

RESONANCE MEDIA SERVICES

SURVEY FINDINGS

South Carolina Special Republican Primary for US Senate

Survey of 600 likely Republican primary voters statewide, fielded July 21, 2026. Margin of error $\pm 4.0\%$ at the 95% confidence level. Sample composition: 94% cell, 6% landline; 49% male, 51% female.

Resonance Media Services surveyed 600 likely Republican primary voters across South Carolina on July 21, ahead of the August 11 special primary for the US Senate seat left vacant by the death of Lindsey Graham. The principal findings follow.

1. Voters know how the seat was filled. That knowledge has not become support.

Ninety-five percent of Republican primary voters are aware that Governor Henry McMaster appointed Senator Graham's sister, Darline Graham Nordone, to serve the remainder of his unexpired term. Awareness at that level is unusual this early in any campaign. President Trump endorsed her near the time of the appointment, and much of the coverage that produced that awareness carried the endorsement with it.

It has not converted. Nordone leads the primary ballot at 20.8%. At the same time, 17.8% of Republican primary voters report never having heard of her by name, and another 31.3% have formed no opinion of her. Roughly half of this electorate knows the appointment happened without having decided anything about the person who received it.

The President's endorsement has opened the door. Nordone is far from walking through it.

2. Ralph Norman holds the strongest favorability in the field.

Norman is viewed favorably by 44.7% of Republican primary voters and unfavorably by 18.9%, a net rating of plus 25.8 — the best of any candidate tested. He also leads the field as a second choice at 17.6%, which carries weight in a state where a nominee must reach 50% plus one to avoid a runoff.

His support concentrates among the most frequent primary voters. Norman's first-choice share climbs across every tier of primary participation, from 13.7% among voters who have taken part in one of the last four Republican primaries to 20.9% among those who have taken part in all four. His second-choice share climbs from 9.9% to 24.6% across the same range. Among voters who turned out in June's gubernatorial primary he draws 18.4%, against 11.8% among those who did not.

A lower-turnout election produces an electorate weighted toward exactly that group.

Norman competed in the June gubernatorial primary and emerged from it with his statewide recognition intact.

3. Russell Fry leads one region and is unknown across the rest of the state.

Fry draws 7.2% statewide, a figure that understates his position. In the Seventh Congressional District he takes 29.0% and leads the field outright, with a further 14.7% naming him a second choice there. Across the other six districts he ranges between 1.1% and 7.1%.

He is also the least defined candidate tested. Forty and a half percent of Republican primary voters have never heard of him, and his favorable and unfavorable ratings stand at 18.7% and 12.5%. No opponent has yet spent money defining him.

A consolidated regional base paired with a largely blank statewide slate gives Fry more theoretical room to grow than anyone else in this field. Whether he can cover that ground before August 11 is a question of resources rather than of standing.

4. Former Governor Mark Sanford carries the field's steepest negatives.

Sanford has appeared on South Carolina ballots for more than two decades, and 82.6% of Republican primary voters have heard of him. The recognition runs against him.

He is viewed unfavorably by 37.5% of Republican primary voters and favorably by 23.2%, a net rating of minus 14.3. That is the weakest of any candidate tested and the only double-digit negative in the field. He draws 7.1% on the primary ballot.

5. Sixty-nine percent of these voters call themselves pro-life. Half say they will not vote for a candidate who backs a total abortion ban.

Asked how they think of themselves on the abortion issue, 69.3% of South Carolina Republican primary voters said pro-life and 22.3% said pro-choice. A further 5.0% were unsure.

Respondents were then told that some candidates for office are taking the position that abortion should be banned in all cases, including in instances of rape, and were asked whether that makes them more or less likely to vote for a candidate holding that position.

49.9% of Republican primary voters said they will not vote for a candidate who supports a complete ban. 23.2% said their candidate must support one.

Only 12.3% said it is not an issue that will decide how they cast their vote.

Among women, 54.7% said they will not vote for a candidate who supports a complete ban.

How the field is viewed

Favorable and unfavorable ratings for every candidate tested, with the share of voters who have never heard of them:

	Favorable	Unfavorable	Net	Never heard of
Ralph Norman	44.7%	18.9%	+25.8	14.4%
Darline Graham Nordone	36.3%	14.5%	+21.8	17.8%

	Favorable	Unfavorable	Net	Never heard of
Pamela Evette	33.5%	35.6%	-2.1	12.5%
Mark Lynch	29.0%	28.8%	+0.2	17.1%
Mark Sanford	23.2%	37.5%	-14.3	17.4%
Russell Fry	18.7%	12.5%	+6.2	40.5%
Duke Buckner	3.4%	5.9%	-2.5	62.5%

Ratings for Fry and Buckner should be read against the large share of voters who do not yet recognize them.

The state of the race

	First choice	Second choice
Darline Graham Nordone	20.8%	16.8%
Ralph Norman	16.9%	17.6%
Pamela Evette	9.6%	15.8%
Russell Fry	7.2%	6.9%
Mark Lynch	7.2%	8.9%
Mark Sanford	7.1%	7.0%
Duke Buckner	0.9%	0.9%
Unsure / Refused	27.6%	22.3%

Nancy Mace was included in the survey instrument and has since announced she will not run. Her share is not reallocated above.

No candidate approaches the 50% plus one required to win outright. If no one reaches that threshold on August 11, the top two finishers advance to a runoff on August 25. More than a quarter of the electorate remained undecided three weeks before the first vote.