

POLL REPORT: 2021 ORLAND PARK MAYORAL RACE

This Chicago suburb is a cross-section of America. In 2017, conservative challenger Keith Pekau defeated longtime mayor Dan McLaughlin in an upset victory. In 2021, McLaughlin vastly outspent Pekau in an attempt to reclaim the village's top spot. But will it be enough? Read on to find out.

Victory Insights: Political Insights. Driven by Data.

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(A) Background: Orland Park Mayoral Race

If you visited Orland Park, a suburban village just south of Chicago, it would be hard to believe the quaint town is a hotbed for high-dollar elections, frenzied political attacks, and razor-close races. **But nevertheless, it is.**

Orland Park is a cross-section of suburban America. Its political leanings are complex, ever-changing, and sometimes even contradictory. The political landscape is treacherous, and candidates must tread carefully around landmines such as face masks, law enforcement, and Donald Trump. In 2016, when Trump achieved an upset victory with the help of rural and suburban America, it was a referendum on business-as-usual politics in favor of conservative populism.

In 2017, Orland Park followed suit. Dan McLaughlin, an ultra-moderate old-school Democrat, had been Orland Park Mayor for decades until a younger, more fiery, and more conservative businessman named Keith Pekau blew McLaughlin out of the water, winning by eight percentage points.

But then in 2020, something very different happened. Dan Lipinski, the Democratic Congressman for Orland Park and Illinois' third Congressional district, was successfully primaried by Democrat Marie Newman. Newman was a far more progressive splash of color against Lipinski's blue-dog backdrop. With this context alone, it seemed that Orland Park may have begun to shift leftwards once again. **This was soon proven false.**

November of 2020 solidified Orland Park as a red village. Not only did Donald Trump beat out Joe Biden in Orland Park, but Marie Newman lost the village to her Republican opponent by nearly eleven percentage points, despite winning the overall election. What's more, Orland Park voters overwhelmingly approved a term limits package that would outlaw career politicians in Orland Park's Village Hall.

Now, on April 6th, 2021, Orland Park will face another village-defining moment. Will "career politician" and old-school Democrat Dan McLaughlin's massive political spending be enough to defeat conservative firebrand Keith Pekau?

Read on to find out.



(B) Key Takeaways: Poll of Orland Park Voters

Just days before the April 6th election, Victory Insights conducted a poll among Orland Park voters to assess the state of the mayoral race. After weighing the results to reflect expected turnout, here are a few of the key findings:

- **Despite more than half of respondents being registered Democrats, fewer than 1 in 3 still identified as such.** This shift is emblematic of the ideological transformation Orland Park has undergone in the last few years. *(See Section C)*
- **The race between Keith Pekau and Dan McLaughlin remains too close to call.** The poll found Pekau and McLaughlin locked 50-50, with Pekau holding a miniscule advantage. We are confident that the race will be decided by percentage points in the single digits. *(See Sections D-F)*
- **Pekau won voters over due to his conservative values and his stances on crime, public safety, and the economy.** Nearly 50% of Pekau’s supporters listed his “values and beliefs” as the deciding factor when voting for mayor. *(See Sections G-I)*
- **McLaughlin’s supporters value his experience and COVID-19 policies.** Despite Pekau’s incumbent status, more than 90% of respondents who listed “public service experience” as their most important deciding factor cast their vote for McLaughlin. *(See Sections G-I)*
- **Pekau and McLaughlin both have paths to victory.** McLaughlin’s campaign has made a concerted effort to turn out young progressive voters, which could potentially be enough to turn the tide in his favor. On the other hand, Pekau could benefit greatly from high Election Day turnout. *(See Section J)*

Keep reading to see the numbers and more.



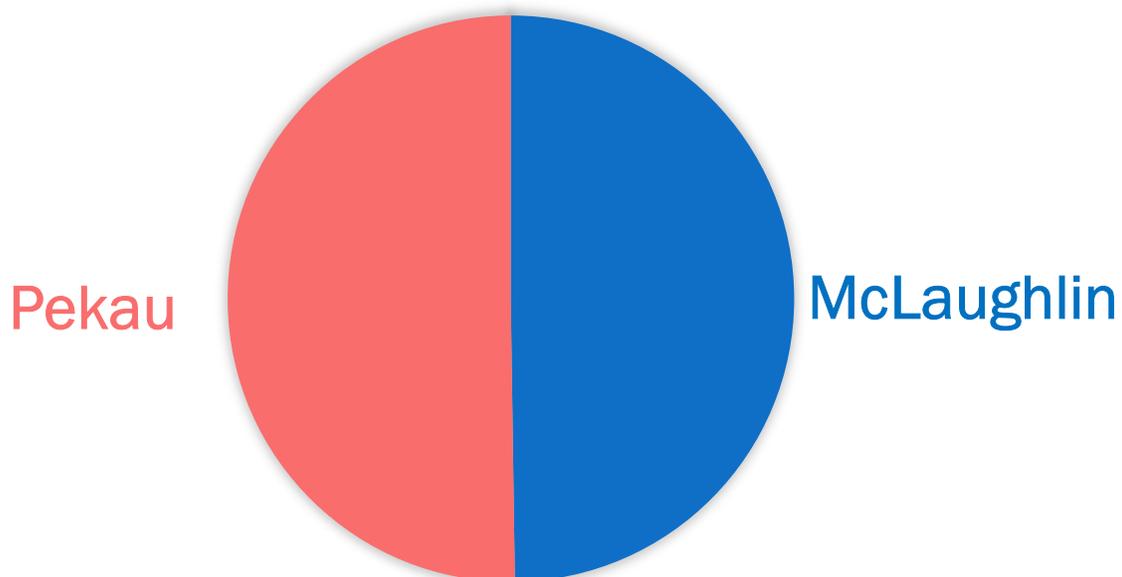
(C) Shifting Party Lines in Orland Park

We compared respondents' voter registration files to their responses regarding which political party they most closely identify with. As recent election results have reflected, Orland Park's voters are shifting away from the Democratic Party and taking more middle-of-the-road and conservative postures.

I am a registered...		I identify as a...		Margin
Democrat	55%	Democrat	33%	-22%
Republican	37%	Republican	44%	+7%
Independent/Other	8%	Independent/Other	23%	+15%

(D) Razor-Thin Margins: Orland Park Mayoral Race

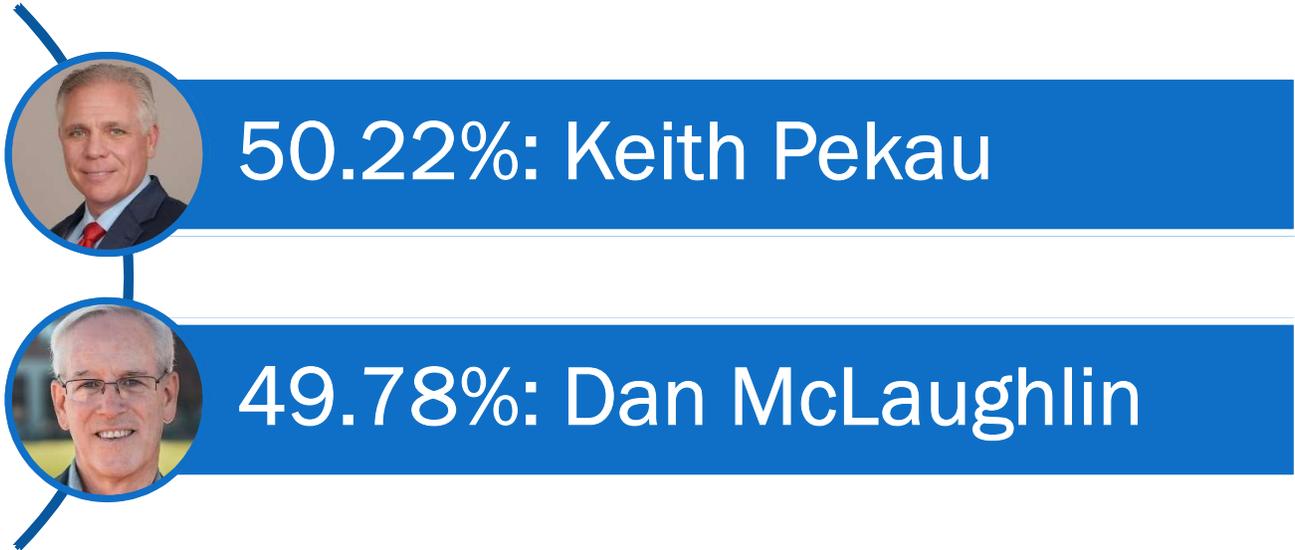
Pekau's 0.4% lead is virtually indistinguishable when the race is viewed in typical pie-chart fashion. The probabilistic nature of polling means that Pekau's lead has little statistical significance – but that doesn't mean we can't analyze it.





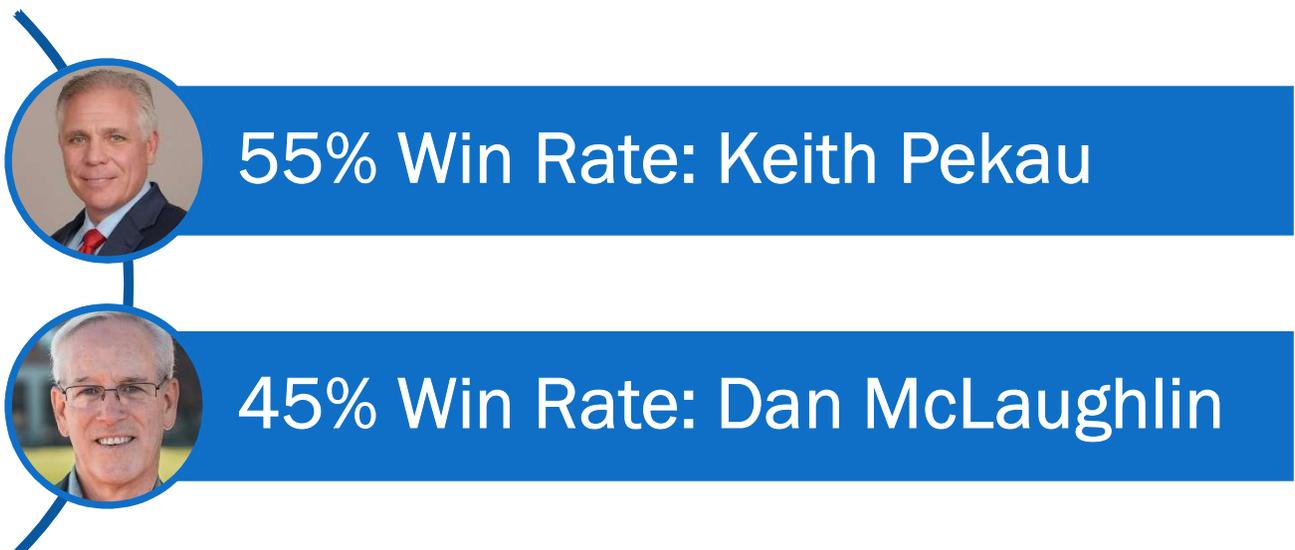
(E) The Raw Numbers: Orland Park Mayoral Race

We cannot stress enough that Pekau's lead is well within the poll's margin of error. We have only 52.6% statistical confidence that Pekau is favored to win. However, we'll provide the facts and figures and allow you to draw conclusions for yourself.



(F) 10,000 Simulations: Who Wins the Most?

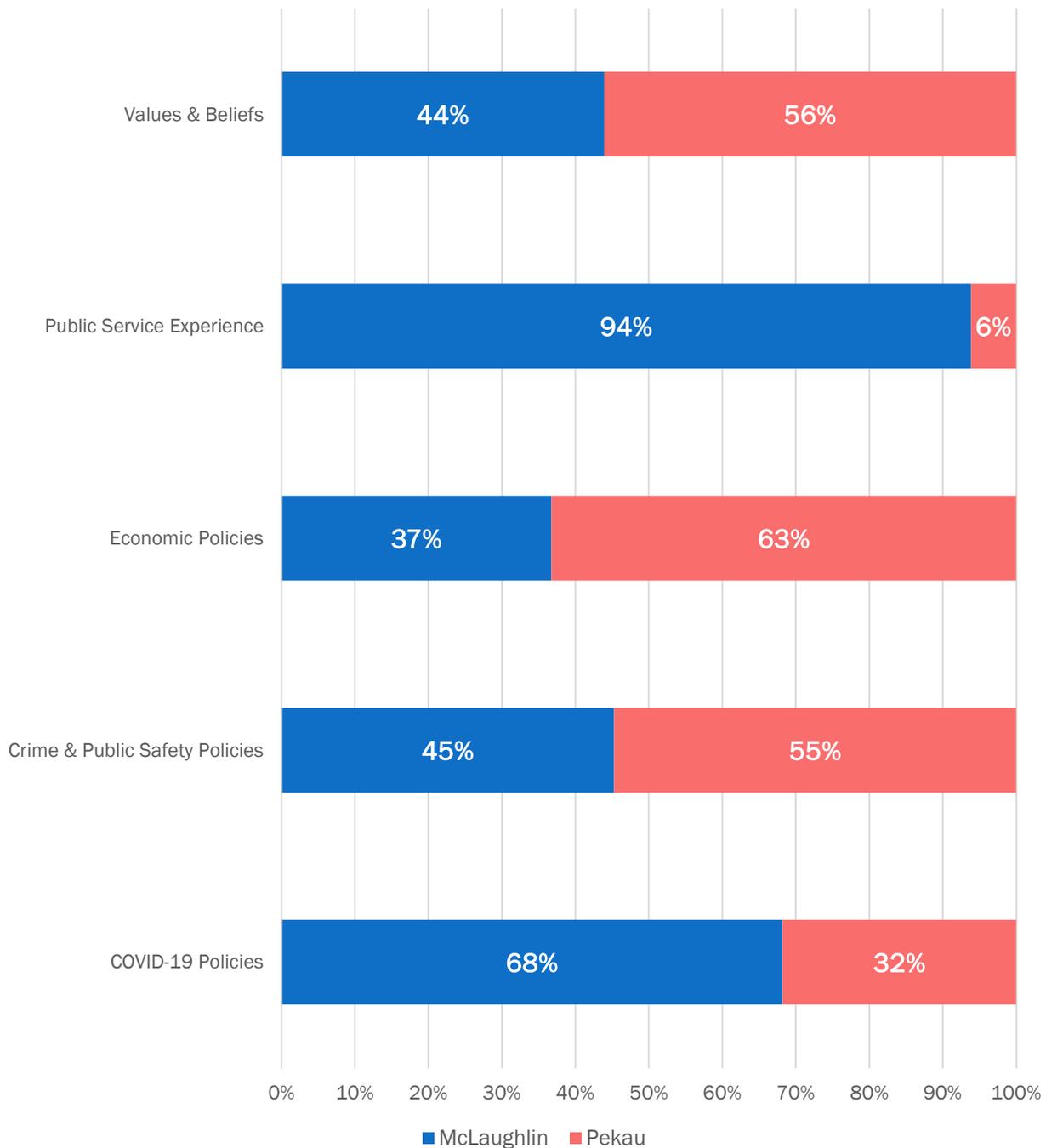
Using polling and turnout data, we simulated the race 10,000 times. Pekau won the simulated race 55% of the time, while McLaughlin won the other 45% of the time. Again, these numbers reflect an extremely close race.





(G) Deciding Factors: COVID-19, Crime, Values, Etc.

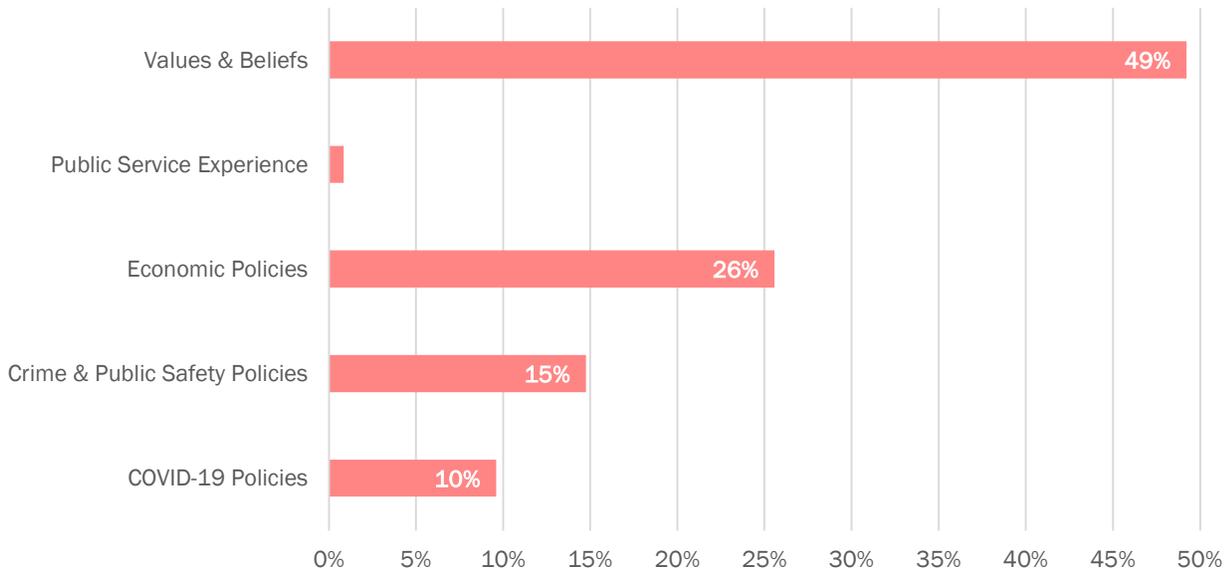
Poll respondents were asked which of these five factors was most important when deciding who to vote for. The following chart shows which candidate respondents chose most often, based on which factor they considered most important.





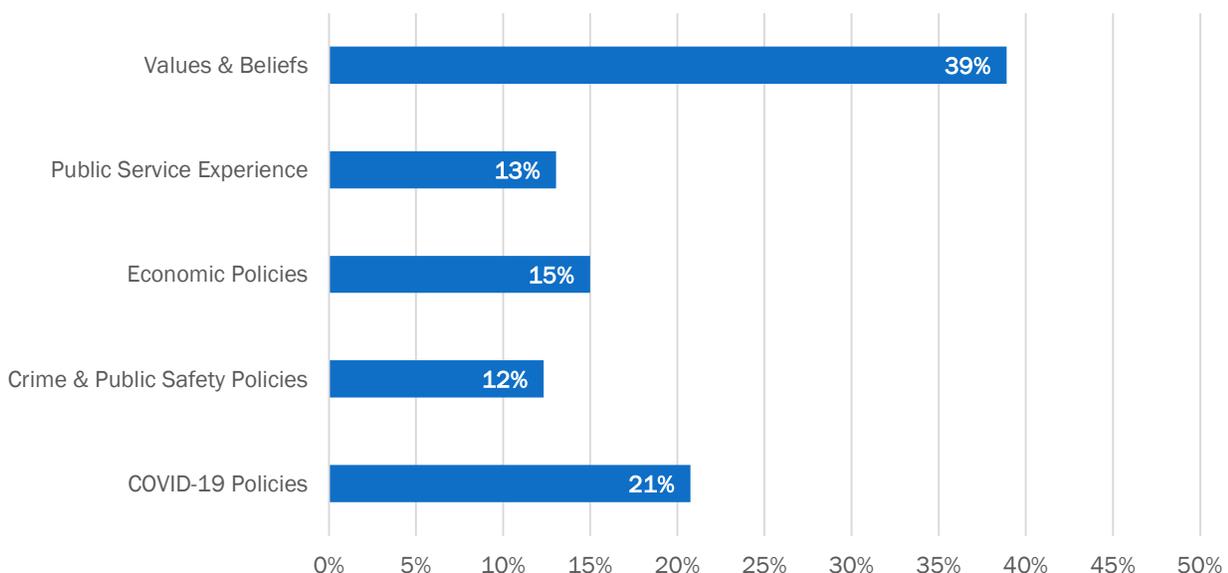
(H) Why Pekau?

Pekau supporters were asked which of these five factors was most important when deciding who to vote for. The predominance of “values and beliefs” (compared to McLaughlin) reflects how Pekau clearly displayed his conservatism, while McLaughlin shifted between progressive and moderate.



(I) Why McLaughlin?

The following chart shows the same information as above, but this time for McLaughlin. Although McLaughlin spent the majority of his campaign talking about COVID-19, the virus was the deciding factor for only 21% of his voters.



(J) Each Candidate's Paths to Victory

Each of the following scenarios are considered on a ceteris paribus basis, meaning that the effect of each is determined under the assumption that all other factors remain constant. Thus, if several of the scenarios occur, the effects would be compounded.

Pekau's Paths to Victory

Those who list economic policies as their most important deciding factor turn out at a rate 30% higher than anticipated due to financial woes.



Pekau's lead among economically-focused voters would give him a 0.75% boost, enough for a nearly 2% lead over McLaughlin.

The famous "Trump Bump" on Election Day causes overall self-identified Republican turnout to rise 15% higher than anticipated.



Pekau's strengthened Republican base would gain him just over 1.5%, giving him a more than 3.5% lead over McLaughlin.

All the buzz surrounding recent political events causes voters who didn't even vote in the 2018 general election to turn out at a rate 10% higher than anticipated.



Nontraditional voters favor Pekau, so this phenomenon would give Pekau a 0.3% boost, enough for a 1% lead.



McLaughlin's Paths to Victory

McLaughlin's extensive efforts among younger voters increases youth turnout (ages 18-29) by 80% compared to 2017.



McLaughlin's lead among younger voters would give him a 0.23% boost, pushing him just over the 50% mark.

Those who list COVID-19 policies as their most important deciding factor turn out at a rate 30% higher than anticipated due to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis.



McLaughlin's advantage among COVID-19-focused voters would gain him 0.8%, enough to give him a 1.2% lead over Pekau.

Self-identified Democrats turn out at a rate 10% higher than anticipated due to the One Orland Party's more progressive stances.



McLaughlin's dominance among self-identified Democrats would give him a 1.1% boost to 50.95%, a comfortable 1.9% ahead of Pekau.



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