Aug. 17, 2010
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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.

NEW RUTGERS-EAGLETON POLL SHOWS DEMOCRATIC INCUMBENTS SAFE, BUT REPUBLICANS SAFER

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. – Will New Jersey voters support their incumbent congressional representatives in this fall’s contentious midterm elections?

Their answers depend on how the question is asked.

If the question is framed in terms of incumbency – will you vote for your current congressman? – voters who have made up their minds are split nearly evenly between incumbents and challengers.

But, if the question is framed purely partisan terms – will you vote for a Democrat or a Republican this fall? – voters who have made up their minds are favoring Democrats.

When registered voters statewide are asked about voting for their current member of Congress or for a challenger – without identifying either by party – they give incumbents a 30 percent to 28 percent lead, while 31 percent say they do not know how they would vote and 11 percent say they definitely would not vote. This compares a February, 2010 Rutgers-Eagleton Poll, which showed incumbents supported 32 percent to 25 percent, with 27 percent undecided and 17 percent not voting.

“We have seen tightening of the generic incumbent versus challenger results since February,” said David Redlawsk, director of the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll and professor of political science at Rutgers University. “Among those making a choice, it is now a statistical dead heat statewide, where incumbents had a seven-point margin six months ago. No question that the environment is more risky than usual for incumbents, though it still seems likely that most, if not all, New Jersey incumbents will survive.”

Half those polled were asked about voting for their “current congressman” versus a challenger; half were asked about voting for a generic Republican versus a Democrat. Among these latter voters, 38 percent said they would vote for a Democrat and 29 percent supported a Republican, with 4 percent “other,” 25 percent don’t know and 4 percent saying they will not vote.
In February, 33 percent favored Democrats, 31 percent Republicans and 7 percent someone else, with 20 percent saying didn’t know and 10 percent not voting.

The poll of 751 registered New Jersey voters was conducted Aug. 5 to Aug. 8. The full sample has a margin of error of +/-3.6 percentage points. Vote questions were asked of random half samples, which have a margin of error of +/- 5.0 percentage points.

**Democratic “incumbents” fare badly, but “Democrats” do just fine**

Across all districts held by Democrats, voters support a generic Democrat over a Republican 41 percent to 28 percent. But when party is not named, voters in these same districts appear more ready to toss their incumbents, with 29 percent supporting their “current congressman” and 31 percent supporting “a challenger.” The story is the opposite for Republicans. When party is named, voters in GOP-held districts support an unnamed Democrat 34 percent to 31 percent for the Republican, a -3 margin for Republicans. In February a generic Republican led by 15 points in these same districts. But when asked about supporting their “current congressman” over a challenger, voters support the incumbent 33 percent to 23 percent, a 10 point margin, compared to 7 points in February.

Republicans are hurt when their party is named because voters are very unhappy with Republicans in Congress. While only 37 percent of voters feel favorable towards Congressional Democrats, Republicans are liked by even fewer; only 27 percent hold a “favorable” impression.

“Still when we ask voters about supporting their current congressman or voting for a challenger, Democratic districts suffer the most, reflecting that voters are unhappy and know that it is Democrats who are in charge,” said Redlawsk. “Voters in GOP districts overall are more supportive of their ‘current congressman’ than those in Democratic-held districts, when party is not named. Anti-incumbency, such as it is, is more directed at Democrats than Republicans.”

**Independents leaning Republican**

Independent voters are more supportive of Republicans then Democrats. When asked whether they would vote for an unnamed Democrat or Republican for Congress, independents pick the Republican 25 percent to 14 percent for the Democrat with 8 percent preferring someone else. But 46 percent of independents are undecided, and another 7 percent say they will not vote. This is a slight drop for both parties from the February Rutgers-Eagleton Poll when Republicans led Democrats 30 to 17 percent.
When asked if they would vote for their current congressman or a challenger, independents statewide support a challenger 30 percent to 22 percent, with 34 percent undecided and 15 percent saying they would not vote. Challengers have gained since February when independents were evenly split 28 to 28 percent.

“But, as indicated by the very large undecided and not voting groups, turnout by independents in off-year elections is usually much lower than partisans,” Redlawsk said. “So while Republicans and challengers generally may gain from independent voters, the gain will be limited unless turnout by these voters is much higher than usual.”

There is some evidence independents may turn out in larger than usual numbers. More independents than Democrats say they are following news about the election somewhat or very closely, 63 percent to 52 percent. Republicans are paying even more attention, with 72 percent claiming they are following election news somewhat or very closely.

**Obama and Christie have influence**

Voters’ opinions about President Obama and Gov. Christie have some bearing on how voters see the congressional races. President Obama is seen favorably by 52 percent of New Jersey votes, and unfavorably by 36 percent, compared to 56 to 31 percent in March. Meanwhile, Gov. Christie is viewed favorably by 46 percent and unfavorably by 39 percent, up from April, when his rating was 33 percent favorable and 37 percent unfavorable.

Support for Obama appears to have a stronger partisan influence on registered voters, than Christie. Statewide, voters who view Obama favorably say they will vote for a Democrat for Congress, 61 percent to 8 percent for a Republican, while those favorable to Christie support a Republican 55 percent to 14 percent.

In districts held by Democrats, Christie support increases the vote for a challenger over the incumbent. Voters favorable towards Christie say they will vote for a challenger, 39 percent to 20 percent, while those unfavorable towards the Governor support the incumbent, 42 percent to 24 percent, a 37 point shift away from the Democratic incumbent based on Christie favorability in Democratic districts. Obama’s influence in Republican districts is not as strong. While support for Obama also leads to support for a challenger, 28 percent to 24 percent, those unfavorable towards Obama support the Republican incumbent, 40 to 19 percent. This is a shift of only 25 points from the incumbent based on favorability towards Obama in GOP districts.
“Voters in Democratic districts are more easily moved by support for Christie than are voters in GOP-held districts by support for Obama; Republicans are just less likely to defect,” said Redlawsk.

Statewide results do not include the 3rd Congressional District, where a Rutgers-Eagleton poll released Aug. 10 shows incumbent Democrat John Adler leading Republican Jon Runyan 31 to 25 percent.

QUESTIONS AND TABLES FOLLOW ON THE NEXT PAGE
The questions covered in the release of August 17, 2010 are listed below. Column percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding. All percentages are of New Jersey Registered Voters.

**Q. Thinking back to the last presidential election, did you vote for Barack Obama, John McCain, some other candidate, or were you unable to vote?**

- Obama: 50%
- McCain: 28%
- Some other candidate: 4%
- Unable to vote: 10%
- Don’t remember: 2%
- Refused: 5%

N= 751

**Q. And in last year’s election for New Jersey Governor, did you vote for Republican Chris Christie, Democrat Jon Corzine, Independent Chris Daggett, some other candidate, or were you unable to vote?**

- Christie: 34%
- Corzine: 38%
- Daggett: 4%
- Some other candidate: 3%
- Unable to vote: 17%
- Don’t remember (Vol): 3%
- Refused: 3%

N= 751

**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?**

- Right Direction: 37%
- Wrong Track: 50%
- Don’t Know: 12%

N= 750

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New Jersey Congressional Election – August 2010
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll

[SPLIT SAMPLE – RANDOM HALF TO VERSION A and HALF TO VERSION B]

[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?

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[VERSION B]

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#### Rutgers-Eagleton Poll

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<th>Black</th>
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<th>Hispanic</th>
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<th>30-49</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>29%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Party</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not vote</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>31%</td>
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**N=** 251 41 28 35 55 140 113 55

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<th>Exurb</th>
<th>Philly</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Shore</th>
<th>Shore &lt; 50K</th>
<th>50K-100K</th>
<th>100K-150K</th>
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<td>25%</td>
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<td>28%</td>
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<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not vote</td>
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<td>23%</td>
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<td>30%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>28%</td>
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<td>31%</td>
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**N=** 81 100 53 51 66 112 103 63 30
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<th>Third Party</th>
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<th>Don’t Know</th>
<th>Favor</th>
<th>Unfav</th>
<th>DK</th>
<th>Favor</th>
<th>Unfav</th>
<th>DK</th>
<th>Favor</th>
<th>Unfav</th>
<th>DK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>68%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>27%</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>28%</td>
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<td>9%</td>
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<td>13%</td>
<td>50%</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Current Congressman</th>
<th>Challenger</th>
<th>Not vote</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
<th>Favor</th>
<th>Unfav</th>
<th>DK</th>
<th>Favor</th>
<th>Unfav</th>
<th>DK</th>
<th>Favor</th>
<th>Unfav</th>
<th>DK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>59%</td>
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<td>12%</td>
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<td>33%</td>
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<td>20%</td>
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<td>22%</td>
<td>24%</td>
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<table>
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<th>Republican Incumbent</th>
<th>Favor</th>
<th>Unfavor</th>
<th>Favor</th>
<th>Unfavor</th>
<th>Favor</th>
<th>Unfavor</th>
<th>Favor</th>
<th>Unfavor</th>
<th>Favor</th>
<th>Unfavor</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
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<td>87%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td>63%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
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<td>24%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>32%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Version</th>
<th>Current Congressman</th>
<th>Challenger</th>
<th>Not vote</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
<th>Favor</th>
<th>Unfavor</th>
<th>DK</th>
<th>Favor</th>
<th>Unfavor</th>
<th>DK</th>
<th>Favor</th>
<th>Unfavor</th>
<th>DK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>19%</td>
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<td>32%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>32%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>32%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
New Jersey Congressional Election – August 2010
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll

Q. How closely have you followed news about the election this fall?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very closely</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat closely</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not too closely</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all closely</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N= 751

Q. I’d like to ask about some people and organizations. Please tell me if your general impression of [NAME] is favorable or unfavorable, or if you do not have an opinion. First [Next]….

[ROTATE ORDER OF NAMES]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Favorable</th>
<th>Unfavorable</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President Obama</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governor Christie</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislature in Trenton</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Tea Party movement</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrats in Congress</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republicans in Congress</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N= 750
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll August 5-8, 2010
New Jersey Statewide Poll

The Rutgers-Eagleton Poll was conducted from August 5-8, 2010 with a scientifically selected random sample of 751 registered voters from throughout the state of New Jersey. Data are weighted to represent known parameters in the New Jersey population, including gender, age, race, education, and Hispanic ethnicity. All results are reported with these weighted data. This telephone poll included 660 landline respondents acquired through random digit dialing, supplemented by 71 interviews of randomly selected cell phone only 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 the full sample of 751 registered voters is +/-3.6 points, at a 95 percent confidence interval. 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 46.4 and 53.6 percent (50 +/- 3.6) had all New Jersey 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. For the landline respondents, the AAPOR response rate was 18.0%, the refusal rate was 26.3% and the cooperation rate was 39.8%. For the cell phone respondents, the AAPOR response rate was 9.1%, the refusal rate was 30.0% and the cooperation rate was 25.1%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weighted Sample Characteristics</th>
<th>(n=751 Registered Voters)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>37% Dem</td>
<td>48% Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41% Independent</td>
<td>52% Female</td>
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<tr>
<td>22% Republican</td>
<td>16% 18-29</td>
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<td></td>
<td>38% 30-49</td>
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<td>23% 50-64</td>
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<td></td>
<td>19% 65+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71% White</td>
<td>12% Black</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10% Hispanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6% Asian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1% Other/Multiple</td>
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