



POLITICS

Poll From Tali Farhadian Weinstein in Manhattan District-Attorney Race Is Criticized

Rivals say candidate conducted a ‘push poll’ spreading negative information about candidate Alvin Bragg; Farhadian Weinstein camp defends survey as standard



A poll commissioned by the campaign of Tali Farhadian Weinstein, who is running in the

Democratic primary for Manhattan district attorney, has raised concerns among rival candidates.

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By [Deanna Paul](#) and [Corinne Ramey](#)

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Manhattan voters began getting phone calls and texts from a pollster in recent days about the Democratic primary for district attorney. The questions quickly turned into a series of negative statements about [one of the leading candidates in the race, Alvin Bragg](#).

Another district attorney candidate, Tali Farhadian Weinstein, commissioned the poll, which asked voters to react to various attack lines against Mr. Bragg.

Ms. Farhadian Weinstein's spokeswoman said it wasn't surprising to see campaigns looking for feedback from voters.

But Mr. Bragg and other New York political figures say the survey appears to be a campaign tactic known as a “push poll,” which disseminates misleading information about a candidate in the guise of a legitimate poll.

While it’s common for candidates to spread negative information about opponents and to use polls to test out [messaging](#), a push poll is widely viewed as an underhanded tactic because of its false pretense.



The campaign of Alvin Bragg, the other leading candidate in the Manhattan DA contest, was alerted by another campaign about the content of the poll.

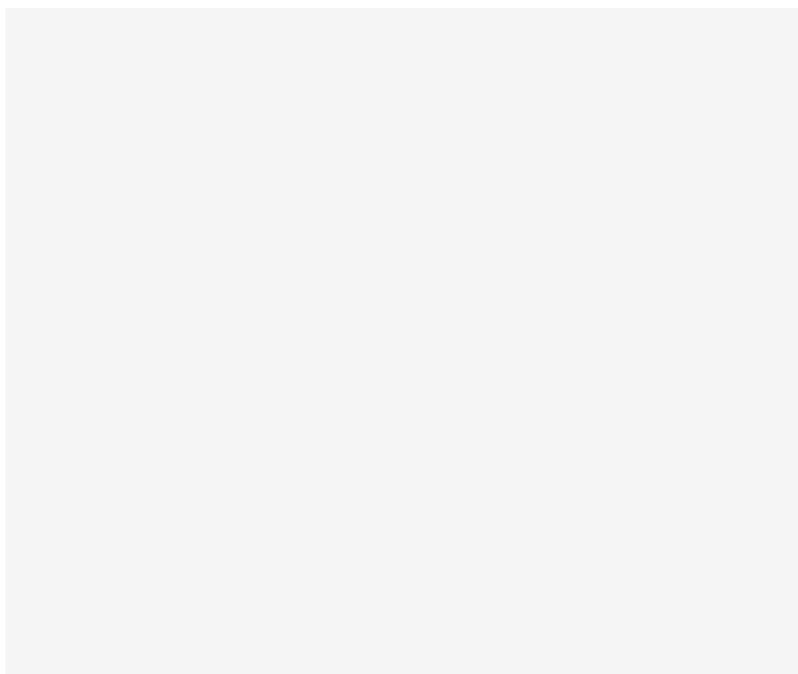
PHOTO: THALIA JUAREZ/THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Marc Landis, a New York State Democratic

Committeeman, said he was contacted by phone and text by the pollster last week and found it disturbing.

“It’s not a true poll,” Mr. Landis said. “I’m disappointed when that’s a direction that people take.”

People who told The Wall Street Journal they had been polled received it as early as June 1, after Mr. Bragg received the endorsement of the [New York Times](#), giving his campaign a boost in the final stretch.



The survey included questions that seemed designed to portray Mr. Bragg unfavorably compared with Ms. Farhadian Weinstein, the only other candidate who is substantively

mentioned in the poll. The two have [emerged as top contenders in the race](#).

“It’s sad and disturbing that a candidate, particularly one running for district attorney, would resort to deceptive, insidious push polling to smear their opponent in the campaign’s final stages,” said Richard Fife, spokesman for Mr. Bragg.

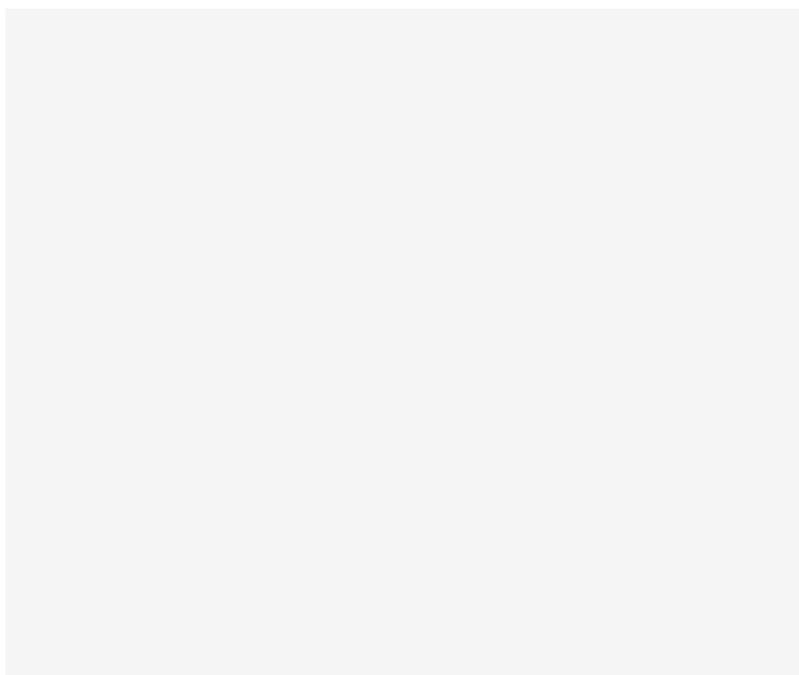
Jefrey Pollock, president of Global Strategy Group, said his firm had polled a small sample of people over a short time to test Ms. Farhadian Weinstein’s communications strategy, as other campaigns have done. The campaign said the poll reached 600 people.

“To call this a push poll is ridiculous,” Mr. Pollock said. “Testing various messaging, both positive and negative, to see what voters care about is standard.”

The survey comes during a [contentious period in the election to replace incumbent](#) Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus Vance Jr. , who isn’t seeking a fourth term. The [winner of the primary](#) will be the prohibitive favorite to win the general election in a heavily Democratic borough.

The Wall Street Journal viewed screenshots of the poll's online surveys.

The poll started by asking which of the eight candidates the voter favors, then narrowed to Ms. Farhadian Weinstein and Mr. Bragg, offering brief summaries of their experience and accomplishments.



Conducted both by phone and online, the poll said individuals were “randomly selected” to hear a series of negative statements about Mr. Bragg— and then asked whether each piece of information raised doubts about voting for him.

One question asked whether it was concerning that Mr. Bragg failed to speak out at the time when his boss, former New York Attorney

General Eric Schneiderman, was—as the poll described it—“disbarred for violently assaulting four women.”

Mr. Schneiderman’s [law license was suspended for a year](#) earlier this year. He [resigned abruptly as the state’s top law enforcement officer](#) in May 2018 after publication of a New Yorker article in which several women alleged he physically abused them.

Mr. Bragg, who worked in senior management under Mr. Schneiderman in 2018, [says he condemned Mr. Schneiderman’s behavior](#) and encouraged him to resign within hours of the news breaking.

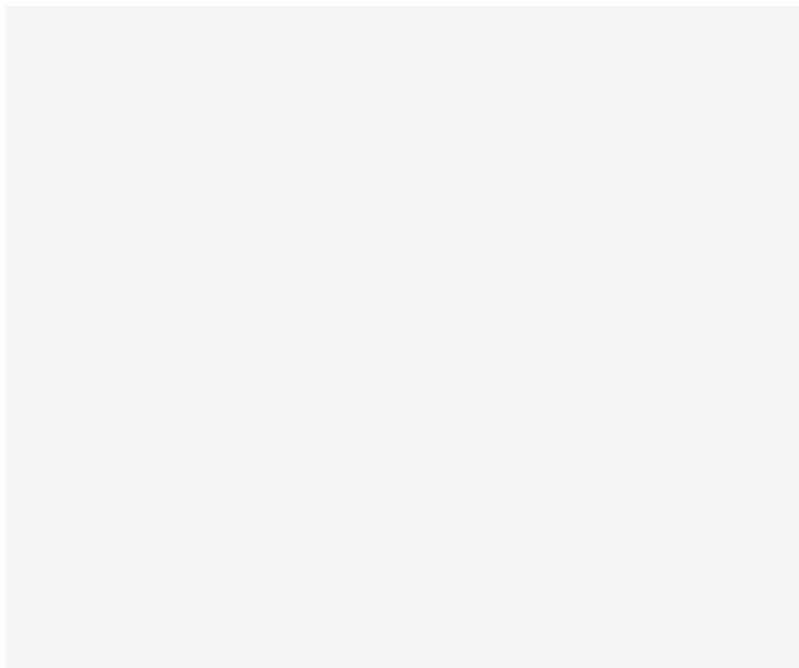
At several points, the survey asked if the voter had changed his or her mind. The poll concluded by asking “regardless of how you plan to vote, what concerns you most about voting for Alvin Bragg?”

Lee Miringoff, a veteran pollster and director of the Marist College Institute for Public Opinion, said the campaign seemed to be testing out messaging.

“They’re not trying to measure where the race currently stands as much as how to influence

the race and shape it,” he said.

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Craig Burnett, program director of the Kalikow School Poll at Hofstra University, said the survey doesn't have an obvious scientific value behind it.

“The extremely heavy dose of negative information at the end, and the follow up of ‘have you changed your mind now that you know all this stuff,’ is the hallmark of a push poll,” he said.

Some people said they received the survey via a text message link that identified the polling group as Research Opinions US. A website for Research Opinions, built on a WordPress blog,

lists a phone number that doesn't work. An address for the company, on a similar website, linked to a provider of offices, co-working and "virtual office space" in Buffalo, N.Y. Research Opinions didn't respond to a request for comment.

George Arzt, who works for another Manhattan district attorney candidate, Liz Crotty, received a call to take the poll. He and Mr. Landis were both bothered enough by the survey that they contacted the Bragg campaign about it.

"This type of activity can only be characterized as the underbelly of politics," Mr. Arzt said.

Manhattan District Attorney's Race

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