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RESEARCH GROUP

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Jeff Horwitt and Mark Bunge
DATE: October 5, 2018
RE: Key Findings from Polling in IL-6

This memorandum outlines the key findings from a telephone survey among a cross section of 400 likely general election voters in Illinois's 6th congressional district conducted on behalf of Casten for Congress. The survey was in the field from September 29 to October 1, 2018, includes both cell and landline interviews, and has an overall margin of error of ± 4.9 percentage points.

Summary: Our latest poll shows Sean Casten expanding his lead over Peter Roskam to five points (49% Casten, 44% Roskam), up from a three-point lead in early September. Roskam's job approval and personal ratings remain in negative territory, and his electoral support has been mired in the mid-40s since our first poll in April. Meanwhile, Sean Casten is becoming better known and better liked with each passing day. Voters clearly have soured on Peter Roskam, and their attitudes are calcifying quickly. Millions of dollars spent trying to rebrand Roskam has done nothing to change voters' negative impressions of him. And efforts to tarnish Sean Casten with lies and distortions about his business record have failed, despite Roskam and outside groups sinking millions more on these attempts. Congressman Roskam's continued support for President Trump's divisive and unpopular agenda is proving disqualifying among the thoughtful, moderate voters in this district.

- 1. Sixth district voters remain negative to Roskam personally and professionally, and both ratings are getting worse.** Roskam's personal favorability is now net negative by 10 points, at just 30% positive and 40% negative, which is even worse than his 33% positive, 39% negative standing in early September. His job approval rating also has slipped several points over the past three weeks, from -1 (42% approve, 43% disapprove) to -6 (43% approve, 49% disapprove). Importantly, by two to one, voters are more likely to *strongly* disapprove (30%) of the job that Roskam is doing than to strongly approve (15%). Moreover, by two to one, voters also say that what they have heard about Peter Roskam in the past few weeks has made them less (37%) rather than more (19%) favorable toward him.
- 2. Sean Casten has successfully introduced himself to most voters and weathered the first waves of misleading negative attacks.** Today, three in four (75%) voters know Sean Casten, up from 62% in early September. And unlike Roskam, the more that voters get to know Sean Casten the more they like him, giving him personal ratings of 34% positive and 23% negative.

- 3. Donald Trump remains deeply unpopular in the 6th district, and Roskam's unwavering support for the president may prove to be the anchor that sinks his campaign.** A clear majority of 6th district voters continue to view Donald Trump negatively (56% negative, 35% positive), which has been a constant over the past six months. This has significant bearing on the congressional race, as voters' top impression of Roskam in an open-ended question is that he is too close to Trump and supports Trump more than 90% of the time. It is no surprise, then, that voters give Sean Casten a 14-point advantage over Roskam on being independent-minded and not just following a party line—a critical metric in the middle-of-the-road 6th district.
- 4. With five weeks until Election Day, this race is trending in the wrong direction and quickly slipping out of reach for Peter Roskam.** Not only has Roskam been stuck at 44% in the trial heat since Labor Day, he has never broken 46% support or held more than a bare one-point advantage since April, even when Sean Casten was unknown to most voters.
- 5. A final red flag for Peter Roskam is that Sean Casten has a significant advantage in voter enthusiasm and commitment—critical factors in mid-term elections.** Casten holds a full 13-point advantage over Roskam (54% to 41%) among voters who say they are certain to vote in November. And just 47% of Roskam's voters say they support him strongly (which is actually *down* nine points since September), while nearly three in five (58%) Casten voters say they support Casten strongly.

Bottom line: While this race remains close, both our polling and recent fundraising (Casten outraised Roskam by two to one in the third quarter) show that momentum is on Sean Casten's side and that the race is quickly slipping away from Peter Roskam. However, it would be foolish to underestimate an entrenched incumbent like Roskam. Despite their poor ROI thus far, we fully expect special interests to continue to support Roskam as payback for the billions of dollars in corporate tax breaks he handed out in last year's tax bill. Given Roskam's unpopularity and weakness, they undoubtedly will spend the next month trying to tear down Sean Casten, and their only chance of success is if Casten does not have the resources to answer their desperate negative attacks.