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Release available after embargo at: <http://eagletonpoll.rutgers.edu/Menendez-Hugin-October2018>. Find all releases at <http://eagletonpoll.rutgers.edu>. Follow the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/RutgersEagletonPoll> and Twitter [@EagletonPoll](https://twitter.com/EagletonPoll).

**MENENDEZ HOLDS NARROW LEAD OVER HUGIN IN SENATE RACE;  
CORRUPTION TRIAL, LACK OF ENTHUSIASM HURT MENENDEZ WITH INDEPENDENTS AND  
BASE**

**NJ Likely Voters Solidly Side with Democrats on House Races**

**NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J.** – With two weeks until Election Day, incumbent U.S. Senator Bob Menendez narrowly leads Republican challenger Bob Hugin 51 percent to 46 percent among likely voters in New Jersey, according to the latest Rutgers-Eagleton Poll. Menendez’s tight margin stems from the mark his federal corruption trial has left on his reputation, his inability to capture a majority of independents, and a large enthusiasm gap between his likely voters and Hugin’s:

- Likely voters who identify as independent prefer Hugin, 50 percent to 43 percent.
- Thirty-eight percent of likely voters say Menendez’s trial factors “a lot” into their vote; 16 percent say it factors “some.”
- Twenty-nine percent of Menendez voters are “very enthusiastic” to vote for the senator, compared to 58 percent of Hugin voters who say the same about their candidate of choice.

“After his recent onslaught of attack ads against Menendez, Hugin is making this race much closer than it should be for an incumbent in a blue state,” said Ashley Koning, assistant research professor and director of the [Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling \(ECPIP\)](http://eagletonpoll.rutgers.edu) at [Rutgers University–New Brunswick](http://rutgers.edu). “But what’s most responsible for the narrow margin here is the corruption charges against Menendez that have haunted his entire re-election campaign. Mistrial or not, the charges have dampened support where Menendez needs it most – with independents and even a handful of his own base.”

Menendez’s tight lead does not extend to Democrats statewide, however. In a generic House ballot test, a majority of New Jersey likely voters (54 percent) side with the Democratic candidate over the Republican candidate (40 percent) in their home district.

Results are from a statewide poll of 1,006 adults contacted by live callers on landlines and cell phones from Oct. 12-19. The poll contains a subsample of 896 registered voters and 496 likely voters. The entire sample has a margin of error of +/-3.6 percentage points; the registered voter subsample has a margin of error of +/-3.8 percentage points, and the likely voter subsample has a margin of error of +/-5.1 percentage points. Interviews were done in English and, when requested, Spanish.

**Charges against Menendez do damage, especially with independents and Democrats**

Menendez's 5-point lead overall turns into a 7-point loss among coveted independents, who break for Hugin 50 percent to 43 percent. This is likely due, at least in part, to the number of independents who say the senator's corruption trial factors into their vote choice; 39 percent of independents say the charges factor into their decision "a lot," while 20 percent say they factor in "some."

A number of Democrats say the charges influence their decision, as well: 18 percent say "a lot" and 14 percent say "some." One in 10 Democrats cross party lines and say they would vote for Hugin – twice the number of Republicans who say the same for Menendez. A similar pattern emerges among 2016 Clinton voters: 13 percent abandon Menendez for Hugin or another candidate, or abstain entirely. Across all likely voters, those who say Menendez's corruption charges factor into their vote choice "a lot" are more than four times as likely to choose Hugin over the incumbent senator (77 percent to 19 percent).

Given the trial's impact, it is no surprise Menendez voters are only half as enthusiastic about voting for the incumbent senator as Hugin voters are about their own candidate: 29 percent are "very enthusiastic" to vote for Menendez (another 33 percent "somewhat enthusiastic"), compared to 58 percent who say the same for Hugin (another 32 percent "somewhat enthusiastic").

Yet Menendez does have some bright spots. He leads Hugin by double digits among women, non-white residents, and likely voters under 50 years of age. He holds an 8-point lead over Hugin among those in households making less than \$100,000 annually. These groups are also much less likely than their counterparts to be concerned about Menendez's corruption charges, with less than half of each – with the exception of those making under \$100,000 – saying it factors "a lot" or "some" into their vote.

"A larger turnout does not automatically work in Menendez's favor," said Koning. "Election Day may come down to not just how many ballots are cast but, more importantly, who turns out to vote."

**Lackluster feelings on Menendez do not carry over to other Democrats**

Menendez's favorability ratings fare no better among likely voters: he is the least liked major political figure in the state, paling in comparison to his counterpart, junior U.S. Senator Cory Booker, and even less liked than both his opponent Hugin and President Donald Trump.

Menendez is unique in his subpar performance compared to his fellow Democrats. Likely voters across the state solidly side with the Democratic candidate in their home district, with almost the entire Democratic base (92 percent) choosing their party's candidate in a generic House ballot test.

Menendez continues to trail his fellow senator when it comes to likability. Among likely voters, just 28 percent have a favorable impression of Menendez, while 55 percent have an unfavorable one. Booker's numbers are practically flipped, with 50 percent viewing the junior senator favorably and 39 percent feeling the opposite. Just under half of those who are favorable toward Booker are also favorable toward Menendez, with a notable three in 10 Booker supporters saying they are unfavorable toward the senior senator. This sentiment carries over to the Senate race, where almost one in five Booker supporters opt for someone other than Menendez.

Menendez's opponent garners better ratings than the incumbent senator, as well. Forty percent of likely voters have a favorable impression of Hugin, while 33 percent are unfavorable. Notably, the President outperforms Menendez on favorability: 37 percent have a favorable impression of Trump, though 56 percent have an unfavorable one.

**QUESTIONS AND TABLES START ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE**

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**Broadcast interviews:** Rutgers University–New Brunswick has broadcast-quality TV and radio studios available for remote live or taped interviews with Rutgers experts. For more information, contact Neal Buccino [neal.buccino@echo.rutgers.edu](mailto:neal.buccino@echo.rutgers.edu).

**ABOUT RUTGERS—NEW BRUNSWICK**

*Rutgers University–New Brunswick is where Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, began more than 250 years ago. Ranked among the world's top 60 universities, Rutgers's flagship university is a leading public research institution and a member of the prestigious Association of American Universities. It is home to internationally acclaimed faculty and has 12 degree-granting schools and a Division I Athletics program. It is the Big Ten Conference's most diverse university. Through its community of teachers, scholars, artists, scientists, and healers, Rutgers is equipped as never before to transform lives.*

**ABOUT THE EAGLETON CENTER FOR PUBLIC INTEREST POLLING (ECPIP)**

*Home of the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll, ECPIP was established in 1971 and is the oldest and one of the most respected university-based state survey research centers in the United States. ECPIP's mission is to provide scientifically sound, non-partisan information about public opinion. To read more about ECPIP and view all of our press releases and published research, please visit our website: [eagletonpoll.rutgers.edu](http://eagletonpoll.rutgers.edu). You can also visit our [extensive data archive](#), [Facebook](#), and [Twitter](#).*

**Questions and Tables**

*The questions covered in this release are listed below. Column percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding. Respondents are registered voters (RV) or likely voters (LV); all percentages are of weighted results. Interpret groups with samples sizes under 100 with caution.*

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**Q. Many people are not registered to vote because they are too busy or move around often. Would official state records show that you:**

Are registered to vote at your current address	82%
Are registered to vote at a permanent address while residing at a temporary address	4%
Are registered but your address is out of date	2%
Are not now registered to vote	10%
Don't know (vol)	2%
Unwght N=	1006

**Q. How likely are you to vote in the general election this November? Do you think you will definitely vote, probably vote, probably not vote, or definitely not vote?**

	RV	LV
Definitely will vote	80%	99%
Probably will vote	13%	1%
Probably will not vote	3%	0%
Definitely will not vote	2%	0%
Don't know (vol)	2%	0%
Unwght N=	895	496

**Q. Generally speaking, how much interest would you say you have in politics?**

	RV	LV
A great deal	39%	69%
A fair amount	44%	26%
Only a little	14%	3%
No interest at all	4%	2%
Don't know (vol)	0%	0%
Unwght N=	849	496

**Q. There are many types of elections, such as federal elections for president and members of Congress, primary elections where voters choose party nominees, local elections for city council and school board, and special elections when vacancies arise in between scheduled elections. Which best describes how often you vote, since you became eligible?**

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	RV	LV
Every election without exception	36%	65%
Almost every election, perhaps missing a few	48%	34%
Some elections	11%	1%
Rarely	3%	0%
Don't vote in elections	1%	0%
Don't know (vol)	1%	0%
Unwght N=	849	496

**Q. Have you been following news about the candidates running in in the midterm elections very closely, somewhat closely, not very closely, or not at all?**

	RV	LV
Very closely	29%	52%
Somewhat closely	43%	39%
Not very closely	20%	7%
Not at all	8%	2%
Don't know (vol)	0%	0%
Unwght N=	848	495

**Q. If the election were held today and the candidates were [ROTATE ORDER: Bob Menendez the Democrat, or Bob Hugin the Republican] for whom would you vote?**

	Party ID (LV)				
	RV	LV	Dem	Ind	Rep
Menendez	48%	48%	85%	41%	5%
Hugin	45%	44%	9%	46%	94%
Someone else (vol)	1%	1%	0%	4%	0%
Neither (vol)	1%	1%	2%	2%	0%
Would not vote (vol)	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Don't know (vol)	5%	5%	4%	7%	1%
Unwght N=	838	487	183	170	129

**Q. If you had to choose between one of the following candidates at this moment, would you lean toward [ROTATE ORDER SAME AS ABOVE: Bob Menendez the Democrat, or Bob Hugin the Republican]?**

**[COMBINED HEAD-TO-HEAD WITH LEANERS]**

			Party ID (LV)		
	RV	LV	Dem	Ind	Rep
Menendez	48%	51%	90%	43%	5%
Hugin	45%	46%	10%	50%	94%
Someone else (vol)	1%	1%	0%	3%	0%
Neither (vol)	1%	1%	0%	2%	1%
Would not vote (vol)	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Don't know (vol)	5%	2%	0%	3%	0%
Unwght N=	838	490	185	171	129

**Q. Are you very enthusiastic, somewhat enthusiastic, not very enthusiastic, or not enthusiastic at all about voting for Bob Menendez?**

	RV	LV	Democrats (LV)
Very enthusiastic	19%	29%	36%
Somewhat enthusiastic	37%	33%	32%
Not very enthusiastic	32%	26%	21%
Not enthusiastic at all	10%	10%	9%
Don't know (vol)	2%	2%	1%
Unwght N=	401	245	165

**Q. Are you very enthusiastic, somewhat enthusiastic, not very enthusiastic, or not enthusiastic at all about voting for Bob Hugin?**

	RV	LV	Republicans (LV)
Very enthusiastic	37%	58%	62%
Somewhat enthusiastic	38%	32%	32%
Not very enthusiastic	16%	7%	4%
Not enthusiastic at all	6%	2%	1%
Don't know (vol)	2%	1%	1%
Unwght N=	388	229	121

**[ORDER OF MENENDEZ AND HUGIN FAVORABILITY QUESTIONS ROTATED]**

**Q. Regardless of who you plan to vote for, is your general impression of Bob Menendez favorable or unfavorable, or do you not have an opinion about him?**

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	Party ID (LV)				
	RV	LV	Dem	Ind	Rep
Favorable	23%	28%	53%	18%	4%
Unfavorable	48%	55%	24%	65%	89%
No Opinion	28%	16%	22%	17%	5%
Don't know person (vol)	1%	1%	1%	0%	2%
Unwght N=	844	492	187	171	129

**Q. Is your general impression of Bob Hugin favorable or unfavorable, or do you not have an opinion about him?**

	Party ID (LV)				
	RV	LV	Dem	Ind	Rep
Favorable	32%	40%	11%	42%	81%
Unfavorable	24%	33%	54%	31%	4%
No Opinion	42%	27%	34%	27%	14%
Don't know person (vol)	1%	1%	2%	0%	0%
Unwght N=	847	494	187	173	129

**Q. As you may know, Senator Menendez was on trial last year for federal criminal corruption charges, but the jury was unable to reach a verdict, and the case ended in a mistrial. How much does this factor into your choice of who to vote for in this year's U.S. Senate election in New Jersey – a lot, some, a little, or not at all?**

	Party ID (LV)				
	RV	LV	Dem	Ind	Rep
A lot	36%	38%	18%	39%	67%
Some	21%	16%	14%	20%	12%
A little	13%	12%	19%	13%	3%
Not at all	28%	32%	47%	27%	17%
Don't know (vol)	2%	2%	2%	1%	1%
Unwght N=	844	492	186	172	129

**Q. There will be an election for U.S. Congress this year. If the election were today, would you vote for the [ROTATE: Republican candidate or the Democratic candidate] for Congress in your district, or would you not vote?**

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	Party ID (LV)				
	RV	LV	Dem	Ind	Rep
Republican	36%	40%	4%	40%	94%
Democrat	50%	54%	92%	47%	5%
Not vote	4%	2%	0%	4%	1%
Don't know (vol)	9%	5%	3%	9%	1%
Unwght N=	842	493	187	171	130

**Q. Thinking back to the presidential election in November 2016, did you vote for [ROTATE: Hillary Clinton the Democrat, Donald Trump the Republican], some other candidate, or were you unable to vote?**

	RV	LV
Clinton	46%	52%
Trump	34%	38%
Some other candidate	10%	8%
Unable to vote	9%	1%
Don't know (vol)	1%	0%
Unwght N=	832	492

**Q. Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way Donald Trump is handling his job as president of the United States?**

	Party ID (LV)				
	RV	LV	Dem	Ind	Rep
Approve	36%	41%	8%	44%	88%
Disapprove	58%	56%	90%	54%	7%
Don't know (vol)	6%	3%	2%	2%	5%
Unwght N=	992	494	187	172	130

**Q. And Is your general impression of Donald Trump favorable or unfavorable, or do you not have an opinion about him?**

	Party ID (LV)				
	RV	LV	Dem	Ind	Rep
Favorable	30%	37%	7%	39%	81%
Unfavorable	56%	56%	88%	53%	11%
No Opinion	14%	6%	5%	7%	7%
Don't know person (vol)	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Unwght N=	1001	494	188	172	129



**Q. And what about Cory Booker? Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way Cory Booker is handling his job as U.S. Senator?**

	Party ID (LV)				
	RV	LV	Dem	Ind	Rep
Approve	50%	53%	87%	49%	7%
Disapprove	30%	41%	6%	45%	87%
Don't know (vol)	20%	6%	7%	6%	6%
Unwght N=	994	494	187	172	130

**Q. Is your general impression of Cory Booker favorable or unfavorable, or do you not have an opinion about him?**

	Party ID (LV)				
	RV	LV	Dem	Ind	Rep
Favorable	44%	50%	83%	45%	6%
Unfavorable	27%	39%	6%	43%	84%
No Opinion	26%	10%	9%	12%	9%
Don't know person (vol)	4%	1%	1%	0%	1%
Unwght N=	1005	496	188	173	130

## **Methodology**

The Rutgers-Eagleton Poll was conducted by telephone using live callers October 12 to 19, 2018, with a scientifically selected random sample of 1,006 New Jersey adults, 18 or older. The sample contains a subsample of 896 registered voters and 496 likely voters; the latter is comprised of those determined to have a strong likelihood of voting in the November election based on a series of questions assessing their past voting behavior, voting intention, interest in politics, and attention to the campaign. Persons without a telephone could not be included in the random selection process. Respondents within a household are selected by asking randomly for the youngest adult male or female currently available. If the named gender is not available, the youngest adult of the other gender is interviewed. The poll was available in Spanish for respondents who requested it. This telephone poll included 451 adults reached on a landline phone and 555 adults reached on a cell phone, all acquired through random digit dialing. Distribution of household phone use in this sample is:

Cell Only:	30%
Dual Use, Reached on Cell:	25%
Dual Use, Reached on LL:	43%
Landline Only:	2%

The data were weighted to be representative of New Jersey adults. The weighting balanced sample demographics to population parameters. The sample is balanced to match parameters for sex, age, education, race/ethnicity, region and phone use. The sex, age, education, race/ethnicity and region parameters were derived from 2016 American Community Survey PUMS data. The phone use parameter was derived from estimates provided by the National Health Interview Survey Early Release Program.<sup>123</sup> Weighting was done in two stages. The first stage of weighting corrected for different probabilities of selection associated with the number of adults in each household and each respondent's telephone usage patterns. This adjustment also accounts for the overlapping landline and cell sample frames and the relative sizes of each frame and each sample. The second stage of weighting balanced sample demographics to match target population parameters. This weighting was accomplished using SPSSINC RAKE, an SPSS extension module that simultaneously balances the distributions of all variables using the GENLOG procedure. Weights were trimmed to prevent individual interviews from having too much influence on the final results. The use of these weights in statistical analysis ensures that the demographic characteristics of the sample closely approximate the demographic characteristics of the target population.

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. Sampling error should be adjusted to recognize the effect of weighting the data to better match the population. In this poll, the simple sampling error for 1,006 New Jersey adults is +/-3.1 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence interval. The design effect is 1.36, making the adjusted margin of error +/- 3.6 percentage points. Thus if 50 percent of New Jersey adults in this sample favor a particular position, we would be 95 percent sure that the true figure is between 46.4 and 53.6 percent (50 +/- 3.6) if all New Jersey adults had been interviewed, rather than just a sample.

The simple sampling error for 896 New Jersey registered voters is +/-3.3 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence interval. The design effect is 1.35, making the adjusted margin of error +/- 3.8 percentage points. Thus if 50 percent of New Jersey registered voters in this sample favor a particular position, we would be 95 percent sure that the true figure is between 46.2 and 53.8 percent (50 +/- 3.8) if all New Jersey registered voters had been interviewed, rather than just a sample.

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<sup>1</sup> NCHS, National Health Interview Survey, 2012-2016; U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2011-2015; and infoUSA.com consumer database, 2012-2016.

<sup>2</sup> Blumberg SJ, Luke JV. Wireless substitution: Early release of estimates from the National Health Interview Survey, July-December 2015. National Center for Health Statistics. May 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Blumberg SJ, Luke JV. Wireless substitution: Early release of estimates from the National Health Interview Survey, July-December 2017. National Center for Health Statistics. June 2018.

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The simple sampling error for 496 New Jersey likely voters is +/-4.4 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence interval. The design effect is 1.34, making the adjusted margin of error +/- 5.1 percentage points. Thus if 50 percent of New Jersey likely voters in this sample favor a particular position, we would be 95 percent sure that the true figure is between 44.9 and 55.1 percent (50 +/- 5.1) if all New Jersey likely voters had been interviewed, rather than just a 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.

This Rutgers-Eagleton Poll was fielded by Braun Research, Inc. with sample from Survey Sampling International (SSI). The questionnaire was developed and all data analyses were completed in house by the Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling (ECPIP). Dr. Cliff Zukin, Professor Emeritus of Political Science and Public Policy and Senior Survey Advisor to ECPIP, assisted with this questionnaire and analysis. William Young assisted with analysis and preparation of this report. The Rutgers-Eagleton Poll is paid for and sponsored by the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, a non-partisan academic center for the study of politics and the political process. Full questionnaires are available on request, and can also be accessed through our archives at [eagletonpoll.rutgers.edu](http://eagletonpoll.rutgers.edu). For more information, please contact [poll@eagleton.rutgers.edu](mailto:poll@eagleton.rutgers.edu).

**Weighted Sample Characteristics  
896 New Jersey Registered Voters**

<b>Male</b>	48%	<b>Democrat</b>	34%	<b>18-34</b>	22%	<b>HS or Less</b>	29%	<b>White</b>	64%
<b>Female</b>	52%	<b>Independent</b>	43%	<b>35-49</b>	23%	<b>Some College</b>	29%	<b>Black</b>	12%
		<b>Republican</b>	23%	<b>50-64</b>	32%	<b>College Grad</b>	25%	<b>Hispanic</b>	15%
				<b>65+</b>	23%	<b>Grad Work</b>	16%	<b>Other</b>	9%

**Weighted Sample Characteristics  
496 New Jersey Likely Voters**

<b>Male</b>	51%	<b>Democrat</b>	39%	<b>18-34</b>	11%	<b>HS or Less</b>	26%	<b>White</b>	70%
<b>Female</b>	49%	<b>Independent</b>	36%	<b>35-49</b>	19%	<b>Some College</b>	26%	<b>Black</b>	12%
		<b>Republican</b>	26%	<b>50-64</b>	39%	<b>College Grad</b>	29%	<b>Hispanic</b>	11%
				<b>65+</b>	31%	<b>Grad Work</b>	20%	<b>Other</b>	7%