

BAKER GROUP STRATEGIES

MEMORANDUM

TO: INTERESTED PARTIES
FROM: WARD BAKER
DATE: APRIL 30, 2019
RE: VANDERBILT "POLL" INSULTS THE POLLING COMMUNITY

Vanderbilt released a survey of Nashville/Davidson County residents earlier today. Before we analyze the merits of this particular survey, let's take a look back on Vanderbilt's track record.

In [mid-October 2018](#), they had Bredesen leading now-Senator Blackburn by double digits; Blackburn ended up winning by 11 points. Instead of taking ownership of spotty data, they doubled down and released the image for Bredesen in a mid-December survey. They had Bredesen as a +21%, despite the fact that he lost by double digits and that exit polling data (which is by and large the most reliable data we have when determining post-election results) had Bredesen's image as barely breaking even (+3%). Maybe they were trying to make Bredesen feel better about his loss, or make the argument that he was still popular despite a double digit lose where he spent \$7 million+ of his own money.

It is important to remember that in [October 2016](#), Vanderbilt had President Trump only leading Hillary Clinton by a margin of 44% - 33%. Trump ending up winning Tennessee by a margin of 61% - 35%. John Geer, co-director of the Vanderbilt poll, even went as far as to say, *"People are locked in. They have their preferences and they're not going to shift them very much."*

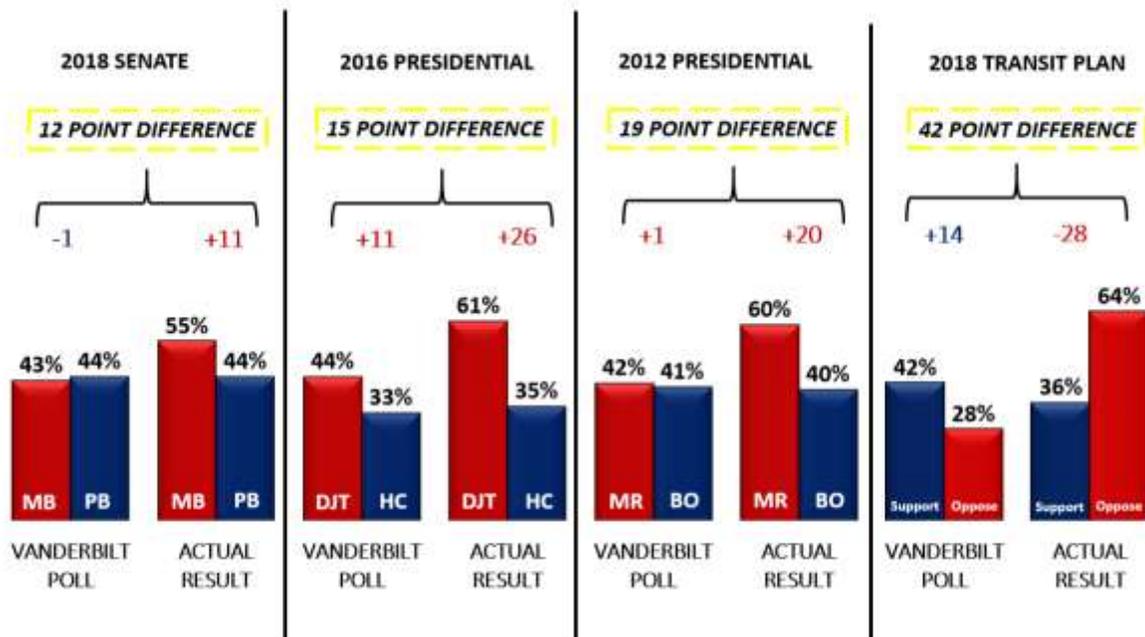
In [May 2012](#), Vanderbilt only had Romney leading Obama by a point. Romney went on to win Tennessee by 20 points. That's like saying Nashville only had 5,000 people for the NFL draft.

Additionally, in [Spring 2018](#), Vanderbilt found that voters in Nashville supported Mayor Barry's transit plan by 14 points. The transit plan was defeated by nearly a 2-to-1 margin (36% - 64% to be precise). In other words, Vanderbilt was off by **42 points** in this instance. That's so far off that is like saying I have hair like Fabio – no insult to Fabio.



Please find on the following page a chart summarizing just how far off Vanderbilt has been in these key races.

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So, this all brings us to today, when Vanderbilt thought it was necessary to change up their methodology – which given their track record is actually a good assessment on their part. However, Vanderbilt actually found a way to still go backwards with their methodological standards. In Vanderbilt latest survey, more than half of their respondents were reached via mail. From there, participants could mail back their survey, or they could go online to complete the survey. Here is where it gets good though, *“the prenotification mailing also included a \$1 pre-incentive bill and an offer of \$10 payment via an electronic gift card code sent immediately upon completion of the survey.”* Vanderbilt is now in the businesses of paying voters to get them to respond, which reputable pollsters do not do when completing surveys. They used to do these bad polls for free, now they are paying people to take them and somehow, they have gotten worse. I hope this isn’t coming from the football program’s budget – *Anchor Down*.



Additionally, because Vanderbilt hard-mailed voters, they were in the field for just under a month. Most statewide surveys can usually be completed in three days.

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It is actually impressive that the Vanderbilt Poll found a way to hit a new low.



BOTTOM LINE

Vanderbilt's track record of wild inaccuracy is unparalleled not only in Tennessee, but across the country. Now they are resorting to methodological techniques out of the 1960s. Next time you see a Vanderbilt poll, don't even take it with a grain of salt, hit the delete or "X" button – or maybe for Vanderbilt to get the message you need to write a letter to them asking to be put on a do not mail list.