Opinions of public schools, Clausen dip

Capitol News Bureau

Louisiana voters have a more positive view of their major state university than they have of their local public schools, according to a poll commissioned by the Morning Advocate and State-Times.

The results also show that voters’ opinions about their chief state school officer, Education Superintendent Tom Clausen, have dipped significantly since he ran into legal and political problems last year.

The poll surveyed 907 registered voters about their attitudes on Louisiana education.

Voters were asked: “Do you think your local public schools are getting better, getting worse, staying about the same or haven’t you thought much about them?” Nineteen percent said their public schools are getting better, while 32 percent think they are getting worse. Another 36 percent said the quality of the schools remains about the same, and 14 percent said they hadn’t thought much about the subject.

The perception of improvement in public schools is down somewhat from the December 1984 poll, in which 24 percent of respondents said their schools were getting better, 27 percent said schools were getting worse, and 39 percent said they were staying the same.

In the most recent poll, north Louisiana respondents expressed this view.

The December 1984 survey produced similar results — 31 percent said the university was better, 5 percent said it was worse, 31 percent said it was about the same and about a third of the voters said they did not know.

People from the New Orleans area, people under age 30, blacks and people in union households all expressed higher than average confidence in LSU’s improvement. By percentages of 36 to 38 percent, those four groups feel LSU is better than it was a decade ago.

The university’s image was lowest in the southeast part of the state, among people who graduated from college and those making over $45,000 a year.

Clausen’s overall approval rating is significantly lower than it was in the December 1984 survey. That poll gave Clausen a total favorable rating of 40 percent, a not-too-favorable rating of 13 percent and an unfavorable rating of 9 percent.

Since then, the Legislature voted to allow a state board, rather than the state’s voters, to choose the education superintendent, thus denying Clausen the chance to run for re-election when his term expires in 1988.

Clausen also faces criminal charges alleging public payroll fraud, malfeasance and obstruction of justice in connection with an investigation into personnel practices in the Department of Education.

Poll

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their public school system.

Poll participants were asked whether their opinion of Clausen, listed in a group with other public officials, is very favorable, favorable, not too favorable or unfavorable.

Clausen got a favorable mark from 26 percent of the respondents, including the 2 percent who gave him a very favorable rating. The not-too-favorable category totals 16 percent, and 23 percent of the voters had an outright unfavorable opinion of the superintendent.

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