

Poll: 8th Congressional District Republican candidate Fincher holds lead

By Bartholomew Sullivan
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WASHINGTON – Stephen Fincher, an 8th Congressional District Republican candidate, is nine points ahead of his closest GOP rivals, according to internal polling released by his campaign this afternoon.

Fincher, a cotton farmer from Crockett County, out-polls his rivals with 32 percent of Republican voters likely to show up to vote in the Aug. 5 primary, according to the memo from the Alexandria, Va.-based Tarrance Group.

Ronald Kirkland, a medical doctor from Jackson, would take 23 percent of the vote and Shelby County Commissioner and medical doctor George Flinn would get 21 percent in the poll of 300 likely voters questioned on June 28 and 29. Twenty-two percent of those polled are listed as undecided.

Kirkland spokesman Brent Leatherwood said the poll confirms that Fincher “is losing ground on a daily basis,” since his polling claimed a 25-point lead in mid-April. Kirkland’s campaign came out with a television ad today in which he blasts Flinn for his votes for spending as a county commissioner and Fincher for receiving “millions of dollars in government subsidies.”

Flinn campaign manager Paul Ciaramitaro said the poll numbers reflect “a tightening race.” He said Kirkland’s ad is an attempt to smear Flinn with the votes of the entire commission, adding that Flinn has never voted for a tax increase.

Fincher, who appeared to stumble after reports of his receipt of farm subsidy payments and record of voting in Democratic primaries as recently as this year, picked up the endorsement of Tennessee Right to Life on Tuesday. Last week he was named a “Young Gun” by the National Republican Congressional Committee, meaning he can count on it for financial support.

Fincher’s spokesman Matt McCullough said: “After withstanding a barrage of misleading attacks from Dr. Kirkland’s campaign and being outspent by our wealthy opponents at a rate of 6-to-1, Stephen’s commanding lead reflects a solid base of support with grassroots conservatives.”

Whoever wins the August primary will face state Sen. Roy Herron, D-Dresden, who announced earlier this week that he is sitting on \$1.2 million after raising \$350,000 in the three months ending June 30.

If elected, Fincher, a high school graduate running against men with advanced degrees, would be among a small number of members of Congress without a college degree. The Office of the House Historian confirmed today that there are currently just 32 lawmakers in Congress without four-year bachelor's degrees. They include Zach Wamp, R-Tenn., currently a candidate for governor.