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**MENENDEZ LEADS VIRTUALLY UNKNOWN OPPONENT KYRILLOS
IN RACE FOR U.S. SENATE SEAT, RUTGERS-EAGLETON POLL FINDS**

Statewide, New Jersey voters support Democrats for U.S. House

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J – U.S. Sen. Robert Menendez holds a commanding lead over New Jersey state Sen. Joe Kyrillos in an early test of the 2012 U.S. Senate election, according to a new Rutgers-Eagleton Poll. Menendez, a Democrat, is favored by 44 percent of Garden State registered voters and 22 percent name Kyrillos, while 26 percent are unsure and 7 percent say they would not vote. An unnamed Republican does better than Kyrillos in the Senate race, though still loses to a generic Democrat by a 46 percent to 34 percent margin.

Kyrillos' primary weakness is that few voters know him; 80 percent either have no opinion (50 percent) or are unsure (30 percent) about the GOP challenger. Eleven percent have a favorable impression and 9 percent do not.

Voters feel more positive toward Menendez, 37 percent to 24 percent, but nearly 40 percent have no opinion about the incumbent. "Menendez's favorability numbers crept up slightly early last year, but for an incumbent, he has a very low profile," said poll Director David Redlawsk, a professor of political science at Rutgers University. "Kyrillos, however, is completely unknown at this point, a huge advantage for Menendez. We certainly expect that the numbers will tighten as the campaign develops, but Menendez starts off in a good position."

Democrats also hold a significant lead over Republicans statewide in an early 2012 U.S. House election ballot test, according to the poll. Statewide, 45 percent of registered voters would support an unnamed Democrat, 28 percent would vote Republican, 11 percent would not vote and 15 percent are unsure.

Results are from a poll of 914 registered voters conducted statewide among both landline and cell phone households from Feb. 9-11. The full sample has a margin of error of +/- 3.3 percentage points. Questions about the U.S. Senate and House elections were split into two random subsamples, with a margin of error of +/- 4.6 percentage points for each.

Even Republicans don't know Kyrillos

While the state's voters tend to lean Democratic in national elections, Kyrillos is at a particular disadvantage, suffering from virtually no name recognition nine months before the election. Only 20 percent of voters venture an opinion (11 percent favorable and 9 percent unfavorable). Even among Republicans, few know how they feel about the state senator: 12 percent are favorable, 4 percent unfavorable, but 84 percent have no opinion.

"No name recognition is a double whammy for Kyrillos," said Redlawsk. "He must overcome the lack of a statewide profile and the underlying Democratic leanings of voters. Neither is impossible to do, with enough time and enough money, but it is a clear challenge."

That Kyrillos' lack of name recognition is a drag on his candidacy against Menendez is reflected by a party name ballot test for the Senate, where half of the poll's respondents were asked to pick a Democrat or Republican for the seat. Among those with this option, a generic Democrat beats a generic Republican by only 12 percentage points, with 18 percent unsure. When the matchup is described as Kyrillos versus Menendez, the Democrat's lead grows to 22 points. However, 33 percent say they would not vote or they cannot decide.

"Given a partisan cue – vote for a Republican or a Democrat – voters can express their generic preference pretty easily," noted Redlawsk. "Asking them to choose between candidates they don't know well leaves more room for uncertainty."

Menendez rating stable and favorable, but lots of 'no opinion'

Although an incumbent up for re-election, Menendez continues to have a surprisingly low profile: 39 percent of respondents have either no opinion of him (32 percent) or don't know (7 percent). Thirty-seven percent feel favorably and 24 percent do not. One year ago, those favoring Menendez provided a 10-point cushion. Just as many held no opinion then as now.

"Without a sense of the candidates as individuals, voters are likely to fall back on party cues," said Redlawsk. "This gives Kyrillos the opportunity to define Menendez, which could make the race more competitive by November. But first Kyrillos has to make himself known."

Independents are particularly unsure where they will go at this point, said Redlawsk. Those asked to vote for an unnamed Republican or Democrat split evenly at 32 percent, but 37 percent would not choose one party over the other. Given named candidates, independents swing heavily to the name they recognize better: 43 percent would vote for Menendez, 23 percent for Kyrillos, and 34 percent are undecided or would not vote.

Democrats lead in statewide U.S. House test

To examine the 2012 U.S. House race, one-half of respondents chose between a Republican and a Democrat, while the other half was asked to choose between their “current congressman” and a “challenger running against him.”

In the party name test, 45 percent of registered voters pick a Democrat while 28 percent say they would vote GOP. Another 11 percent would not vote, and 15 percent are uncertain. Asked to choose the incumbent or challenger, voters are more ambivalent, with 30 percent choosing the officeholder and 27 percent preferring the opponent. Given this choice, 20 percent would not vote, and 23 percent could not make a choice.

“For perspective, two years ago when we asked these same questions, 33 percent picked a Democrat and 31 percent wanted a Republican,” said Redlawsk. “These results suggest a shift towards the Democrats, much of which is driven by independents, who were 2-to-1 for Republicans in February 2010, and are now leaning slightly Democratic.”

Redlawsk also noted that the desire for challengers is not much different now than two years ago, when 32 percent supported their “current congressman” and 25 percent preferred someone else. As the 2010 election progressed, voters shifted slightly toward challengers in the polling, but in the end re-elected all but one of the state’s incumbents.

While noting that getting an early read on where the electorate is for 2012 provides a sense of the political environment, early numbers give only some guidance for the fall. “I would caution against reading too much into this,” said Redlawsk. “It’s early, for one thing. And whether a voter wants to throw out an incumbent, or wants a candidate of one party or the other, it really doesn’t matter if there isn’t a strong alternative to the incumbent on the ballot.”

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QUESTIONS AND TABLES BEGIN ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE

Questions and Tables

The questions covered in the release of February 28, 2012 are listed below. Column percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding. Respondents are Registered Voters (RV).

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

	U.S. Senator Robert Menendez	State Senator Joseph Kyrillos	State Senate Pres. Steve Sweeney	State Senator Barbara Buono
Favorable	37%	11%	22%	10%
Unfavorable	24%	9%	22%	10%
No Opinion	32%	50%	41%	50%
DK	7%	30%	16%	29%
Unwght N=	913	914	911	914

Menendez

	Menendez Trend				
	Feb '12 (RV)	Aug '11 (RV)	March '11 (RV)	Feb '11 (RV)	Dec '10 (adults)
Favorable	37%	35%	32%	36%	27%
Unfavorable	24%	28%	24%	26%	24%
No Opin	32%	30%	33%	38%	49%
DK	7%	7%	11%		
Unweight N=	913	614	767	852	904

	Party ID			Ideology				Education		
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Lib	Mod	Cons	HS or less	Some Coll	Coll Grad	Grad Work
Favorable	52%	33%	19%	51%	38%	19%	33%	34%	37%	43%
Unfavorable	12%	25%	42%	14%	20%	46%	23%	24%	24%	24%
No Opin	27%	38%	33%	31%	35%	26%	37%	34%	33%	27%
DK	9%	5%	6%	4%	7%	9%	7%	8%	5%	6%
Unwght N=	318	402	183	187	511	191	202	246	245	215

	Employment				Race		Age			
	FT	PT	Retired	Not Empl	White	Black	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
Favorable	34%	33%	48%	32%	38%	32%	29%	30%	38%	48%
Unfavorable	25%	18%	27%	19%	26%	17%	11%	23%	28%	28%
No Opin	35%	40%	21%	38%	30%	39%	54%	37%	28%	20%
DK	6%	9%	4%	11%	6%	13%	6%	10%	6%	4%
Unwght N=	397	82	291	141	718	84	54	224	347	280

	Income				Gender		Religion		
	< 50K	50K- <100K	100K- <150K	150K+	Male	Female	Catholic	Protestant	Jewish
Favorable	40%	38%	34%	37%	36%	38%	37%	33%	48%
Unfavorable	23%	24%	29%	26%	30%	19%	28%	22%	22%
No Opin	27%	33%	34%	28%	28%	36%	30%	37%	27%
DK	10%	5%	3%	9%	6%	7%	6%	8%	2%
Unwght N=	245	265	132	102	431	482	397	235	68

*Senate/Congress February 2012
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll*

Menendez (cont.)

	Born Again		Union Household			Region				
	Yes	No	Public	Private	No Union	Urban	Suburb	Exurban	Phil/South	Shore
Favorable	25%	37%	45%	39%	36%	43%	39%	40%	33%	29%
Unfavorable	22%	27%	16%	25%	25%	19%	23%	27%	22%	32%
No Opin	42%	31%	33%	28%	32%	27%	33%	29%	38%	35%
DK	11%	5%	6%	8%	7%	11%	6%	4%	6%	5%
Unwght N=	124	535	121	55	719	142	333	105	169	164

Kyrillos

	Party ID			Ideology				Education			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Lib	Mod	Cons	HS or less	Some Coll	Coll Grad	Grad Work	
Favorable	11%	10%	12%	11%	12%	7%	14%	14%	8%	7%	
Unfavorable	11%	9%	4%	8%	9%	10%	6%	10%	11%	6%	
No Opin	46%	52%	52%	50%	51%	48%	46%	45%	57%	50%	
DK	32%	29%	32%	31%	28%	35%	33%	31%	24%	36%	
Unwght N=	319	402	183	187	512	191	202	247	245	215	

	Employment				Race		Age			
	FT	PT	Retired	Not Empl	White	Black	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
Favorable	11%	10%	13%	8%	11%	10%	16%	9%	9%	11%
Unfavorable	8%	5%	8%	16%	7%	17%	4%	10%	12%	6%
No Opin	53%	66%	38%	50%	48%	49%	61%	56%	47%	40%
DK	29%	20%	41%	26%	34%	24%	19%	25%	32%	43%
Unwght N=	398	82	291	141	718	85	54	224	348	280

	Income				Gender		Religion		
	< 50K	50K- <100K	100K- <150K	150K+	Male	Female	Catholic	Protestant	Jewish
Favorable	14%	10%	12%	10%	12%	9%	12%	11%	11%
Unfavorable	11%	11%	4%	8%	11%	7%	9%	11%	1%
No Opin	45%	48%	59%	49%	49%	51%	49%	50%	58%
DK	30%	30%	25%	33%	28%	32%	31%	29%	30%
Unwght N=	245	266	132	102	431	483	397	236	68

	Born Again		Union Household			Region				
	Yes	No	Public	Private	No Union	Urban	Suburb	Exurban	Phil/South	Shore
Favorable	8%	12%	8%	15%	11%	8%	13%	8%	4%	18%
Unfavorable	14%	9%	9%	3%	9%	11%	9%	11%	8%	6%
No Opin	46%	50%	46%	54%	50%	45%	52%	42%	57%	49%
DK	33%	30%	37%	28%	30%	36%	26%	39%	30%	28%
Unwght N=	125	535	121	55	720	142	334	105	169	164

**[U.S. HOUSE BALLOT TEST – STATEWIDE – FOLLOW PRESIDENTIAL BALLOT TEST]
[SPLIT SAMPLE: 1/2 RANDOMLY ASSIGNED TO VERSION A, 1/2 TO VERSION B]**

[VERSION A]

Q There will also be an election for U.S. Congress this year. If the election were today would you vote for the Republican, or the Democrat for Congress, or would you not vote?

Republican	28%
Democrat	45%
Not Vote	11%
DK	15%
<hr/>	
Unwght N=	457

	Party ID			Ideology			Gender		Education			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Lib	Mod	Cons	Male	Female	HS or less	Some Coll	Coll Grad	Grad Work
Republican	1%	27%	86%	4%	22%	76%	31%	26%	31%	26%	25%	33%
Democrat	84%	31%	2%	84%	42%	11%	44%	47%	50%	45%	43%	45%
Not Vote	7%	17%	6%	5%	16%	6%	7%	16%	12%	12%	14%	7%
DK	7%	25%	7%	7%	20%	7%	18%	11%	6%	18%	18%	15%
Unwght N=	159	203	91	93	256	95	219	238	98	117	122	117

[VERSION B]

Q There will also be an election for U.S. Congress this year. If the election were today would you vote for your current Congressman, a challenger running against him, or would you not vote?

Current Congressman	30%
Challenger	27%
Not Vote	20%
DK	23%
<hr/>	
Unwght N=	451

	Party ID			Ideology			Gender		Education			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Lib	Mod	Cons	Male	Female	HS or less	Some Coll	Coll Grad	Grad Work
Current	39%	25%	27%	27%	29%	38%	28%	32%	30%	26%	30%	37%
Challenger	22%	27%	36%	25%	28%	27%	29%	25%	33%	24%	24%	30%
Not Vote	13%	28%	15%	24%	19%	15%	19%	20%	18%	24%	20%	13%
DK	26%	20%	22%	25%	24%	20%	23%	23%	19%	26%	26%	19%
Unwght N=	158	197	91	92	252	96	211	240	101	130	122	96

**[U.S. SENATE BALLOT TEST – STATEWIDE – FOLLOW U.S. HOUSE BALLOT TEST]
[SPLIT SAMPLE: 1/2 RANDOMLY ASSIGNED TO VERSION A, 1/2 TO VERSION B]**

[VERSION A]

Q There will also be an election for U.S. Senator from New Jersey this year. If the election were today and the candidates were [ROTATE CANDIDATE ORDER] current U.S. Senator Bob Menendez and State Senator Joseph Kyrillos (ker-RIL-los), would you vote for [SAME ORDER: Mendendez or Kyrillos]?

Menendez	44%
Kyrillos	22%
Other (vol)	1%
Not Vote (vol)	7%
DK	26%
<hr/> Unwght N=	455

	Party ID			Ideology			Gender		Education			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Lib	Mod	Cons	Male	Female	HS or less	Some Coll	Coll Grad	Grad Work
Menendez	61%	43%	14%	63%	45%	20%	42%	46%	48%	40%	43%	45%
Kyrillos	7%	23%	52%	6%	18%	55%	27%	18%	24%	24%	22%	21%
Other (vol)	0%	1%	3%	0%	0%	3%	2%	0%	1%	1%	2%	0%
Not Vote (vol)	7%	7%	6%	10%	7%	4%	8%	6%	4%	5%	10%	8%
DK	25%	26%	25%	21%	30%	18%	21%	29%	23%	31%	22%	26%
<hr/> Unwght N=	162	204	84	93	251	100	224	231	92	120	126	115

[VERSION B]

Q There will also be an election for U.S. Senator in New Jersey this year. Thinking about that election in November, if the election were today would you vote for [ROTATE: the Democrat or the Republican] for the US Senate?

Democrat	46%
Republican	34%
Other (vol)	2%
Not Vote(vol)	2%
DK	16%
<hr/> Unwght N=	453

	Party ID			Ideology			Gender		Education			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Lib	Mod	Cons	Male	Female	HS or less	Some Coll	Coll Grad	Grad Work
Democrat	89%	32%	2%	77%	46%	9%	42%	50%	43%	48%	46%	48%
Republican	4%	32%	89%	9%	31%	77%	35%	33%	40%	36%	29%	32%
Other (vol)	0%	3%	2%	2%	1%	0%	2%	1%	1%	3%	1%	1%
Not Vote(vol)	1%	3%	0%	0%	2%	2%	3%	1%	1%	2%	0%	2%
DK	6%	31%	7%	12%	20%	12%	19%	15%	15%	10%	24%	17%
<hr/> Unwght N=	155	195	99	93	257	90	205	248	108	127	116	99

Rutgers-Eagleton Poll February 9-11, 2012

The Rutgers-Eagleton Poll was conducted by telephone from February 9-11, 2012 with a scientifically selected random sample of 914 New Jersey registered voters. Data are weighted to represent known parameters in the New Jersey population, using gender, age, race, and Hispanic ethnicity matching to 2010 US Census Bureau data. All results are reported with these weighted data. This telephone poll included 734 landline respondents supplemented with 180 cell phone respondents, acquired through random digit dialing.

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 914 adults is +/-3.3 percentage points, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of New Jersey voters favored a particular position, one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 46.7 and 53.3 percent (50 +/-3.3) had all New Jersey adults 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.

This Rutgers-Eagleton Poll was fielded by Braun Research, Incorporated. The questionnaire was developed and all data analyses were completed in house. The Rutgers-Eagleton Poll is paid for and sponsored by the Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University, a non-partisan academic center focused on the study and teaching of politics and the political process.

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

37% Democrat	47% Male	14% 18-29	71% White
43% Independent	53% Female	32% 30-49	15% Black
20% Republican		39% 50-64	7% Hispanic
		24% 65+	6% Asian/Other/Multi