In response to a recent Republican Party memo critiquing the latest Winthrop Poll, I'd like to offer a few rebuttals. The points from the memo are taken verbatim from a story in the Charleston Post & Courier. I respond in red below each numbered point:

1. The poll shows that President Barack Obama polls 12 points higher than he scores in national polls. "Do you honestly think Barack Obama is massively more popular in South Carolina than he is nationwide? I don't," Moore said.

Our poll shows the approval rating of Obama at 44.8%. Nationally he's at 44% on a poll taken roughly the same time. These numbers are statistically identical: http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-503544_162-57340576-503544/grim-economic-outlook-weighs-down-obama-approval-rating/.

2. The questions asked are biased, Moore said. For example, Moore points toward this question:

"Do you think it is possible to address national budget concerns without any tax increases on any groups, or would some tax increases be required to address national budget concerns?"

The question omits other options such as cutting spending or growing the economy, Moore said.

We did ask questions about spending cuts related to Social Security, Medicare, and defense (see the following):

[NOTE: this question was ONLY asked of those respondents who CURRENTLY receive Social Security or Medicare benefits]

Would you be willing to have your current Social Security or Medicare benefits reduced in order to address national budget concerns?

	All	Democrat	Republican	Independent (& other)
Yes	18.8%	16.4%	17.7%	22.4%
No	76.1%	78.4%	76.1%	72.4%
Not Sure	4.2%	3.4%	5.3%	4.3%
Refused	.9%	1.7%	.9%	.9%

[NOTE: This question was ONLY asked of those respondents who do NOT currently receive Social Security or Medicare benefits]

Would you be willing to have your future Social Security or Medicare benefits reduced in order to address national budget concerns?

	All	Democrat	Republican	Independent (& other)
Yes	28.2%	26.1%	28.4%	29.9%
No	64.8%	71.0%	62.0%	61.0%
Not Sure	6.4%	1.7%	9.1%	8.7%
Refused	.6%	1.2%	.5%	.4%

[NOTE: This question was ONLY asked of those respondents who do NOT currently receive Social Security or Medicare benefits]

Would you be willing to have the retirement age at which you can receive full Social Security or Medicare benefits raised to 70 years old in order to address national budget concerns?

	All	Democrat	Republican	Independent (& other)
Yes	30.6%	22.6%	33.2%	36.5%
No	66.1%	74.5%	64.4%	58.9%
Not Sure	3.2%	2.5%	2.4%	4.6%
Refused	.1%	.4%	0.0%	0.0%

Would you be willing to cut defense spending in order to address national budget concerns?

	All	Democrat	Republican	Independent (& other)
Yes	46.5%	56.1%	33.1%	49.1%
No	45.4%	32.8%	62.2%	43.3%
Not Sure	7.3%	9.4%	4.3%	7.4%
Refused	.8%	1.7%	.3%	.3%

Besides, each question should be about one topic; to make a single question about tax increases AND spending cuts AND 'growing our way out' would be methodologically flawed. Everyone hates tax increases; if anything, by using that term we biased people against responding that tax increases might be necessary. We also took care to avoid using language like "taxing the rich" or "taxing the wealthy." Therefore, it is obvious that we took special care to not bias this particular question, much less any other.

3. The pollster did not release "crosstabs," which provide more detail on who was polled, Moore said. Without that information, a peer review of the poll is less complete and raises questions about whether those polled reflect South Carolina's diversity, Moore said.

I think the answer as to whether our poll reflects the make up of the known population of registered voters as reported by the South Carolina State Election Commission can be pretty clearly seen here:

Registered Voters: Dec. Winthrop Poll v. SC Election Commission

Demographic	SC Election Commission	Dec. Winthrop Poll
Female	55.2%	55.6%
White	69.6%	64.0%
18-24	9.0%	8.8%
25-44	33.0%	32.7%
45-64	36.9%	36.1%
65+	21.1%	20.0%
Refused to give age	--	2.4%

I respect the attempt of the state party to protect the reputation of the sitting governor from their party; to do less would be failing to do their job. Nonetheless, it is incumbent upon me to point out that these criticisms of the poll are unfounded and I am sure their energy could be used elsewhere more profitably than attacking a legitimate poll.

Finally, I'd like to point out that the last time the Winthrop Poll was accused of bias, it was by the South Carolina Democratic Party when we – correctly, as it turned out – predicted that Nikki Haley would win the gubernatorial race.

As always, our first and foremost duty is to the people of South Carolina to provide accurate measures of their opinions. We've done that here.

--Scott Huffmon