Libertarian and Constitution party candidates who were unopposed in their primaries.)

On Monday, primary election eve, Wood turned in 22,000 signatures to get on the ballot, well in excess of the 10,000 required.

Wood is a former U.S. Attorney for Western Missouri, appointed to that job after serving in the George W. Bush administration. He later served as General Counsel to the U. S. Chamber of Commerce before going to the January 6<sup>th</sup> Committee.

A protégé of former U.S. Senator, U.N. Ambassador and Missouri Attorney General **John C. Danforth** – whose other protégés include Clarence Thomas and Josh Hawley, and who broke the Democrats' hold on Missouri statewide offices in 1968, 54 years ago – Wood responded to the centrist's, Danforth's appeal for an alternative non-Greitens candidate, an appeal backed by an already spent \$5 million from Danforth's

political action committee with announced plans to raise another \$20 to \$25 million.

With his credentials, ties to St. Louis and Kansas City, and with \$25 million, Wood should be a credible candidate, even as an Independent in a state that, in my memory, has never elected an Independent statewide.

The question is, given his anti-Trump January 6th Committee and Danforth ties, can he attract enough Republican votes in a state President Trump won by 18.51 points in 2016 and by 15.4 points in 2020 . . . and, given his lifelong Republican allegiance, can he add enough Democrat votes to win a three-way race? Said differently, from whom will he take votes: Schmitt or Valentine? How many, from whom?

What is NOT a question is that his candidacy should not have been ignored in the reports on Missouri's primary two days ago.

Of course, that assumes he qualifies for the ballot, raises the money he has pledged to raise, and stays in the race. And staying seems a reasonable question. He was recruited to be a Republican alternative to the disgraced (and disgraceful) Greitens. The GOP has now nominated a veteran Republican office holder – albeit a Trump conservative – taking Greitens out of the race. The GOP now has a decent answer to the “anyone but Greitens, even a Democrat” Republicans. Why risk a three-way race?

It will be fascinating to watch . . . and if he can take votes mostly from his fellow Republican Schmitt, he is the Democrats' only hope of flipping the seat . . . provided he doesn't take so many votes from both he wins it outright.

### **A Final Comment --**

For those “sick unto death” of seeing political commercials, you're right if you think the number is growing. Axios reported yesterday morning that – with the three month general election campaign still to be fought – the **\$3.6 Billion ALREADY spent to date on the 2022 election is “set to obliterate” 2018's total spending of \$5.25 Billion.**

Our guess is it will more than double the spending of four years ago. Most will go to broadcast. So far, of the \$3.6B spent, \$2.1B has been broadcast, plus \$697M on digital (including \$309M on “Connected TV”), \$614M on cable, \$100M on radio, and \$38.5M on satellite.

Stay well!

*John*