

Rutgers - Eagleton Poll

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CRANKY ELECTORATE STILL GIVES DEMOCRATS THE EDGE IN LEGISLATIVE CAMPAIGN

VOTERS ALSO BACK STEM CELL BOND ISSUE BY WIDE MARGIN

Voters are growing increasingly negative about New Jersey as a place to live, and perceptions of the extent of corruption among public officials is at an all-time high in the latest Rutgers-Eagleton Poll. And yet, likely voters still prefer Democrats over Republicans by margins of 10 to 12 percentage points when asked which party they would support in the upcoming state legislative election on Nov. 6.

The statewide telephone survey, conducted Oct. 18-23, also found that likely voters, by a margin of 57 to 36 percent, would approve the state's proposed \$450 million bond issue to finance stem cell research if the election were held today. Registered voters who identified themselves as Catholics said they would support the bond issue by a margin of 48 to 41 percent, while registered voters who identified themselves as evangelical or born-again Christians expressed support by a margin of 48 to 42 percent. Two-thirds of Democrats and 57 percent of

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independent registered voters said they would support the bond issue, while Republican voters were evenly split on the ballot question.

“The margin favoring approval of the stem cell research bond issue is typical for recent ballot questions about state uses of public funds, despite public controversy surrounding this type of research,” said Tim Vercellotti, director of polling at the Eagleton Institute of Politics. “That some of the key constituencies expected to oppose the ballot question, such as evangelical Christians and Republican voters, are narrowly in favor or divided speaks to the strength of public support for the bond issue.”

The mood of the Garden State

The Nov. 6 election comes amid a souring of public sentiment about New Jersey and its elected officials. Thirty-nine percent of registered voters said that New Jersey is a fair or poor place in which to live, compared to 24 percent in 2003 and 28 percent in 2004. Gov. Jon Corzine’s job approval rating is at 47 percent among registered voters, down from 57 percent in August. The State Legislature’s job approval rating is 30 percent among registered voters, a drop of seven points since January 2004 and 18 points since February-March 2002.

While positive assessments of the governor and the Legislature declined in the latest poll, perceptions of public corruption increased. Sixty-six percent of registered voters said there is a lot of political corruption in New Jersey, up from 47 percent in August 2004 and 39 percent in January-February 2003. Twenty-seven percent of registered voters also said the extent of political corruption in New Jersey is greater today than five years ago, up five percentage points from August 2004.

Despite increasingly negative views about the state and its officials, voters who said they definitely will vote in the Nov. 6 legislative election were more likely to favor Democrats than Republicans for seats in the Assembly and Senate. Forty-two percent of likely voters said they would back Democrats for the Assembly seats in their district, and 32 percent said they would support Republicans. Forty-six percent said they would back the Democratic candidate for the Senate seat from their district, while 34 percent said they would vote for a Republican candidate.

“While statewide poll data cannot predict the outcome of individual races for the 80 Assembly seats and 40 Senate seats on the ballot, the general sense of the electorate favors Democrats right now,” Vercellotti said.

But Vercellotti noted that about one-fifth of likely voters, and more than one-third of registered independent voters, said they were undecided about whom to support in their districts. Also, only one-quarter of registered voters accurately identified state legislative seats as being among the offices on the ballot in the Nov. 6 election. The Democrats control the Assembly by a 20-seat margin, but control the Senate by only four seats.

“Voter knowledge about the specifics of the election is low, and that is likely to change in the days leading up to the election,” Vercellotti said. “Given the large percentage of undecided voters, neither party can afford to be complacent.”

Property taxes remain the top issue among voters who said they definitely will cast a ballot on Election Day. Twenty-eight percent of likely voters said property tax reform should be the top priority of the new Legislature, followed by dealing with the state’s budget crisis (21 percent) and eliminating corruption among state elected officials (19 percent). Voters also identified property tax reform as the top issue for the incoming governor to address in 2005, followed by eliminating corruption among state elected officials.

“Voters’ continued focus on property taxes may explain why the electorate still gives the edge to Democrats in the legislative election, despite perceptions of increasing levels of public corruption,” Vercellotti said. “In the eyes of the voters, property tax reform still trumps addressing corruption as a policy priority.”

The poll also found that while voters have an increasingly negative view of the State Legislature, those attitudes do not necessarily extend to individual legislators. While only 30 percent of registered voters and 34 percent of likely voters approved of the job the Legislature is doing, 48 percent of registered voters and 55 percent of likely voters approved of the job that legislators from their district are doing.

“The data illustrate the classic disconnect between views about a political institution and the individuals who make up the institution,” Vercellotti said. “Voters tend to look at Congress in a similar vein, with greater support for individual representatives than for the body as a whole.”

Stem cell research and other ballot questions

Voter support for the \$450 million bond issue to finance research using adult stem cells and embryonic stem cells did not vary significantly by gender or race. While registered voters who identified themselves as Catholics or evangelical Christians favored the bond issue by a small margin, the gap was much larger for voters who described themselves as Protestant or Jewish. Protestant voters favored the bond issue by a margin of 57 to 36 percent, and Jewish voters favored the bond issue by 86 to 8 percent.

Support varied by the reported frequency with which voters attend worship services. Registered voters who said they attend a worship service at least once a week were evenly

divided, 44 percent in favor and 46 percent opposed. Fifty-three percent of voters who said they attend worship services almost every week said they support the bond issue, and 66 percent of voters who said they never attend worship services said they would vote for the bond issue.

Among those who said they opposed the bond issue, 58 percent said they did so because they think the state cannot afford to borrow the money. One-quarter of those who said they would vote against the bond issue cited moral objections to embryonic stem cell research.

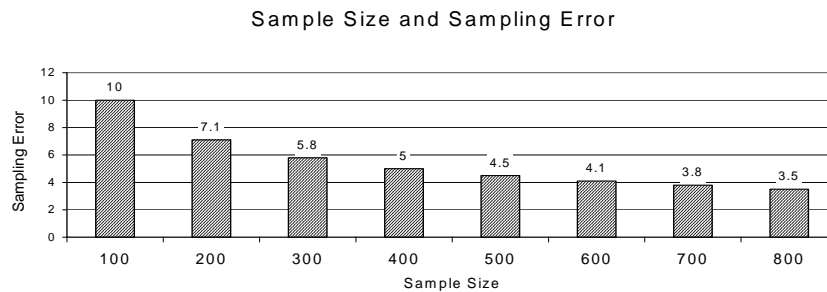
A majority of voters also supported a bond issue on the ballot that would generate \$200 million to buy land for recreation and conservation purposes, preserve farmland and pay for historic preservation projects. Fifty-nine percent of likely voters said they would vote in favor of the bond issue, and 34 percent were opposed.

By a much larger margin, voters said they would back a ballot question that would dedicate one-half of one percent of the state sales tax to property tax relief. Seventy percent of likely voters said they would support the measure, and only 21 percent said they would oppose it.

BACKGROUND MEMO – RELEASE (EP 163-1) OCTOBER 25, 2007

The latest Rutgers-Eagleton Poll was conducted Oct. 18-23, 2007 with a scientifically selected random sample of 1,002 New Jersey adults. This sample yielded 856 adult residents who said they are registered to vote in New Jersey and 435 adults considered to be likely to vote in the Nov. 6, 2007 election. Unless otherwise noted, most of the figures in this release are based on the statewide sample of registered voters and likely voters. Sampling and data collection were conducted by Braun Research, Princeton, NJ.

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 1,002 adults is ± 3.1 percent, at a 95 percent confidence interval. The margin of sampling error for 856 registered voters is ± 3.4 percent, and the margin of sampling error for 435 likely voters is ± 4.7 percent. Thus if 50 percent of likely voters were found to have a favorable opinion of Gov. Jon Corzine, one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 45.3 percent and 54.7 percent (50 percent ± 4.7 percent) 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. The following chart shows the relationship between sample size and sampling error. 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 background memo contains the verbatim wording of all questions featured in the release.



NJ1. Overall, how would you rate New Jersey as a place to live—excellent, good, only fair or poor?

New Jersey as a Place to Live						
	Excellent	Good	Only fair	Poor	DK/RF (VOL)	(n)
October 2007						
Registered voters	15%	45%	26%	13%	1%	856
Aug. 2004						
Registered voters	24%	48%	21%	7%	0%	624
Sept. 2003						
Registered voters	28%	47%	19%	5%	0%	658

AE1. There is an election this November in New Jersey. Even though this has not received a lot of attention yet, do you happen to know which offices are up for a vote? [DO NOT READ RESPONSE CATEGORIES]

Awareness of 2007 State Legislative Election					
	Names State Assembly, Senate, and/or Legislature	Names other political offices	Names Legislature and other political offices	DK/RF	(n)
October 2007					
Registered voters	18%	3%	8%	71%	856
Democrat	17%	3%	7%	74%	290
Republican	19%	4%	8%	69%	208
Independent	21%	5%	10%	64%	277
Sept. 2003					
Likely voters	14%	7%	6%	73%	266

AE2. Most people do not vote in the State Legislature elections. How about you -- do you think you definitely will vote, probably will vote or probably not vote in the November election for State Legislature?

Plans to Vote in 2007 State Legislative Election						
	Definitely will	Probably will	Probably will not	Definitely will not (VOL)	DK/RF (VOL)	(n)
October 2007						
Registered voters	46%	32%	16%	2%	4%	856
Democrat	48%	33%	15%	1%	4%	290
Republican	53%	33%	10%	1%	3%	208
Independent	44%	32%	15%	4%	5%	277
September 2003 Registered voters	36%	37%	22%	2%	3%	658
September 1999 Registered voters	50%	35%	12%	1%	2%	601

AE3. And if the election was held today, would you vote for the Republican or Democratic candidates for Assembly in your district?

Vote Intent for Assembly in 2007 State Legislative Election					
	Republicans	Democrats	Split/Other (VOL)	DK/RF/ Undecided (VOL)	(n)
October 2007					
Likely voters	32%	42%	6%	20%	435
October 2007					
Registered voters	32%	42%	5%	21%	706
Democrat	5%	86%	1%	8%	242
Republican	81%	1%	7%	11%	186
Independent	26%	30%	8%	36%	223
September 2003 Likely voters	32%	41%	5%	22%	266
September 2001 Likely voters	39%	40%	1%	20%	396

AE4. And if the election was held today, would you vote for the Republican or Democratic candidate for Senate in your district?

Vote Intent for Senate in 2007 State Legislative Election					
	Republican	Democrat	Other (VOL)	DK/RF/ Undecided (VOL)	(n)
October 2007 Likely voters	34%	46%	1%	19%	435
October 2007 Registered voters	34%	44%	1%	21%	706
Democrat	4%	89%	0%	7%	242
Republican	87%	3%	0%	10%	186
Independent	28%	31%	3%	38%	223
September 2003 Likely voters	33%	43%	2%	22%	266
September 1997 Likely voters	31%	35%	1%	34%	501

AE5. October 2007

If Governor Jon Corzine (pronounced Core-zign) campaigned for the Democratic candidates in your district would this make you more likely to support them, less likely, or make no difference in how you would vote?

September 2003

“If Governor McGreevey campaigned for the Democratic candidates in your district would this make you more likely to support them, less likely, or make no difference in how you would vote?”

Governor’s Effect on Vote Intent in 2007 State Legislative Election					
	More likely	Less likely	Makes no difference	DK/RF (VOL)	(n)
October 2007					
Likely voters	14%	23%	60%	3%	435
October 2007					
Registered voters	12%	22%	64%	3%	706
Democrat	21%	7%	68%	4%	242
Republican	3%	43%	53%	1%	186
Independent	12%	23%	64%	2%	223
September 2003					
Likely voters	14%	20%	63%	3%	266

October 2007

AE6. Now I'm going to read to you a list of issues that the next State Legislature may address, and I can repeat the list if it helps. Which one of the following issues should be the top priority for the State Legislature to address? (READ AND ROTATE)

October 2005

MP1. Now I'm going to read to you a list of issues that the next Governor of New Jersey may address. Which one of the following issues should be the top priority for the next Governor to address? (READ AND ROTATE)

	Oct. 2007 Legislative Election	Oct. 2007 Legislative Election	Oct. 2005 Gubernatorial Election
	Likely voters	Registered voters	Likely voters
Dealing with the state's budget crisis	21%	19%	13%
Improving the quality of education	13%	13%	14%
Protecting the state from terrorist attacks	5%	6%	9%
Reducing property taxes	28%	30%	31%
Increasing access to quality healthcare	9%	13%	11%
Eliminating corruption among state elected officials	19%	16%	17%
None of the above	1%	0%	---
Other	1%	1%	3%
Don't know/Refused (VOL)	2%	2%	3%
(n)	435	856	638

ST1. Voters in November also will decide whether the state should issue 450 million dollars in bonds to provide grants for stem cell research. If the election were held today, would you vote for or against the bond issue? (IF UNSURE: As of today, which way are you leaning?)

		Stem Cell Research Bond Issue				
		For	Against	DK/ Undecided (VOL)	RF (VOL)	(n)
October 2007						
Likely voters		57%	36%	7%	0%	435
October 2007						
Registered voters		56%	34%	9%	0%	856
Democrat		68%	22%	9%	0%	290
Republican		45%	46%	7%	2%	208
Independent		57%	32%	11%	0%	277
Male		56%	37%	7%	0%	409
Female		57%	31%	11%	1%	447
White		56%	35%	9%	1%	705
Non-white		59%	30%	10%	0%	119
Catholic		48%	41%	11%	0%	379
Protestant		57%	36%	7%	0%	220
Jewish		86%	8%	7%	0%	70
Evangelical Christian	Yes	48%	42%	9%	2%	135
	No	58%	32%	10%	0%	683
Attends worship services	At least once a week	44%	46%	9%	2%	258
	Almost every week	53%	34%	14%	0%	85
	About once a month	63%	26%	12%	0%	126
	Seldom	63%	30%	8%	0%	240
	Never	66%	26%	7%	0%	118

ST2. Which of the following statements comes closest to your reason for voting against the state bond issue to pay for stem cell research? (*Asked only of those who said they would vote against the bond issue.*)

- 1 I oppose embryonic stem cell research on moral grounds
- 2 I think the state can't afford to borrow money for stem cell research
- 3 Both statements (VOL)
- 4 Neither statement (VOL)
- 5 Other reason (specify) _____ (VOL)
- 9 Don't know/Refused (VOL)

Reasons for Opposing Stem Cell Research Bond Issue							
	Oppose on moral grounds	State can't afford to borrow the money	Both (VOL)	Neither (VOL)	Other (VOL)	DK/RF (VOL)	(n)
October 2007 Likely voters	26%	58%	13%	1%	1%	0%	160
October 2007 Registered voters	27%	60%	10%	2%	1%	0%	290

TX1. Voters in November will decide whether to dedicate one-half of one percent of the state sales tax toward property tax reform. If the election were held today, would you vote for or against dedicating one-half of one percent of the sales tax to property tax reform? (IF UNSURE: As of today, which way are you leaning?)

Sales Tax Ballot Question					
	For	Against	DK/Undecided (VOL)	RF (VOL)	(n)
October 2007 Likely voters	70%	21%	8%	1%	435
October 2007 Registered voters	71%	19%	10%	1%	856

SP1. Voters in November will decide whether the state should issue 200 million dollars in bonds to buy land for recreation and conservation purposes, to preserve farmland, and to pay for historic preservation projects. If the election were held today, would you vote for or against this bond issue? (IF UNSURE: As of today, which way are you leaning?)

Land Preservation Bond Issue						
	For	Against	DK/ Undecided (VOL)	RF (VOL)	(n)	
October 2007 Likely voters	59%	34%	7%	0%	435	
October 2007 Registered voters	61%	32%	7%	0%	856	

J1. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Jon Corzine (pronounced Core-zign) is handling his job as Governor?

		Approve	Disapprove	DK/RF	(n)
Oct. 2007	Likely voters	48%	42%	11%	435
Oct. 2007	Registered voters	47%	38%	15%	856
Party ID	Democrat	68%	20%	12%	290
	Republican	29%	60%	11%	208
	Independent	38%	43%	19%	277
Aug. 2007	Registered voters	57%	33%	10%	891
Party ID	Democrat	76%	16%	8%	268
	Republican	39%	52%	9%	205
	Independent	53%	36%	11%	325
Oct. 2006	Registered voters	51%	32%	17%	695
Sept. 2006	Registered voters	50%	34%	16%	660
June 2006	Registered voters	45%	35%	20%	699
Mar. 2006	Registered voters	41%	36%	23%	676

L1. Do you approve or disapprove of the job the New Jersey State Legislature is doing?

		Approve	Disapprove	DK/RF	(n)
Oct. 2007	Likely voters	34%	48%	18%	435
Oct. 2007	Registered voters	30%	43%	26%	856
Party ID	Democrat	44%	31%	25%	290
	Republican	22%	59%	19%	208
	Independent	21%	47%	32%	277
Jan. 2004	Registered voters	37%	35%	28%	823
Feb.-March 2002	Registered voters	48%	22%	31%	645

L2. And how about the people who represent YOUR DISTRICT in the New Jersey State Legislature. Do you approve or disapprove of the job they are doing?

		Approve	Disapprove	Mixed	DK/RF	(n)
Oct. 2007	Likely voters	55%	30%	6%	10%	435
Oct. 2007	Registered voters	48%	31%	5%	16%	856
Party ID	Democrat	57%	22%	4%	16%	290
	Republican	48%	36%	4%	11%	208
	Independent	41%	36%	7%	16%	277

C1. On another topic, how much political corruption would you say there is in New Jersey – a lot, some, only a little, or none at all?

Political Corruption in New Jersey						
	A lot	Some	Only a little	None at all	DK/RF (VOL)	(n)
October 2007 Likely voters	70%	22%	4%	0%	5%	435
October 2007 Registered voters	66%	25%	4%	0%	5%	856
Democrat	58%	32%	6%	0%	5%	290
Republican	81%	14%	2%	0%	3%	208
Independent	69%	26%	3%	0%	2%	277
Aug. 2004 Registered voters	47%	34%	10%	1%	8%	624
Jan. 2004 Registered voters	37%	46%	10%	0%	6%	823
Jan.- Feb. 2003 Registered voters	39%	42%	12%	1%	5%	630

C2. Would you say there is more or less political corruption in New Jersey today than there was five years ago, or is it about the same?

Political Corruption in New Jersey Today Compared to Five Years Ago					
	More	Less	About the same	DK/RF (VOL)	(n)
October 2007 Likely voters	30%	8%	58%	4%	435
October 2007 Registered voters	27%	8%	57%	8%	856
Democrat	19%	10%	61%	9%	290
Republican	34%	3%	58%	5%	208
Independent	31%	10%	53%	7%	277
Aug. 2004 Registered voters	22%	10%	55%	13%	624