TO: INTERESTED PARTIES
FROM: Landon Wall
RE: New York Statewide Poll – Governor Hochul Unpopular and Vulnerable in 2026; Elise Stefanik Poised to Dominate GOP Primary Field and Offers Republicans Their Best Shot Against Hochul
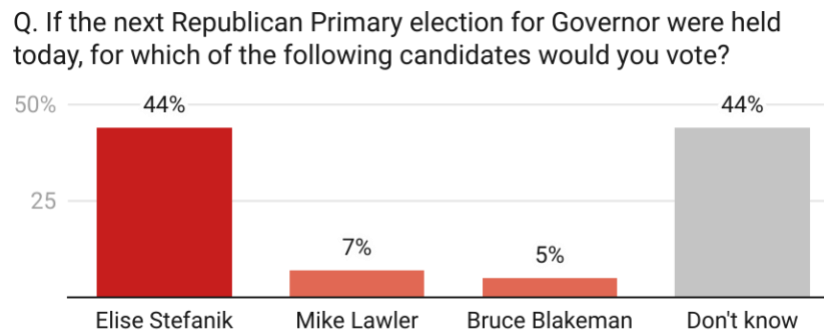**DATE**: April 27th, 2025

In a recently completed survey of 826 registered voters in New York (see methodology statement on last page), GrayHouse finds that should Congresswoman Elise Stefanik choose to enter the race for Governor, she would begin the Republican primary in a dominant position and offer the GOP its strongest opportunity to defeat Governor Kathy Hochul in the 2026 general election.

Governor Hochul enters the cycle facing clear warning signs, including a deeply negative job approval rating, significant vulnerability among Independents and working-class voters, and a weak standing among Democrats themselves.

Elise Stefanik Dominates GOP Primary Field, Leading By Over 30 Points

If Elise Stefanik were to run for Governor of New York, she would immediately become the frontrunner in the Republican field, capturing **44%** of GOP primary voters—far ahead of Mike Lawler (**7%**) and Bruce Blakeman (**5%)**.

Q. If the next Republican Primary election for Governor were held today, for which of the following candidates would you vote?

Elise Stefanik: 44% — Mike Lawler: 7% — Bruce Blakeman: 5% — Don't know: 44%

Stefanik has a clear advantage in image among Republican voters, with a net favorability of +47 (**56%** favorable, **9%** unfavorable)—putting her in a more positively defined position than Lawler (**+28**) and Blakeman (**+18**). She also maintains a positive net favorability of **+10** with Independents, compared to **+2** for Lawler and -**1** for Blakeman.
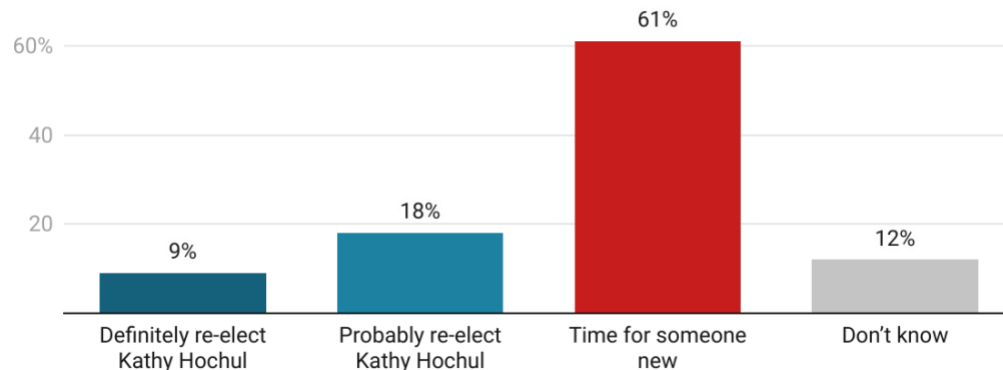
Additionally, Stefanik has significantly higher statewide recognition (**69%**) compared to Lawler (**58%**) and Blakeman (**36%**), positioning her uniquely to quickly consolidate Republican support.

Red Flags Abound for Governor Hochul

Governor Kathy Hochul faces increasing vulnerabilities entering the 2026 cycle, underscored by negative job approval ratings and widespread voter dissatisfaction:

- **61%** of voters statewide say it's "time for someone new," including an overwhelming **75%** of Independents and even **34%** of Democrats.

Q. If the 2026 election for Governor of New York were held today, would you vote to re-elect Kathy Hochul or do you think it's time for someone new?
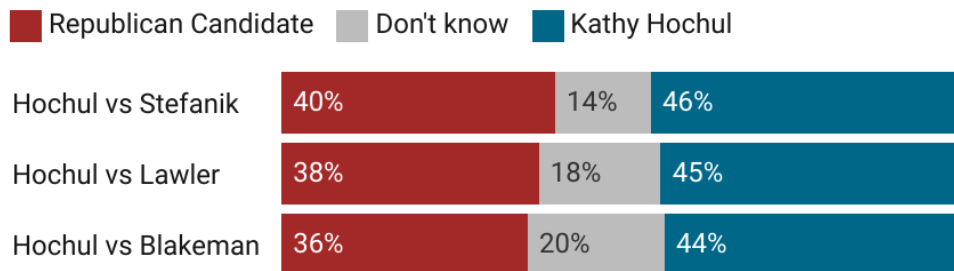

- Hochul's net job approval rating is deeply underwater at -**18** overall (36% approve / 55% disapprove). Among Independents, her net approval is even worse at **-35** (23% approve / 58% disapprove).
    - Another sign for concern is that President Trump's approval rating is currently higher than Hochul's at **-12** (43% approve / 56% disapprove).

- Among Democrats, Hochul secures only **24%** support in a primary ballot test, with an alarming **55%** undecided—a clear indicator of weak enthusiasm within her party base.

- Nearly half (**49%**) of New York voters—and a **+27**-point margin among Independents—say Hochul's political views are "too extreme" for the state.

Stefanik Offers Republicans Their Best Path Against Hochul as Democrat's Grip on New York Loosens

Polling shows that if Elise Stefanik chooses to run for Governor, she would give Republicans their strongest opportunity to defeat Kathy Hochul in 2026.

Q. If the 2026 New York gubernatorial election were held today, who would you vote for if the candidates were…

	Republican Candidate	Don't know	Kathy Hochul
Hochul vs Stefanik	40%	14%	46%
Hochul vs Lawler	38%	18%	45%
Hochul vs Blakeman	36%	20%	44%

- Hochul leads Stefanik by only **6 points** (46% Hochul / 40% Stefanik) — the smallest margin of any Republican tested.
- Hochul leads Mike Lawler by **7 points** (45% Hochul / 38% Lawler) and Bruce Blakeman by **8 points** (44% Hochul / 36% Blakeman).
- Across all tested matchups, Hochul fails to reach 47% support—a warning sign for an incumbent in a blue state.

While New York remains a Democratic-leaning state, it has shifted noticeably to the right in recent years. In 2024, Harris won New York by just 13 points — the narrowest Democratic margin since 1992 — following Biden's and Clinton's 23-point victories.

Trump gained more than 600,000 votes in New York between 2016 and 2024, steadily cutting into Democratic margins across Long Island, the Hudson Valley, and Upstate. Even in New York City, Harris's margins fell compared to Biden and Clinton, with significantly lower turnout and weaker Democratic performance in traditionally strong areas like the Bronx and Queens. Against this backdrop, Hochul enters the 2026 cycle in a more challenging environment than previous Democratic incumbents.

General Election Survey Demographics

Gender	Count	Percent
Male	293	49%
Female	304	51%

Education	Count	Percent
Less than 4-year degree	351	59%
4-Year Degree	246	41%

Age Group	Count	Percent
18-29	35	6%
30-39	78	13%
40-49	84	14%
50-64	168	28%
65+	232	39%

Race/Ethnicity	Count	Percent
White	363	61%
Hispanic	90	15%
Asian	60	10%
Black	72	12%
Other	12	2%

Party Identification	Count	Percent
Republican	155	26%
Democrat	249	42%
Independent/Other	193	32%

Region	Count	Percent
Upstate New York	179	30%
NYC	167	31%
Long Island	119	20%
Western New York	54	9%
Lower Hudson Valley	60	10%

2024 Vote	Count	Percent
Trump	239	40%
Harris	299	50%
Someone else	12	2%
Did not vote	48	8%

Methodology

Interview Dates	April 22 – 24, 2025
Target Population	Registered voters in New York State (n = 826), including a Republican-primary subsample of 400 registered Republicans. The GOP sample was obtained through an oversample of 226 Republicans not included in the general-election (GE) base of n = 600.
Number of respondents	**826 total registered voters** 600 RV sample used for general-election questions 400 registered Republicans used for GOP-primary questions
Margin of error	± 4 ppt for the 600 GE sample; ± 5 ppt for the 400 GOP-primary sample (higher for subgroups).
Sampling Method	Mixed-mode survey: 60 % live interviewer calls to cellphones and 40 % SMS text-to-web. Voters were contacted at random from a sample derived from a New York voter file appended with consumer data. Strata (and corresponding quota targets) were set on: Gender, age, party registration, educational attainment, region, and 2024 presidential vote history ensuring proportional representation to registered voters in New York.
Weighting	The final sample was weighted to registered-voter parameters for gender (self-report preferred; interviewer or voter-file fallback), age, party registration (self-identified only; leaners excluded), education, region, 2024 presidential vote, and primary-vote participation.
Survey Modes	60% live call to cell & 40% SMS text-to-web

Contact Landon Wall at Landon@grayhouse.com with any questions about this memo