

# The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll

**EMBARGOED – NOT FOR RELEASE UNTIL: SUNDAY, JUNE 30 , 1996**

**RELEASE: SL/EP 57-2 (EP 107-2)**

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A story based on the survey findings presented in this release and background memo will appear in Sunday's *Star-Ledger*. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to "The *Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll*."

In this release *The Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll* includes a classification of likely voters that is based on how firmly they support a candidate. A "firm voter" is one who selects a candidate and says they are "very sure" about their choice and will not change their mind before the election. "Not firm voters" are those who select a candidate and say they might change their mind or who are initially undecided. Traditionally, election studies have grouped voters who "lean" toward a candidate with those who are "undecided." Voters who are "firm" in their choice of candidate or those who say they "might change" have been allocated to a specific candidate. A 1993 Eagleton post-election study showed that this traditional classification under-represents the larger group of voters who might change their minds prior to, or even on, Election Day.

All of the percentages in this release are based on New Jersey residents who report they are currently registered to vote.

*The Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll* web address: <http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~eaglepol>

## **THE 1996 ELECTIONS: ISSUES, CHARACTER, AND CAMPAIGNS**

In both the 1996 Presidential and the U. S. Senate race, economic concerns such as the economy, the budget deficit, and unemployment top the list of a wide range of issues New Jersey voters identify as being most important in the election, and the Democratic candidate is preferred as being the most capable of handling the issue New Jersey voters select as being the most important. By a margin of 47 to 34 percent registered voters say Bill Clinton can do a better job than Bob Dole in handling the issue they select as being most important in the Presidential race, and Bob Torricelli (22%) is selected over Dick Zimmer (16%) in the race for U. S. Senate.

- more -

At this time, the three issues where Clinton has the largest advantage over Dole are providing social services (68% to 20%), protecting the environment (61% to 19%), and improving education (59% to 23%). Dole is preferred over Clinton for cutting government spending (48% to 33%), holding down taxes (45% to 33%), and balancing the budget (44% to 35%).

One important aspect of the 1996 Presidential election is the personal characteristics of the candidates. New Jersey voters choose Clinton over Dole for caring more about people (48% to 30%), being more capable of running the country (48% to 35%), and having a clearer vision about the country's future (44% to 32%). Having better personal values is one characteristic where the selection of Bob Dole exceeds Bill Clinton by a margin of 47 to 31 percent.

"While the character issue does not seem to be affecting the support Bill Clinton currently has from the voters, it may in the future. Voters who are not firm in their choice for President give Dole a 2-to-1 advantage over Clinton when it comes to personal values," noted Janice Ballou, Poll Director. "As undecided voters begin to focus on the election, this issue may help Dole close the gap."

In the U. S. Senate race, about 4-in-10 voters report that they do not know enough to select the candidate who is most capable of handling eight different issues. However, at this early stage in the campaign, Torricelli is selected for four issues, Zimmer for two, and the candidates are statistically tied on who would accomplish more for New Jersey and who has a better understanding of the problems and important issues facing New Jersey (Zimmer 24%; Torricelli 27%).

While about half of the registered voters do not see either Senate candidate as having an advantage on a series of seven personal characteristics, Torricelli is selected by more voters than Zimmer on two characteristics, having more experience and caring more about people. The candidates get about equal support for the other five characteristics.

*The Star-Ledger/Eagleton* Poll which was conducted by telephone from June 13 to 19, 1996 with a random sample of 646 registered voters found that even though 6-in-10 registered voters say the upcoming political campaign is an event that they dislike, 3-in-4 say that the campaigns are useful in helping them make a decision about who to vote for.

### ***ISSUES IN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION***

While there is not one single issue that a majority of voters identify as being most important to them in the 1996 Presidential election, the economy (20%), followed by the budget deficit (15%), and unemployment (14%) are mentioned by more voters than any other issues. Smaller percentages of voters name crime (8%), health care (8%), and social services (6%). A range of other issues such as foreign policy (4%), drug and alcohol abuse (3%), taxes (3%), education (2%), government performance and ethics (2%), and moral issues (2%) are also named. And, one percent of voters are concerned about abortion, the environment, immigration, and racial issues.

Overall, Bill Clinton (47%) is selected over Bob Dole (34%) as the candidate who will do the better job of handling the issue the voter identified as being of most concern. Women are about twice as likely to select Clinton (52%) over Dole (27%), compared to men who give about equal support to both candidates (Clinton 42%; Dole 40%). Among the key group of

voters who are not firm in their choice for President, Clinton is selected over Dole by a margin of 39 to 25 percent.

When voters choose a candidate they feel can best handle twelve specific issues, Clinton is selected for eight, Dole for three, and there is a statistical tie on one issue.

Clinton is favored over Dole for:

- providing social services (68% to 20%)
- protecting the environment (61% to 19%)
- improving education (59% to 23%)
- maintaining Medicare spending (56% to 29%)
- creating jobs (50% to 28%)
- dealing with foreign policy (48% to 39%)
- managing the country's economy (45% to 37%)
- reducing crime (40% to 33%).

Dole is selected over Clinton for:

- cutting government spending (48% to 33%)
- holding down taxes (45% to 33%)
- balancing the budget (44% to 35%).

On the issue of reforming welfare, about equal percentages of voters select Clinton (43%) as choose Dole (41%).

***PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION: PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS***

Among the six personal characteristics voters attributed to the Presidential candidates, President Clinton is preferred over Bob Dole on three: cares more about people like you (48% to 30%); is more capable of running the country (48% to 35%); and has a clearer vision about the country's future (44% to 32%).

Dole has the advantage over Clinton for having better personal values (47% to 31%). Similar percentages of voters select both candidates as the one they trust the most (Clinton 39%; Dole 37%) and the one who would bring better people into government (Clinton 41%; Dole 38%).

The issue of personal values gives Bob Dole a decisive advantage over Bill Clinton among voters who are not yet firm in their choice for President. Dole is picked over Clinton by a margin of 50 to 21 percent among the voters who are still making up their mind. In addition, this issue also weakens Clinton's support among those who say they are firm in their selection of President with 16 percent of firm Clinton supporters selecting Dole on this characteristic.

### ***ISSUES IN THE U. S. SENATE ELECTION***

As might be expected, the issues selected by registered voters for the U. S. Senate race reflect those selected for the Presidential contest. When voters identify the issue that is most important in the race for the U. S. Senate, unemployment (16%), the economy (14%), and the budget deficit (12%) are mentioned by more voters than any other issue. Smaller percentages of voters name crime (9%), health care (7%), and social services (7%). A range of other issues such as taxes (3%), education (3%) drug and alcohol abuse (2%), moral issues (2%), government ethics and performance (2%) are also named as most important. And, one percent of voters are concerned about abortion, foreign policy, family issues, immigration, race, and the environment.

Overall, Bob Torricelli (22%) is selected over Dick Zimmer (16%) as the candidate who will do the better job of handling the issue the voter identified as being of most concern.

In their choice of the U. S. Senate candidate to handle eight specific issues, Torricelli is selected for four, Zimmer for two, and there is a statistical tie on two issues.

Torricelli is favored over Zimmer for:

- getting money from the federal government for projects and programs here in New Jersey (37% to 24%)
- being better at dealing with unemployment (33% to 25%)
- gun control (30% to 24%)
- doing what you want done about abortion (27% to 16%)

Zimmer is selected over Torricelli for:

- reducing the federal deficit (40% to 19%)
- holding down federal taxes (39% to 19%)

About equal percentages of voters select Zimmer (32%) as choose Torricelli (29%) for accomplishing more for New Jersey in the U.S. Senate and for having a better understanding of the problems and issues facing New Jersey ( Torricelli 27%; Zimmer 24%).

***U. S. SENATE ELECTION: PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS***

Since neither the Democratic or Republican candidate for U. S. Senate is well know to the voters, it is not surprising that a majority are not able to decide whether Zimmer or Torricelli is better represented by seven personal characteristics. However, there are two characteristics that voters say describe Torricelli more than Zimmer – being more experienced (30% to 20%) and caring more about people like you (27% to 20%). About equal percentages of voters attributed the following five characteristics to each candidate: trust (Zimmer 25%; Torricelli 22%); having a clearer vision of the future (Zimmer 21%; Torricelli 21%); better personal values (Zimmer 18%; Torricelli 20%); more honest (Zimmer 17%; Torricelli 15%); more intelligent (Zimmer 13%; Torricelli 13%).

***ATTITUDES ABOUT POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS***

This year as candidates compete to get the voters' attention, about one third of New Jersey voters say they will spend a lot of time following the political campaigns compared to 47 percent who will follow them some, 16 percent just a little, and 2 percent who will not spend any time following the campaigns. And while about 6-in-10 voters dislike the political campaign process a lot (32%) or a little (26%), 3-in-10 like campaigns a lot (11%) or a little (24%). Three-in-four voters say the political campaigns will be very (21%) or somewhat (54%) useful in making their voting decisions while 21 percent say they are not too (13%) or not at all useful (8%).

Among those who say campaigns are useful, about half say the main reason is that they can learn more about the candidates. Among those who say campaigns are not useful, their main reason is because they have already made a decision about the candidates they plan to vote for (28%) and because they have negative impressions about what goes on in campaigns (23%).

- 30 -

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**NOTE:** Chris Bruzios and Thomas Regan assisted in the development of this press release.

- more -

The latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton* Poll was conducted between June 13 and 19, 1996, when a random sample of 801 New Jerseyans, 18 years and older, was interviewed by telephone. Figures based on this sample size are subject to a sampling error of about  $\pm 3.5$  percent at a 95 percent confidence interval.

Figures are reported for 646 registered voters. The sampling error for this subset is about  $\pm 4.0$  percent.

This release of the *Star-Ledger/Eagleton* Poll includes two classifications of registered voters based on their support for a candidate: 1) "Vote Choice - Traditional" refers to the initial preference of candidates on a particular election, this group includes both firm and soft supporters of a candidate and groups of people who lean toward a candidate with undecided voters; 2) "Vote Choice - Firm" refers to how firmly voters support a candidate. A firm voter selects a candidate and says they are very sure about their choice and will not change their mind before the election. a not firm voter either selects a candidate and says they might change their mind or is initially undecided in their vote choice. Only voters who are firm are allocated to a specific candidate while all others are referred to as not firm. A 1993 Eagleton post-election study showed that the "Vote Choice - Traditional" underrepresents the group of voters who might change their minds prior to or even on Election Day.

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 presented below. The location of each question on the actual questionnaire is in brackets.

#### BACKGROUND MEMO – RELEASE SL/EP57-2 (EP107-2), SUNDAY, JUNE 30, 1996

What do you think is the most important problem facing the country that whoever is elected President will have to face?

**DO NOT READ OPTIONS. IF MORE THAN ONE GIVEN, PROBE:** Which do you think is **most** important?

**IF ECONOMY IS NAMED, PROBE:** What about the economy do you feel is most important? [Q.15]

	June, 1996 Registered Voters	Vote Choice Firm		
		Dole	Undecided	Clinton
--Economy (general)	20%	18%	21%	21%
--Budget deficit	15	24	13	12
--Unemployment/jobs	14	9	13	18
--Crime, violence, law and order	8	5	9	10
--Health care/health costs/health insurance	8	10	6	9
--Social services, welfare, care of the poor, elderly, handicapped, child care, aids	6	3	9	6
--Foreign policy	4	6	3	3
--Taxes	3	3	3	2
--Drugs, alcohol abuse	3	3	3	3
--Moral issues (general)	2	3	2	1
--Government performance, ethics	2	3	2	2
--Education/schools	2	--	3	2
--Abortion	1	3	1	--
--Environment	1	1	1	--

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--Immigration	1	3	1	1
--Race	1	1	--	--
--Other	2	1	2	2
--None	4	1	6	5
TOTAL	97%	97%	98%	97%
(n)	(646)	(154)	(233)	(233)

Regardless of who you plan to vote for, who do you think will do a better job of handling this problem -- **Bob Dole or Bill Clinton?** [Q.16]

	<u>Dole</u>	<u>Clinton</u>	<u>Both</u> <u>No Difference</u>	<u>Neither</u>	<u>Don't</u> <u>Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>June, 1996 - Registered Voters</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>101%</b>	<b>(614)</b>
<u>Vote Choice - Traditional</u>							
--Dole	85	1	2	4	7	99	(216)
--Undecided	12	20	6	18	44	100	(50)
--Clinton	4	84	1	4	7	100	(323)
<u>Vote Choice - Firm</u>							
--Firm Dole	93	1	--	3	3	100	(152)
--Not Firm	25	39	4	10	23	101	(216)
--Firm Clinton	4	89	1	3	3	100	(221)
<u>Gender</u>							
--Male	40	42	2	8	8	100	(318)
--Female	27	52	2	5	14	100	(296)

Who do you think would do a better job of **[READ ITEM]**, Bob Dole or Bill Clinton? [Q.20]

	<u>Dole</u>	<u>Clinton</u>	<u>Neither</u>	<u>Both</u>	<u>Don't</u> <u>Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>June, 1996 - Registered Voters</b>							
--Providing social services	20%	68%	2%	--	9%	99%	(646)
--Protecting the environment	19	61	5	2%	13	100	(646)
--Improving education	23	59	4	2	11	99	(646)
--Maintaining Medicare spending	29	56	3	1	11	100	(646)
--Creating jobs	28	50	6	1	15	100	(646)
--Dealing with foreign policy	39	48	3	1	10	101	(646)
--Managing the country's economy	37	45	5	1	12	100	(646)
--Reforming welfare	41	43	4	1	10	99	(646)
--Reducing crime	33	40	10	4	13	100	(646)
--Balancing the budget	44	35	9	1	10	99	(646)
--Cutting government spending	48	33	7	1	11	100	(646)
--Holding down taxes	45	33	10	1	11	100	(646)

Which candidate [READ ITEM] -- Bob Dole or Bill Clinton? [Q.21]

	<u>Dole</u>	<u>Clinton</u>	(VOL) <u>Both</u>	(VOL) <u>Neither</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>June, 1996 - Registered Voters</b>							
--Cares more about people like you (646)		30%	48%	11%	3%	9%	101%
--Is more capable of running the country	35	48	4	4	9	100	(646)
--Has a clearer vision about the country's future	32	44	7	5	12	100	(646)
--Would bring better people into government	38	41	5	3	13	100	(646)
<b>--Do you trust more</b>	37	39	15	2	8	101	(646)
<u>Vote Choice - Traditional</u>							
--Dole	88	3	7	--	2	100	(222)
--Undecided	20	17	30	4	30	101	(54)
--Clinton	7	69	15	2	7	100	(344)
<u>Vote Choice - Firm</u>							
--Firm Dole	94	1	5	--	1	101	(154)
--Not Firm	34	28	21	3	13	99	(233)
--Firm Clinton	4	80	10	1	5	100	(233)
<b>--Has better personal values</b>	47	31	4	4	14	100	(646)
<u>Vote Choice - Traditional</u>							
--Dole	90	3	1	1	5	100	(222)
--Undecided	50	19	2	6	24	101	(54)
--Clinton	21	52	6	5	17	101	(344)
<u>Vote Choice - Firm</u>							
--Firm Dole	93	2	1	1	4	101	(154)
--Not Firm	50	21	2	5	21	99	(233)
--Firm Clinton	16	61	7	4	12	100	(233)

What do you think is the most important problem facing the country that whoever is elected U.S. Senator will have to face?

**DO NOT READ OPTIONS. IF MORE THAN ONE GIVEN, PROBE:** Which do you think is **most** important?  
**IF ECONOMY IS NAMED, PROBE:** What about the economy do you feel is most important? [Q.34]

	June, 1996 <u>Registered Voters</u>	Vote Choice <u>Firm</u> <i>ZimmerUndecided Torricelli</i>		
--Unemployment/jobs	16%	11%	16%	18%
--Economy (general)	14	10	14	18
--Budget deficit	12	26	11	9
--Crime, violence, law and order	9	9	9	9
--Health care/health costs/health insurance	7	6	6	8
--Social services, welfare, care of the elderly, handicapped, child care, aids	7	6	6	9
--Taxes	3	2	4	3

- more -

--Education/schools	3	1	2	4
--Moral issues (general)	2	3	1	1
--Government performance, ethics	2	3	2	2
--Drugs, alcohol abuse	2	1	3	2
--Foreign policy	1	2	1	3
--Abortion	1	1	1	--
--Family issues/family values	1	--	1	--
--Environment, toxic clean-up, pollution	1	--	1	1
--Immigration	1	1	1	1
--Race	1	1	1	1
--Other	4	2	4	3
--None	10	11	12	5
--Don ' t know	1	1	1	1
TOTAL	98%	97%	97%	98%
(n)	(646)	(89)	(406)	(118)

Regardless of who you plan to vote for, who do you think will do a better job of handling this problem--Dick Zimmer or Bob Torricelli? [Q.35]

	Zimmer	Torricelli	Both/ No Difference	Neither	Don ' t Know	Total	(n)
<b>June, 1996 - Registered Voters</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(576)</b>
<u>Vote Choice - Traditional</u>							
--Zimmer	47	2	1	3	48	101	(176)
--Undecided	1	3	1	5	90	100	(145)
--Torricelli	3	52	1	2	41	99	(225)
<u>Vote Choice - Firm</u>							
--Firm Zimmer	67	1	--	1	31	100	(78)
--Not Firm	10	13	1	4	73	101	(357)
--Firm Torricelli	3	71	2	3	22	101	(111)
<u>Gender</u>							
--Male	20	20	1	5	54	100	(304)
--Female	11	25	1	1	63	101	(272)

Who do you think [READ ITEM], Dick Zimmer or Bob Torricelli? [Q.39]

	Zimmer	Torricelli	(VOL) Neither	(VOL) Both	Don ' t Know	Total	(n)
--Would be better at getting money from the federal government for projects and programs here in New Jersey	24%	37%	3%	1%	36%	101%	(389)
--Would be better at dealing with the problem of unemployment	25	33	4	2	37	101	(389)
--Would be more likely to do what you want done on gun control	24	30	3	1	42	100	(389)
--Would accomplish more for New Jersey in the U.S. Senate	32	29	2	2	36	101	(389)
--Would be more likely to do what you want done about abortion	16	27	8	1	49	101	(389)
--Has a better understanding of the problems and important issues facing New Jersey	24	27	4	4	41	100	(389)
--Would be better at reducing the federal							

budget deficit	40	19	5	1	35	100	(389)
--Would do a better job at holding down federal taxes		39	19	4	1	37	100
							(389)

Which candidate **[READ ITEM]** -- Dick Zimmer or Bob Torricelli? [Q.40]

	Zimmer	(VOL) Torricelli	(VOL) Neither	Both	Don't Know	Total	(n)
--Is more experienced?	20%	30%	2%	5%	44%	101%	(389)
--Cares more about people like you? (389)		20	27	5	1	47	100
--Do you trust more?	25	22	11	2	41	101	(389)
--Has a clearer vision of the future? (389)		21	21	5	3	51	101
--Has better personal values?	18	20	2	3	57	100	(389)
--Is more honest?	17	15	9	3	55	99	(389)
--Is more intelligent?	13	13	2	4	68	100	(389)

How much time do you think you will spend following the upcoming political campaigns -- a lot, some, just a little or none? [Q.43]

	A Lot	Some	Just A Little	None	Don't Know	Total	(n)
<b>June, 1996 - Registered Voters</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>101%</b>	<b>(646)</b>
<u>Party ID</u>							
--Democrat	31	47	19	2	--	99	(212)
--Independent	36	49	13	2	1	101	(228)
--Republican	39	45	14	1	1	100	(176)
<u>Gender</u>							
--Male	38	45	15	2	1	101	(328)
--Female	29	49	18	2	2	100	(318)
<u>Age</u>							
--18 - 29	21	54	18	4	4	101	(111)
--30 - 49	32	48	17	1	1	99	(277)
--50 - 64	42	47	9	2	1	101	(150)
--65 and older	42	34	20	2	2	100	(98)

Overall, how useful do you think the upcoming political campaigns will be in your voting decision -- very useful, somewhat useful, not too useful or not useful at all? [Q.44]

	Very Useful	Somewhat Useful	Not Too Useful	Not Useful At All	Don't Know	Total	(n)
<b>June, 1996 - Registered Voters</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>(646)</b>
<u>Party ID</u>							
--Democrat	22	53	13	8	5	101	(212)
--Independent	21	55	17	6	1	100	(228)
--Republican	21	56	11	10	2	100	(176)
<u>Gender</u>							
--Male	20	53	15	9	2	99	(328)
--Female	22	55	12	7	4	100	(318)
<u>Age</u>							

--18 - 29	26	49	14	8	4	101	(111)
--30 - 49	22	60	11	6	1	100	(277)
--50 - 64	19	54	13	11	3	100	(150)
--65 and older	17	45	18	10	9	99	(98)

Why do you feel the upcoming political campaigns will be **[ANSWER TO Q.44]** in your voting decision? [Q.45]

	<u>June, 1996 Registered Voters</u>	<u>Very Useful</u>	<u>Somewhat Useful</u>	<u>Not too/ Not Useful At All</u>
--Learn about candidates	42%	56%	52%	2%
--Get general information	11	13	14	2
--Negative impressions	8	2	5	23
--Learn about issues	8	13	8	2
--Decision already made	7	2	1	28
--Promises	6	1	4	15
--Mud slinging	5	1	3	14
--Future decision making	4	6	3	2
--Other	6	6	6	11
--Don't know	2	2	3	1
TOTAL	99%	102%	99%	100%
(n)	(570)	(128)	(315)	(127)

In general, do you like or dislike the political campaign process? Is that like/dislike a lot or a little? [Q.46]

	<u>Like A Lot</u>	<u>Like A Little</u>	<u>Dislike A Little</u>	<u>Dislike A Lot</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>June, 1996 - Registered Voters</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(646)</b>
<i>Party ID</i>							
--Democrat	10	26	28	29	6	99	(212)
--Independent	12	22	24	36	7	101	(228)
--Republican	11	26	25	30	7	99	(176)
<i>Gender</i>							
--Male	13	21	27	34	5	100	(328)
--Female	9	27	24	30	10	100	(318)
<i>Age</i>							
--18 - 29	11	32	23	29	5	100	(111)
--30 - 49	8	23	28	33	8	100	(277)
--50 - 64	16	22	24	34	4	100	(150)
--65 and older	12	22	23	30	12	99	(98)