

To: Interested Parties

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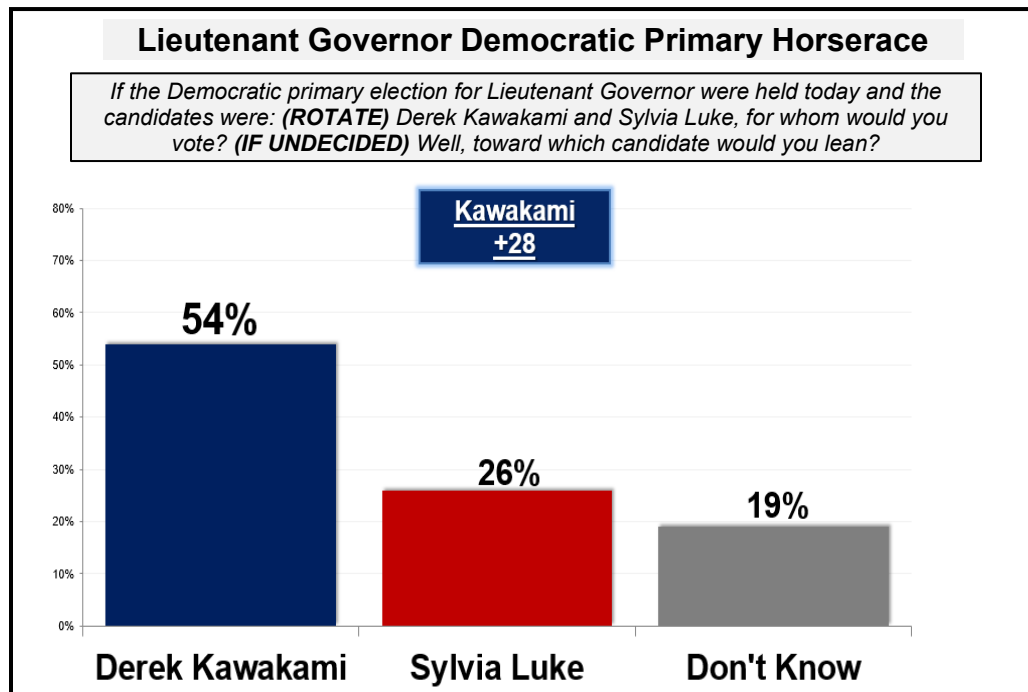
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■ Poll Shows Derek Kawakami with Commanding Lead in Race for Lieutenant Governor

A recent Tulchin Research statewide survey of likely Democratic primary voters in Hawaii finds Kauai Mayor Derek Kawakami entering the race for Lieutenant Governor in a commanding position. Kawakami begins the race with a decisive lead over incumbent Lieutenant Governor Sylvia Luke, driven by his strong personal favorability and compelling personal and local story, which closely align with voters' top concerns, particularly around the cost of living and housing. These advantages reflect both a well-defined and broadly appealing profile, as well as a clear connection to the issues shaping voters' views in this election, which position him strongly to win the Democratic primary. Detailed findings from the poll are outlined below.

Kawakami Holds a Commanding Early Lead in the Democratic Primary

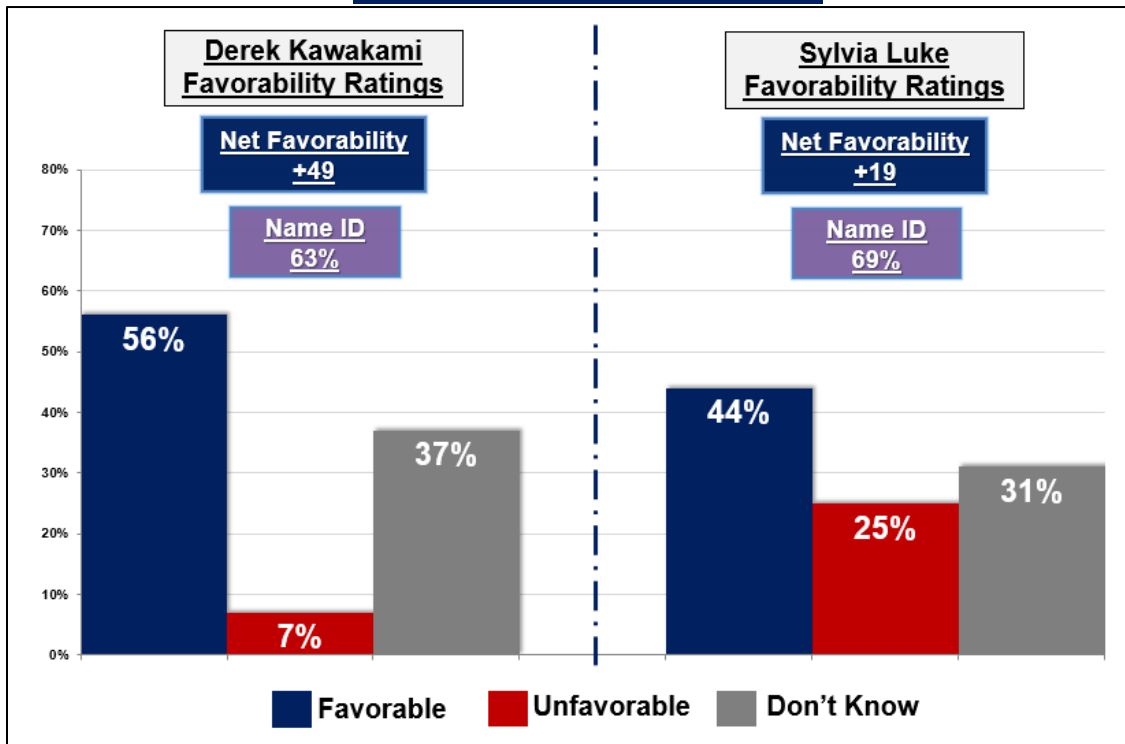
The poll shows Derek Kawakami beginning the race for Lieutenant Governor with a decisive advantage over Lieutenant Governor Sylvia Luke. In a two-way test of the Democratic primary, Kawakami earns 54% of the vote compared to 26% for Luke, giving him a substantial 28-point lead and more than double the incumbent's support, while just 19% of voters remain undecided.



Kawakami’s Lead Fueled by His Popularity

Kawakami’s current advantage in the horserace is better understood by looking at how voters view each candidate on a personal level. The poll shows Kawakami is relatively well known statewide (63% name ID) as Mayor of Kauai and may benefit from having a single media market in the state. He is also extremely popular entering the race with a significantly stronger favorability profile than Lieutenant Governor Sylvia Luke (69% name ID). Specifically, Kawakami is viewed favorably by a majority of voters (56%) while just 7% hold an unfavorable opinion of him, giving him an impressive +49 net favorability rating. By comparison, Luke’s standing is more mixed, with 44% viewing her favorably and 25% unfavorably.

Candidate Favorability Ratings



Kawakami’s Appeal Is Rooted in a Compelling Personal Story and Strong Record on Local Priorities

In an effort to better understand attitudes about the candidates, we tested candidate descriptions to see what motivates voters about the candidates. Kawakami’s strong standing in the race is driven by his favorable image statewide, especially his personal story and record that align closely with everyday concerns of Hawaii voters. Having served as a county councilmember, state legislator, and now as Mayor of Kauai, voters are attracted to the experience he brings across multiple levels of government. His background growing up working in his family’s grocery store reinforces an authentic connection to the challenges local families face, particularly around the rising cost of living, housing, tourism and the local economy. This also helps to position him as a candidate voters see as understanding both the pressures facing residents and how to deliver results. Below is the biographical description of Derek Kawakami we tested with voters.

Derek Kawakami Biographical Description

Derek Kawakami has served as a county councilmember, state legislator, and is now in his second term as Mayor of Kauai. He grew up working in his family's grocery store and understands the challenges local families face with today's high cost of living, including food, housing, and gas. As Mayor, he has taken action to make life more affordable—reducing health insurance costs for many workers and cutting property taxes for homeowners.

The themes below reflect more specific elements we tested to describe Kawakami that voters liked most, including his record on key issues and his agenda for addressing the state's most pressing challenges:

Tourism/Vacation Rentals

Cracked down on illegal vacation rentals, reducing them by 96 percent and freeing up housing for local residents.

Housing

Built more housing for local residents so working families can afford to stay in Hawaii.

Tax Fairness

Made the tax system fairer so large resorts and investors pay more and local homeowners pay less.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the poll shows Derek Kawakami entering the Democratic primary for Lieutenant Governor in a commanding position, anchored by a decisive lead and a strong, well-defined personal profile. His advantage is driven not only by higher favorability ratings, but also by a compelling personal local story and a clear, consistent focus on the issues that matter most to voters, particularly the cost of living and housing. Taken together, these dynamics position Kawakami as the clear favorite to win the Democratic primary and suggest he is well positioned to maintain and build on his advantage as the campaign progresses and more voters learn about his story.

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Survey Methodology: *The findings in this memo are based on a statewide survey of 800 likely Democratic primary voters in Hawaii, conducted March 25–31, 2026. The survey was administered using a multi-modal approach, including landline and cellphone interviews as well as online data collection via email and text-to-web. The margin of error for the full sample is ±3.5 percentage points.*

The sample was drawn to reflect the statewide Democratic primary electorate, and results were weighted to match expected turnout by key demographic characteristics, including age, gender, region, and ethnicity.

Tulchin Research Memo – HI Statewide Poll of Likely Democratic Primary Voters

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Tulchin Research is a leading national polling and strategic consulting firm with over four decades of experience conducting accurate and impactful public opinion research, including conducting more public opinion research in Hawaii since 2010 than any other pollster. Recently named Pollster of the Year® by the American Association of Political Consultants, our firm specializes in helping state and local governments and advocacy coalitions drive meaningful change for their communities through telephone surveys, online surveys, both in-person and online focus groups, on-line ad testing, modelling and other forms of public opinion research. Whether it is providing messaging guidance to help bring a once unknown federal candidate like U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders to the brink of the Presidential nomination, or helping to make change in local policy that increases opportunities for local working families, Tulchin Research has been there time and again to help our clients turn complex issues and data insights into actionable strategy that delivers results.