

# GARIN HART YANG

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## RESEARCH GROUP

**TO:** Interested Parties

**FROM:** Garin-Hart-Yang Research Group

**DATE:** August 12, 2020

**RE:** New poll shows competitive Mississippi Senate Race

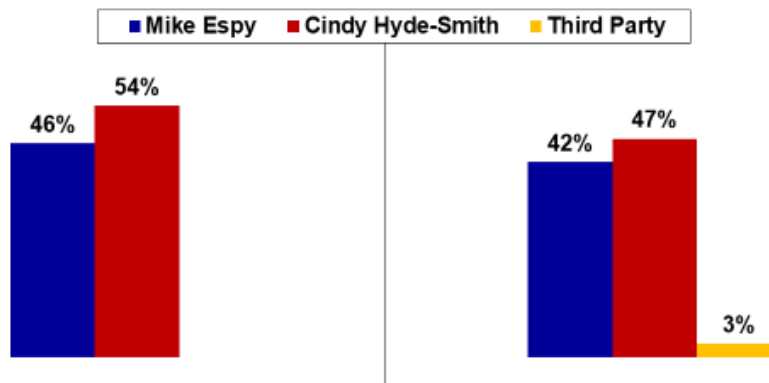
*On behalf of the Mike Espy for Senate campaign, Garin-Hart-Yang conducted a survey among 600 likely Mississippi voters between July 30 and August 9. The survey, which was conducted on landlines and cell phones, has a margin of error of  $\pm 4.1\%$ , and it is fully representative of Mississippi's electoral dynamics. For example, the black proportion in our sample is 35%, and in the self-reported 2016 vote, our sample voted for Donald Trump by 54%-39%.*

The following are the key findings:

**#1. Mike Espy starts this race in a very competitive position (trailing just outside the survey's margin of error) without having started his paid media campaign.** As the following chart shows, Mike Espy trails Cindy Hyde-Smith by five points, which is slightly better than the 2018 election results (a non-presidential year):

**November 2018**

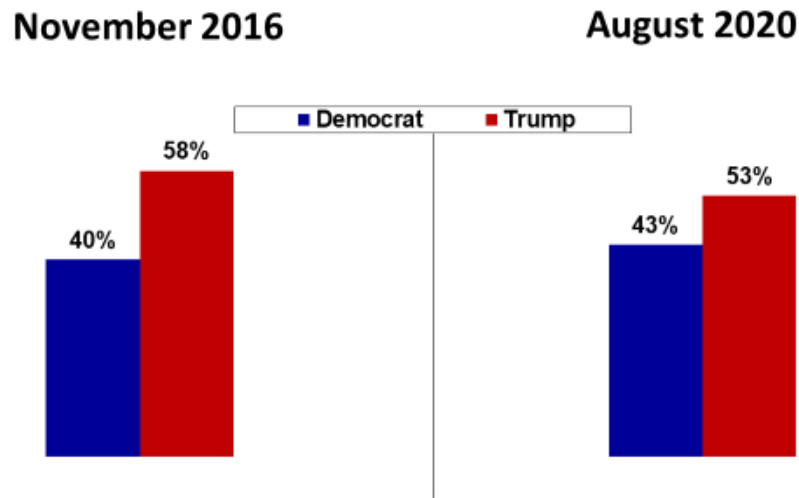
**August 2020**



Additionally, the current trial heat results represent an improvement from the May 27<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> PPP survey sponsored by the Mississippi Democratic Party that showed Hyde-Smith with a 49%-to-41% advantage. As a reminder, the PPP survey was conducted before the George Floyd protests across the country AND the subsequent, historic decision by Mississippi to remove the Confederate Battle Flag from its State Flag.

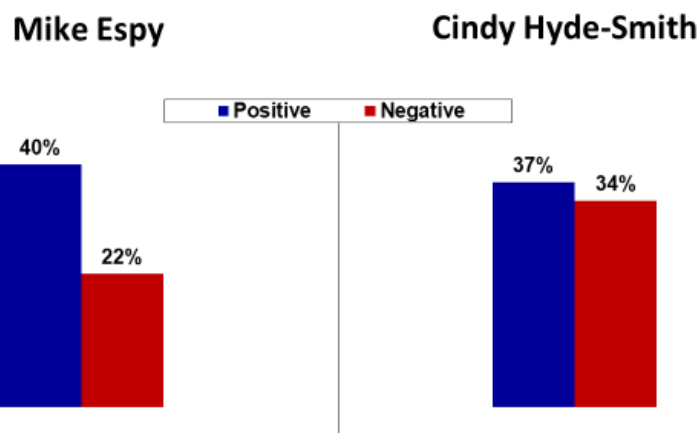
**#2. Espy leads by 8 points with independents, tied with young white voters.** First, Espy is ahead of the incumbent by 48%-to-40% among Independents (whereas Joe Biden trails by 16 points with this key group). Second, Espy is garnering 20% of the white vote, with room to grow especially among younger whites. In fact, the Senate race is TIED among white voters ages 18 to 34, an important factor in a presidential turnout year. And finally, Mike Espy receives a robust 85% share of the black vote, with the likelihood that he will grow this vote once he begins his paid media and GOTV campaign.

**#3. Donald Trump is weaker in Mississippi than he was in 2016.**



President Trump’s approval rating for his handling of the coronavirus is barely above a majority (51% excellent or good), with 48% giving him a negative rating; interestingly, while 78% of Democrats rate Trump’s performance in strongly negative terms of “poor,” just 55% of both Republicans and Hyde-Smith voters say the President is doing an “excellent” job on the coronavirus.

**#4. Finally, voters are considerably more positive towards Espy than Cindy Hyde Smith.**



It is extraordinary that a Republican incumbent has a polarizing image in a Republican state; in fact, Hyde-Smith already has net-negative ratings with Independents (26% positive, 36% negative), while she is lukewarm with groups

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that should be MUCH more enthusiastic about her: just 51% of white voters say they are positive toward her. More importantly, among Soft Hyde-Smith, voters she only has a 26% positive rating meaning three-fourths of a group that she MUST retain to win reelection either feels negative or neutral toward her, which is an extraordinarily low level of commitment.

By contrast, Mike Espy elicits a respectable 31% positive and 18% negative feeling thermometer score among Independents, and he has a NET positive rating with younger white voters that are so important to his vote growth among white voters.