

## Vanderbilt Poll: Gov. Bill Haslam wildly popular in Tennessee

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Gov. Bill Haslam (r) (Andrew Steele)

Tennessee's Bill Haslam is a remarkably popular Republican governor during a politically divisive time in the nation's history, making him a politician to watch, says a Vanderbilt University political scientist.

Haslam has a 68 percent job approval rating, according to new analysis of data from a Vanderbilt Poll conducted late last year. **In comparison, New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, who has received a surge of national attention for his actions and comments in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, has a 67 percent job approval rating in his home state, according to a Rutgers-Eagleton Poll.**

Taking into account margin of errors for the polls, Christie and Haslam are in "a dead heat" as far as popularity ratings in their respective states, said John Geer, Gertrude Conaway Vanderbilt Professor of Political Science and co-director of the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions at Vanderbilt.

"But Christie's popularity is inflated due to the aftermath of Sandy," Geer said. "And so even with that jump in popularity, he and Haslam are tied. Prior to Sandy, Christie's approval was about 20 points lower. So within that context, Haslam is doing amazingly well."

Haslam also has more support from across the aisle than Christie, picking up 60 percent approval from Democratic voters. "In today's polarized environment, these data," Geer contends, "are really eye-popping." Christie has a 40 percentage point gap between Democrats and Republicans even with the post-Sandy bounce and Haslam's is half that. Haslam also enjoys equal support among men and women, which again is highly unusual in today's politics.

"Overall, these are the kind of numbers that are likely to draw the attention of Republicans and Democrats nationally as discussion heats up about the 2016 presidential election," contends Geer.

The Vanderbilt Poll, conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International, has a margin of error of plus or minus four percentage points. More information is available online at the website of the [Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/csdi/) (<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/csdi/>) at Vanderbilt.

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