

The Star-Ledger/EAGLETON POLL

FOR RELEASE: **IMMEDIATE: OCTOBER 6, 1988**
RELEASE: SL/EP 20-4 (EP 70-4)

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RELEASE INFORMATION

A story based on the survey findings presented in this release and background memo will appear in Friday's *Star-Ledger*. Other newspapers may also use this information in their Friday editions. Electronic media may release immediately. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to the "*Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll*."

SENATE RACE UNCHANGED SINCE MAY: **LAUTENBERG HOLDS COMMANDING 20 POINT LEAD OVER DAWKINS**

As far as the average New Jersey voter is concerned, the race for the U.S. Senate has yet to start. There has been virtually no change in New Jerseyans' preferences in the Senate contest over the last four months. Democratic incumbent Frank Lautenberg continues to maintain a commanding lead of 20 points over his Republican challenger Pete Dawkins, according to the latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll*.

The survey, conducted by telephone during the last half of September with 790 Garden State residents who said they were registered and planned to vote in November's election, finds Lautenberg holding a 48 to 28 percent lead over Dawkins, with 24 percent yet undecided. Last May, Lautenberg led Dawkins by an almost identical margin of 45 to 28 percent.

While a majority of voters report having seen television ads for both men and name recognition is up, the poll also finds majorities of voters saying they know little about either candidate. Fully half express no opinion of Lautenberg; almost 65 percent say they have formed no opinion about Dawkins. Additionally, half of those interviewed either say they are undecided about who they will vote for or acknowledge that they might change their mind before election day.

"We are seeing a fluid and uninformed electorate that has yet to tune in on a largely invisible campaign," said Cliff Zukin, director of the Poll. "Because local TV in New Jersey comes

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from New York and Philadelphia it is often hard for voters here to learn about the candidates from the electronic media. And this year they have not been helped much by the campaigns, which have been characterized by a greater amount of personal attacks and negative advertising than we have seen in the past."

New Jerseyans report widespread exposure to the candidates' advertisements, with about 60 percent saying they have seen ads for each man. While these ads may have done little to change how people plan to vote, the recent survey does reveal a slight shifting in the public's images of the candidates. Opinions of Lautenberg have become a bit more favorable while impressions of Dawkins have become a bit more unfavorable since May.

While half express no opinion of Lautenberg, views of him are decidedly favorable among those offering an assessment. Positive impressions outnumber negative ones by a margin of 39 to 11 percent. The ratio last May was a similar 34 to 9 percent. In contrast, changes in the public's image of Dawkins over the last four months, while slight, have been almost entirely negative. In May, favorable opinions outnumbered unfavorable ones by a margin of 23 to 4 percent. The current survey finds no change in positive assessments, but negative ones have increased from 4 to 13 percentage points. The vast majority--64 percent--report having formed no opinion of the Republican challenger.

The overall figures indicating rock-solid stability between May and September in how people plan to vote hide some important changes in the candidates' bases of support. While Lautenberg receives the same level of support from members of his party--from 72 percent of Democrats in May and 74 percent in September, Republicans have rallied to give additional support to their candidate, with partisan loyalty increasing from 58 to 66 percent over the last four months.

Dawkins' greater Republican strength has been offset, however, by a significant surge of support for Lautenberg among the state's independent voters--a critical group in New Jersey elections. Last May found Lautenberg with a precarious lead of only six percentage points among

independents--38 to 32 percent with the remainder undecided. The current survey finds Lautenberg holding a much more comfortable lead of 22 points--44 to 22 percent with 34 percent undecided--among this segment of the electorate.

In addition to the large number of still undecided voters--one quarter of the electorate --the latest survey also shows that those who do express a vote preference are not strongly committed to their choice, meaning that things could change quickly and substantially before election day. Just under half of those who say they "definitely" or "probably" will vote in the election say they are "sure" about how they will cast their ballots. Fully 40 percent of Dawkins supporters say they might change their mind before election day, as do one-third of those currently planning to vote for Lautenberg.

Zukin commented, "When voters have as little information as we see in the Senate race there is the potential for a great deal of volatility and change. Thus it is not impossible for Dawkins to close a 20 point deficit in the five weeks remaining. However, this is a lot of ground to make up and will require a dramatic change in the campaign to bring it about."

Recognition of Dawkins has increased substantially over the past year. Just over three-quarters now say they recognize his name, up from about half of the electorate in May and 29 percent last February. However, just one voter in five feels they know "a lot" or at least "some" about the former Heisman trophy winner, Brigadier General and investment banker.

New Jerseyans feel they know a little more about Lautenberg, who is completing his first term in the Senate. Lautenberg defeated Millicent Fenwick in 1982. Just under 90 percent recognize Lautenberg's name, with 35 percent saying they know at least "some" about him, up from 23 percent in February.

The figures presented in this release are actually a composite based on two small independent surveys conducted by Eagleton, as described in the accompanying background memo. The first was conducted between September 16 and 22; the second between September 26 and 29. With the absence of a statistically significant difference between the two on the critical variable of "vote choice" they have been pooled together and treated as a single survey to increase the sample size and lower the sampling error, thereby increasing the accuracy of the data.

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SIDEBAR: DECLINE IN KEAN'S JOB PERFORMANCE RATING

Governor Thomas Kean's job performance rating has slipped to its lowest point since April of 1984, during his first term in office. While still extremely popular, the current survey finds 66 percent giving the Governor positive ratings of "excellent" or "good," down from 74 percent in February of this year and a high of 81 percent in February of 1987. Currently, 22 percent say Kean is doing an "only fair" job as Governor, while six percent rate his job performance as "poor" and seven percent express no opinion.

In addition to showing the overall decline in Kean's job performance rating, which is largely across the board, the survey also reveals there has been a significant change in some partisan evaluations of the Governor over the past six months. Last February found all groups offering virtually identical ratings of Kean--he was judged to be doing an excellent job, for example, by 29 percent of Republicans, by 28 percent of Democrats, and by 27 percent of Independents.

The current survey finds a 10 percentage point increase in the number of Republicans offering the ratings of "excellent," accompanied by a 13 percentage point decrease in the number of Independents expressing this judgment. The proportion of Democrats tendering this assessment remained fairly constant.

Zukin noted, "While the time span between the February and September surveys obviously encompasses a number of things that have happened in the state, it also spans this summer's political activity, when the Governor gave the keynote address at the Republican convention. Kean has never really been judged in partisan terms by New Jersey citizens. It is possible that the decline in his popularity is a result of state residents seeing him in an expressly partisan context for the first time."

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BACKGROUND MEMO--RELEASE SL/EP 20-4 (EP 70-4), IMMEDIATE RELEASE: OCTOBER 6, 1988

The latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton* Poll was conducted in two waves. Wave 1 was completed between September 16 and 22, 1988, when a random sample of 500 New Jerseyans ages 18 years and older was interviewed by telephone. This sampling yielded a total of 367 respondents who reported being registered to vote and saying they would "definitely" or "probably" vote in November's election. Figures based on this sample size are subject to a sampling error of ± 5.5 percent. The second wave of interviews was conducted between September 26 and 29, when an additional 423 "definite" or "probable" voters were asked questions about the senate contest and is subject to a sampling error of ± 4.8 percent. Figures based on the combined sample size of 790 are subject to a sampling error of ± 3.5 percent. Sampling error is the probable difference in results between interviewing everyone in the population versus a scientific sample taken from that population. Sampling error does not take into account other possible sources of error inherent in any study of public opinion. The questions and figures referred to in this release are as follows:

"New Jersey will also be choosing a U. S. Senator this year. The (Democratic/Republican) candidate is (Frank Lautenberg/Pete Dawkins)--have you ever heard of him?"

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No/DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
LAUTENBERG	88%	13%	101%	(790)
<u>Party</u>				
--Democratic	84	16	100	(263)
--Independent	93	7	100	(263)
--Republican	86	13	99	(233)
February, 1988	83	17	100	(587)
DAWKINS	77	23	100	(790)
<u>Party</u>				
--Democratic	67	33	100	(263)
--Independent	84	16	100	(263)
--Republican	83	17	100	(233)
May, 1988	52	48	100	(611)
February, 1988	29	71	100	(586)

"How much do you think you know about (Lautenberg/Dawkins)--a lot, some, or just a little?"

	<u>A Lot</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Little</u>	<u>Nothing</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
LAUTENBERG							
September, 1988	7%	28%	47%	15%	2%	99%	(367)
<u>Party</u>							
--Democratic	13	29	40	18	0	100	(120)
--Independent	4	32	52	10	2	100	(122)
--Republican	3	23	54	18	2	100	(109)
February, 1988	4	19	51	24	2	100	(587)
DAWKINS							
September, 1988	5	16	52	27	1	101	(367)
<u>Party</u>							
--Democratic	2	13	51	34	0	100	(120)
--Independent	4	15	54	26	1	100	(122)
--Republican	9	19	54	16	1	99	(109)
February, 1988	2	4	18	77	0	101	(586)

"Is your general impression of (Lautenberg/Dawkins) favorable or unfavorable, or don't you have an opinion about him? (IF FAVORABLE OR UNFAVORABLE, PROBE: Is that very (favorable/unfavorable) or somewhat (favorable/unfavorable)?"

	<u>FAVORABLE</u>		<u>UNFAVORABLE</u>		<u>No</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
	<u>Very</u>	<u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Very</u>	<u>Opinion</u>		
<u>LAUTENBERG</u>							
September 1988--Total	19%	20%	6%	5%	50%	100%	(789)
<u>Party</u>							
--Democrat	30	19	3	0	47	99	(262)
--Independent	15	27	5	7	46	100	(263)
--Republican	8	13	11	10	59	101	(233)
<u>Saw Lautenberg Ads</u>							
--yes	25	25	8	7	35	100	(463)
--no	13	15	4	3	66	101	(290)
<u>Saw Dawkins Ads</u>							
--yes	23	24	8	8	37	100	(492)
--no	16	13	2	2	67	100	(231)
May 1988	16	18	5	4	56	99	(611)
February 1988	13	22	3	2	60	100	(587)
<u>DAWKINS</u>							
September 1988--Total	8	16	6	7	64	101	(789)
<u>Party</u>							
--Democrat	2	9	10	10	69	100	(263)
--Independent	8	15	7	7	64	101	(262)
--Republican	16	25	2	1	56	100	(233)
<u>Saw Lautenberg Ads</u>							
--yes	11	18	9	9	52	99	(463)
--no	4	14	2	4	76	100	(289)
<u>Saw Dawkins Ads</u>							
--yes	13	22	10	9	45	99	(492)
--no	1	8	1	4	85	99	(232)
May 1988	10	13	2	2	74	101	(611)
February 1988	2	4	1	1	92	100	(586)

"Have you heard any of (Lautenberg's/Dawkins') television or radio advertisements?"

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
LAUTENBERG	57%	43%	100%	(788)
DAWKINS	58	42	100	(789)

"If the election was today, would you vote for Pete Dawkins, the Republican; or Frank Lautenberg, the Democrat?"

UNDECIDED VOTERS WERE THEN ASKED: Do you lean more towards Dawkins, or more towards Lautenberg?"

INITIALLY UNDECIDED

	<u>Chooses Lautenberg</u>	<u>Leans to Lautenberg</u>	<u>Pure Undecided</u>	<u>Leans to Dawkins</u>	<u>Chooses Dawkins</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September Total	48%	5%	15%	4%	28%	100%	(765)
<u>Party</u>							
--Democrat	74	6	11	4	5	100	(254)
--Independent	44	6	22	6	22	100	(258)
--Republican	17	2	11	5	66	101	(225)
<u>Survey Wave</u>							
--September 16-22	49	6	15	4	26	100	(359)
--September 26-29	47	3	15	5	29	99	(406)
<u>Saw Lautenberg Ads</u>							
--yes	49	5	15	4	27	100	(458)
--no	47	5	13	6	29	100	(276)
<u>Saw Dawkins Ads</u>							
--yes	44	5	10	6	34	99	(485)
--no	52	5	21	3	19	100	(222)
May 1988	45	6	16	5	28	100	(556)
<u>Party</u>							
--Democrat	72	7	15	1	4	99	(189)
--Independent	38	5	17	8	32	100	(191)
--Republican	15	4	14	10	58	101	(157)
February 1988	45		39		16	100	(575)

"Are you very sure about your choice, or might you change your mind before election day?"

	<u>Sure</u>	<u>Might Change</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September Total	48%	52%	100%	(765)
<u>Vote Choice</u>				
--Lautenberg	66	34	100	(360)
--Dawkins	60	40	100	(229)
<u>Saw Lautenberg Ads</u>				
--yes	53	47	100	(458)
--no	42	58	100	(276)
<u>Saw Dawkins Ads</u>				
--yes	55	45	100	(485)
--no	38	62	100	(222)

"There will also be an election for the U.S. House of Representatives in your district in November. If you were voting today, would you vote for the Democratic candidate or the Republican candidate?"

	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Other/ Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 1988--Total	36%	30%	33%	99%	(790)
<u>By Party</u>					
--Democrat	74	6	20	100	(263)
--Independent	28	21	51	100	(263)
--Republican	3	76	21	100	(233)
October 1986	34	31	35	100	(503)
October 1984	39	32	28	99	(1194)

"How would you rate the job Tom Kean is doing as governor--excellent, good, only fair, or poor?"

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September, 1988	24%	42%	22%	6%	7%	101%	(490)
February, 1988	26	48	20	4	2	100	(800)
October, 1987	24	46	23	3	4	100	(1000)
February, 1987	34	47	14	2	3	100	(799)
October, 1986	20	50	22	3	5	100	(800)
July, 1986	22	52	19	3	5	101	(800)
February, 1986	27	53	14	4	3	101	(600)
August, 1985	22	54	20	2	3	101	(800)
April-May, 1985	24	43	24	3	5	99	(1000)
April, 1984	13	44	31	5	8	101	(805)
<u>By Party--September 1988</u>							
--Democrat	26	41	20	6	7	100	(146)
--Independent	14	51	24	7	4	100	(184)
--Republican	39	33	19	4	5	100	(134)
<u>By Party--February 1988</u>							
--Democrat	28	46	23	3	1	101	(225)
--Independent	27	48	17	4	3	99	(313)
--Republican	29	51	16	2	2	100	(209)