

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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EDITOR'S NOTE: ATTENTION POLITICAL EDITORS, Rutgers-Eagleton Poll Director David Redlawsk may be contacted at 319-400-1134, 732-932-9384, ext. 285, or redlawsk@rutgers.edu. Visit <http://eagletonpoll.blogspot.com> for more commentary.

DEMOCRATS REMAIN STRONG IN NJ CONGRESSIONAL POLL

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J – New Jersey voters seem to be moving toward Democrats in a statewide test of generic congressional candidates, according to a new Rutgers-Eagleton Poll released today. Among registered voters, 45 percent say they would vote for a Democrat for Congress, up from 38 percent in August and 33 percent in February. Republican support has stayed consistent, at 33 percent now, compared to 29 percent in August and 31 percent in February. At the same time, voters have become more certain of their choices, with only 14 percent “don’t know,” down from 25 percent in August.

Applying a “likely voter” screen – defined as those who voted in the last two elections and are generally enthusiastic about voting this time – does not change results very much. Among likely voters, 47 percent say they would vote for a Democrat and 36 percent for a Republican, while 4 percent prefer a third party and 12 percent do not make a choice.

“When we test by party, eight of 10 voters support their own party, and there are simply more Democrats than Republicans in New Jersey,” said David Redlawsk, director of the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll and professor of political science at Rutgers University. “Independents continue to lean Republican as they have all year, but the margin has dropped from 11 points in August to five points. And in any case, independents are much more likely to stay home in an off-year election.”

The poll of 830 registered New Jersey voters was conducted September 23 to 26. The registered voter sample has a margin of error of +/-3.4 percentage points. Generic vote questions were asked of random half samples, which have a margin of error of +/- 4.8 percentage points. Results do not apply to specific districts but give a sense of the overall mood of the state.

Support for incumbents vs. challengers depends on the question

To test attitudes toward incumbent members of Congress, half of those polled were asked if they would vote for a generic Republican versus a Democrat, while the other half were asked if

they would vote for their current representative or a challenger.

While supporting their party, voters are more uncertain when it comes to supporting their representative. Registered voters favor their current congressperson by only one percentage point, 32 percent to 31 percent; another 24 percent are undecided and 13 percent say they would not vote. Among “likely voters” only, incumbents are ahead, 35 percent to 33 percent. Results are essentially unchanged from August, when generic incumbents held a 30 percent to 28 percent lead over challengers among registered voters, with 31 percent don’t know.

“We have consistently seen that voters readily support their own party in a generic ballot test,” said Redlawsk. “But they are much less sure if they support their ‘current congressman’ when they are not given a party cue. If voters vote by party, incumbents are generally safe. If they enter the voting booth in a ‘throw the bums out’ mood, some races could be closer than expected.”

Voters in a relatively sour mood, but give Democrats another chance

New Jersey registered voters match the mood of the nation: half think the state is on the wrong track, while only 40 percent think it is going in the right direction. Fifty-eight percent say thinking about the government in Washington makes them angry. New Jerseyans also are less than positive about both Democrats and Republicans in Congress. Forty-four percent of registered voters have a favorable view of Democrats in Congress, while only 33 percent feel the same about Republicans. While both parties have gained six points since August, Democrats are in a stronger position, with only 39 percent holding an unfavorable view, versus 50 percent for Republicans.

Reflecting their feelings about the parties and the generic ballot test, 54 percent of Garden Staters think Democrats should be “given more time to solve the country’s problems” while only 34 percent say “it is time to elect Republicans to take charge in Congress.”

In Democratic districts, Democratic margin increases as voters decide

Across current Democratic congressional districts, 47 percent of registered voters would vote for a generic Democrat compared to 31 percent for a Republican, while 15 percent of voters living in Democratic districts are still undecided. This is an increase in support for both parties since August when 41 percent of registered voters living in Democratic districts supported a Democrat and 28 percent supported a Republican.

Support for incumbents in these districts is 15 points lower when the question is asked

about supporting “your current congressman” and not including political party. Among registered voters living in a Democratic district, only 32 percent say that they would vote for their current representative, while 31 percent favor a challenger. At the same time, when party is not included, 24 percent of voters are still undecided, and 13 percent say they would not vote. Support for incumbents in Democratic districts is about the same among likely voters who favor their current representative over a challenger by a 36 percent to 32 percent.

Republican Districts remain closer

Across all Republican-held districts, 38 percent of registered voters would vote for a generic Republican, while 42 percent would vote for a generic Democratic candidate; an increase of one point for Democrats since August. Republicans pick up four points among likely voters, with 42 percent siding with the Republican and 44 percent the Democrat. Another 5 percent would vote for a third party candidate and 7 percent are undecided. Likely voters in Republican districts are more certain about their choices than those voters living in Democratic districts (13 percent undecided).

Framing the question as incumbent versus challenger makes some difference across all Republican-held districts. Put this way, 32 percent of registered voters in these districts would vote to re-elect their current congressman, while 32 percent say they would vote for a challenger. As with Democratic districts, many more say they are undecided when party is not included: 21 percent are undecided, and 15 percent say they would not vote.

“While it would appear Republican incumbents face a tougher electorate than Democrats in New Jersey, this is mostly due to the aggregate nature of our statewide polling,” said Redlawsk. “We have fewer respondents in the five Republican districts than the eight Democratic districts, so we must be much more tentative with the numbers here. At this point there is no reason to believe any Republican incumbents in New Jersey are actually in trouble.”

Independents voters favoring Republicans, challengers

Independent registered voters are more supportive of generic Republican congressional candidates than Democrats. When asked if they would vote for a Democrat or Republican for Congress, 25 percent pick the Republican, 20 percent the Democrat, and 16 percent prefer another candidate. But 35 percent of independent voters are undecided, and 5 percent say that they will not vote. This shows an increase in the number of independents preferring a third party candidate, as well as an increase in support of Democratic candidates from August.

When framed in terms of voting for a current incumbent or a challenger, independents are riding the anti-incumbency wave along with their partisan counterparts: 30 percent say that they would support a challenger in a congressional race, while only 24 percent would favor an incumbent. Another 30 percent have not yet made up their minds, and 16 percent say they would not vote.

Partisans are paying attention

Republican and Democratic likely voters are following election news much more closely than independents. Among likely Republican voters, 46 percent say they are following news “very closely” along with 44 percent of likely Democratic voters. But only 31 percent of independents report that they are following the election news “very closely.”

Questions and tables follow on the next page

**Rutgers-Eagleton Poll September 23-26, 2010
Questions and Tables**

The questions covered in the release of October 1, 2010 are listed below. Column percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Q. There will be an election for US Congress in November. Please rate your level of enthusiasm about voting in this election on a scale from zero to ten, where zero means you're not at all enthusiastic about voting and ten means you're extremely enthusiastic about voting this year. You can use any number from zero to ten, the higher the number the more enthusiastic you are.

Not Enthusiastic (0-3)	14%
Moderately Enthusiastic (4-7)	39%
Very Enthusiastic (8-10)	47%
N=	827

CONGRESSIONAL BALLOT TESTS. RANDOMLY ASSIGN TO EITHER VERSION A (PARTY BALLOT) OR VERSION B (INCUMBENT/CHALLENGER BALLOT).

[VERSION A]

Q. If the election for Congress were today would you vote for the Republican, the Democrat, a third party candidate, or would you not vote?

Registered Voters

	Sep 2010	Aug 2010	Feb 2010
Republican	33%	29%	31%
Democrat	45%	38%	33%
Third party	5%	4%	7%
Would not vote	3%	4%	10%
Don't Know	14%	25%	20%
N=	415	353	403

Likely Voters

	Sep 2010
Republican	36%
Democrat	47%
Third party	4%
Would not vote	1%
Don't Know	12%
N=	334

*New Jersey Congressional Election—September 2010
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll*

Registered Voters

	Lives in Dem CD Sept 2010	Lives in Rep CD Sept 2010	Lives in Dem CD Aug 2010	Lives in Rep CD Aug 2010
Republican	31%	38%	28%	31%
Democrat	47%	42%	41%	34%
Third party	4%	7%	4%	5%
Would not vote	3%	4%	4%	1%
Don't Know	15%	9%	23%	29%
N=	246	122	224	122

Likely Voters

	Lives in Dem CD	Lives in Rep CD
Republican	33%	42%
Democrat	48%	44%
Third party	4%	5%
Would not vote	1%	2%
Don't Know	13%	7%
N=	176	115

Registered Voters

	Dem	Ind	Rep
Republican	8%	25%	84%
Democrat	80%	19%	9%
Third party	2%	16%	0%
Would not vote	3%	5%	3%
Don't Know	7%	35%	4%
N=	195	104	112

Likely Voters

	Dem	Ind	Rep
Republican	6%	32%	88%
Democrat	83%	23%	6%
Third party	2%	13%	0%
Would not vote	2%	1%	1%
Don't Know	8%	31%	5%
N=	161	75	96

[VERSION B]

Q. If the election for Congress were today would you vote for your current Congressman, a challenger running against him, or would you not vote?

Registered Voters

	Sept 2010	Aug 2010	Feb 2010
Current Congressman	32%	30%	32%
Challenger	31%	28%	25%
Would not vote	13%	11%	17%
Don't Know	24%	31%	27%
N=	407	367	457

Likely Voters

Current Congressman	35%
Challenger	33%
Would not vote	8%
Don't Know	24%
N =	319

Registered Voters

	Lives in Dem CD Sept 2010	Lives in Rep CD Sept 2010	Lives in Dem CD Aug 2010	Lives in Rep CD Aug 2010
Current Congressman	33%	32%	29%	33%
Challenger	31%	32%	30%	23%
Would not vote	12%	15%	11%	12%
Don't Know	24%	21%	30%	33%
N=	229	154	233	129

Likely Voters

	Lives in Dem CD	Lives in Rep CD
Current Congressman	36%	34%
Challenger	32%	35%
Would not vote	5%	10%
Don't Know	27%	20%
N=	175	128

*New Jersey Congressional Election—September 2010
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll*

Registered Voters

	Dem	Ind	Rep
Current Congressman	37%	24%	34%
Challenger	28%	30%	37%
Would not vote	14%	16%	9%
Don't Know	21%	30%	20%
N =	170	125	109

Likely Voters

	Dem	Ind	Rep
Current Congressman	41%	27%	35%
Challenger	29%	33%	40%
Would not vote	7%	13%	3%
Don't Know	23%	29%	21%
N=	134	94	89

Demographics for both Version A and Version B

Vote	Ideology		
	Lib	Middle	Conserv
Republican	19%	27%	60%
Democrat	75%	42%	21%
Third party	2%	7%	5%
Would not vote	3%	4%	3%
DK	1%	20%	11%
N=	102	201	102
Current Congressman	35%	29%	33%
Challenger	34%	27%	37%
Would not vote	15%	16%	7%
DK	16%	28%	23%
N=	103	177	123

Vote	Education			
	HS or Less	Some Coll	Coll Grad	Grad Work
Republican	28%	32%	37%	39%
Democrat	50%	43%	43%	43%
Third party	4%	6%	5%	5%
Would not vote	1%	4%	8%	2%
DK	17%	15%	8%	11%
N=	135	150	77	53
Current Congressman	29%	33%	31%	36%
Challenger	32%	30%	31%	33%
Would not vote	18%	10%	15%	10%
DK	22%	27%	24%	21%
N=	119	142	79	65

*New Jersey Congressional Election—September 2010
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll*

Vote	Employment			
	Full Time	Part Time	Retired	Not Empl
Republican	30%	43%	38%	29%
Democrat	51%	40%	37%	40%
Third party	6%	6%	5%	3%
Would not vote	1%	6%	2%	8%
DK	12%	6%	18%	19%
N=	214	43	91	65
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Current Congressman	32%	28%	37%	27%
Challenger	36%	15%	30%	27%
Would not vote	12%	29%	9%	14%
DK	20%	27%	24%	32%
N=	214	36	91	64

Vote	Race			
	White	Black	Asian	Hispanic
Republican	39%	4%	0%	40%
Democrat	38%	82%	58%	50%
Third party	7%	2%	0%	3%
Would not vote	3%	5%	6%	0%
DK	14%	7%	36%	8%
N=	290	61	13	41
<hr/>				
Current Congressman	34%	31%	8%	32%
Challenger	31%	33%	28%	33%
Would not vote	10%	4%	20%	32%
DK	24%	32%	44%	3%
N=	268	49	28	53

Vote	Age			
	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
Republican	19%	36%	31%	40%
Democrat	53%	50%	42%	37%
Third party	0%	4%	11%	3%
Would not vote	6%	3%	3%	1%
DK	23%	7%	13%	19%
N=	72	150	112	81
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Current Congressman	15%	31%	35%	39%
Challenger	27%	33%	33%	29%
Would not vote	26%	15%	8%	8%
DK	32%	21%	23%	25%
N=	48	162	105	91

*New Jersey Congressional Election—September 2010
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll*

Vote	Income			
	under 50K	50K- <100K	100K-<150K	150K+
Republican	27%	35%	49%	43%
Democrat	52%	42%	33%	29%
Third party	3%	8%	9%	6%
Would not vote	2%	2%	6%	12%
DK	16%	13%	2%	11%
N=	158	110	36	32
Current Congressman	30%	35%	38%	33%
Challenger	29%	29%	33%	35%
Would not vote	15%	17%	6%	10%
DK	26%	19%	23%	22%
N=	132	114	42	38

Vote	Gender	
	Male	Female
Republican	40%	26%
Democrat	37%	52%
Third party	7%	3%
Would not vote	2%	4%
DK	13%	15%
N=	191	225
Current Congressman	32%	32%
Challenger	39%	24%
Would not vote	11%	15%
DK	19%	29%
N=	198	209

Q. Would you say the state of New Jersey is currently going in the right direction or has it gone off on the wrong track?

Registered Voters

Right Direction	41%
Wrong Track	50%
Don't Know	9%
N=	830

Likely Voters

Right Direction	41%
Wrong Track	50%
Don't Know	8%
N=	656

Q. I'd like to ask about some people and organizations. Please tell me if your general impression of each one is favorable or unfavorable, or if you do not have an opinion. First, Democrats in Congress: [ROTATE]

Registered Voters

	Democrats in Congress	Republicans in Congress
Favorable	45%	33%
Unfavorable	39%	50%
Don't Know	16%	16%
N=	828	830

Likely Voters

	Democrats in Congress	Republicans in Congress
Favorable	46%	34%
Unfavorable	40%	52%
Don't Know	14%	14%
N=	656	657

Q. Should the Democrats in Washington be given more time to solve the country's problems or is it time to elect Republicans to take charge in Congress?

Registered Voters

Give Democrats more time	55%
Elect Republicans	34%
Don't Know	11%
N=	820

Likely Voters

Give Democrats more time	56%
Elect Republicans	36%
Don't Know	9%
N=	650

Q. How closely have you followed news about the election this fall? Is it very closely, somewhat closely, not too closely, or not at all closely?

Registered Voters

Very closely	38%
Somewhat closely	39%
Not too closely	17%
Not at all closely	6%
N=	830

Likely Voters

Very closely	42%
Somewhat closely	40%
Not too closely	15%
Not at all closely	4%
N=	658

Rutgers-Eagleton Poll September 23-26, 2010
New Jersey Generic Congressional Test Poll

The Rutgers-Eagleton Poll was conducted from September 23-26, 2010 with a scientifically selected random sample of 830 registered voters statewide, yielding 676 likely voters. Data are weighted to represent known parameters in the population, including gender, age, race, education, and Hispanic ethnicity. All results are reported with these weighted data. This telephone poll included 722 landline respondents acquired through random digit dialing, and 108 interviews of randomly selected cell phone households.

All surveys are subject to sampling error, which is the expected probable difference between interviewing everyone in a population versus a scientific sampling drawn from that population. The sampling error for a sample of 830 registered voters is +/-3.4 points, at a 95 percent confidence interval. For the likely voter sub sample of 676 respondents, the margin of error is +/-3.8 points. Thus if 50 percent of New Jersey registered voters favored a particular position, one would be 95 percent confident that the true figure would be between 46.6 and 53.4 percent (50 +/- 3.4) had all registered voters been interviewed, rather than just a sample. Sampling error increases as the sample size decreases, so statements based on various population subgroups are subject to more error than are statements based on the total sample. Sampling error does not take into account other sources of variation inherent in public opinion studies, such as non-response, question wording or context effects.

Data were collected by Braun Research, Incorporated, of Princeton, NJ and were analyzed by staff of the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll. The AAPOR response rate 3 was 20.1%, the refusal rate 2 was 31.4% and the cooperation rate 3 was 39.1% for the landline part of this poll. For the cell phone sample, the response rate 3 was 10.7%, the refusal rate 2 was 22.7% and the cooperation rate 3 was 32.0%.

Weighted Sample Characteristics			
(N=830 Registered Voters)			
44% Dem	48% Male	15% 18-29	68% White
29% Independent	59% Female	38% 30-49	13% Black
27% Republican		27% 50-64	11% Hispanic
		21% 65+	5% Asian
			2% Other