

# **The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll**

## **POSSIBLE BACKLASH AGAINST REPUBLICANS IN CONGRESSIONAL VOTING SEEN DUE TO CLINTON--LEWINSKY AFFAIR or IT GETS CURIUSER AND CURIUSER**

**RELEASE: SL/EP 70-3 (EP120-3)  
SEPTEMBER 27, 1998  
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A story based on the survey findings presented in this release and background memo is in the Sunday, September 27th Star-Ledger. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to the "*The Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll*."

Instead of humiliating President Clinton and strengthening themselves by holding impeachment hearings, Congressional Republicans may be risking a backlash at the polls in New Jersey by awakening angry Democrats in what otherwise might have been a fairly boring set of Congressional elections.

The most recent Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll finds far more potential voters throughout the state saying that the Clinton--Lewinsky affair has made them more rather than less likely to vote in the upcoming November elections, with Democrats appearing to be the most energized by what is going on in Washington. And, with five weeks to go before the election, more registered voters say they plan to vote for the Democratic than the Republican candidate in their district, a reversal from the last mid-term Congressional election of four years ago.

The survey, conducted between September 14 and 20 with a statewide sample of 804 residents, including 669 of whom said they were registered to vote, also finds President Bill Clinton's job performance rating remaining strong and Governor Christie Whitman's remaining mixed.

New Jersey has 13 Congressional seats to be decided in the November 3 election. Surprisingly, a majority of registered voters--51 percent--report that the Lewinsky affair has made them more likely to vote in the upcoming election, while just 10 percent say they are less likely to vote because of the scandal. The remaining 38 percent say it makes no difference to their voting intention. And, it appears that slightly more Democrats may be activated than others: 57 percent of Democrats say they are more likely to vote, compared to 51 percent of Republicans and 49 percent of Independents.

Cliff Zukin, director of the Rutgers-based poll commented, "It is still over a month to the election and a lot can happen. But our poll results are somewhat remarkable in two regards. First, they suggest that one impact of this very sordid affair may actually be to increase turnout rather than turning people off to politics. Second, they also certainly suggest the possibility that it is the Republicans who could be punished at the ballot box for the over-zealous pursuit of impeachment rather than the Democrats being punished for Bill Clinton's sexual liaison and untruthful statements about it."

Zukin noted last week's Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll that showed while 73 percent of New Jersey residents feel Clinton lied under oath, only 26 percent want the House to begin impeachment proceedings.

The current survey shows 31 percent planning to vote for the Democratic candidate for Congress in their district while 24 percent plan to vote for the Republican candidate. The remainder are undecided, won't vote or may vote for some minor party candidate. These figures are markedly different from survey responses to the same question asked four years ago. A Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll conducted shortly before that election showed 38 percent planning to vote for the Republican candidate compared to 33 percent intending to vote Democratic. The results of that 1994 midterm election led to Republican control of the Congress and Newt Gingrich's election as Speaker.

Zukin commented, "The results of this poll cannot predict what might happen in any of the 13 individual Congressional districts, of course. But at this point the electorate looks to be leaning Democratic, hardly what one might expect given a Democratic President embroiled in scandal and the regularity with which the party having captured the presidential election in the previous races loses seats in the next midterm election."

Bill Clinton's job performance rating as of last Sunday, before the videotape of his testimony was released, remained high: 65 percent said he was doing an excellent (20 percent) or good (45 percent) job as President. Another 19 percent rated his job performance as "only fair," and just 15 percent as poor. Positive assessments of either excellent or good were offered by 83 percent of Democrats, 65 percent of Independents and even 40 percent of Republicans.

Governor Christie Whitman, who has called for Clinton's resignation, received a more modest job performance evaluation from New Jerseyans: 9 percent excellent, 39 percent good, 33 percent only fair, 14 percent poor, and six percent no opinion. The Governor's job performance rating is basically unchanged from June of this year.

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**BACKGROUND MEMO — RELEASE SL/EP70-3 (EP120-3), SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 1998**

The latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton* Poll was conducted between September 14 and 20, 1998, when a scientifically selected random sample of 800 New Jersey adult residents was interviewed by telephone. 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 total sample size of 800 is just over  $\pm 3.5$  percent, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of New Jerseyans were found to have a favorable opinion of the Governor, one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 46.5 and 53.5 percent ( $50 \pm 3.5$ ) had all New Jerseyans been interviewed, rather than just a sample. Sampling error increases as the sample size decreases, so statements based on various population subgroups, such separate figures reported for men and women, are subject to more error than are statements based on the total sample. Click here for a [chart](#) that 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. The verbatim wording of all questions asked are reproduced in this background memo. The sample has been stratified based on county and the data have been weighted on age and education to insure an accurate proportional representation of the state. Two versions of the questionnaire were used in this study. Not all questions were on both versions.

## REGISTERED VOTERS ONLY WERE ASKED QUESTIONS CE6 and CE7

"Has what is going on in Washington with the Lewinsky affair made you more likely to vote or less likely to vote in the election for Congress?" [CE6]

	More	Less	No difference	Don't know	Total	(n)
<b>September, 1998</b>						
<b>Total</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>(669)</b>
<b>By Party ID</b>						
<b>Democrat</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>(199)</b>
<b>Independent</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(263)</b>
<b>Republican</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(170)</b>

"And as of now, do you plan to vote for the Democratic or Republican candidate running for Congress in your district?" [CE7]

	Democrat	Republican	Other	Don't know	Total	(n)
<b>September, 1998</b>						
<b>Total</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(669)</b>
<b>By Party ID</b>						
<b>Democrat</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(199)</b>
<b>Independent</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>101%</b>	<b>(263)</b>
<b>Republican</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>101%</b>	<b>(170)</b>

## PAST SURVEYS

1996 Total	37%	33%	1%	29%	100%	(841)
1994 Total	33%	38%	1%	28%	100%	(801)
1992 Total	41%	35%	1%	23%	100%	(801)

"How would you rate the job Christie Whitman is doing as Governor – excellent, good, only fair or poor?" [2]

	Excellent	Good	Only fair	Poor	Don't know	Total	(n)
<b>September, 1998</b>							
<b>Total</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>101%</b>	<b>(804)</b>
<b>By Party ID</b>							
<b>Democrat</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>101%</b>	<b>(229)</b>
<b>Independent</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>101%</b>	<b>(338)</b>
<b>Republican</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(195)</b>

PAST SURVEYS

October, 1997	9%	34%	32%	21%	5%	101%	(800)
September, 1997	10%	37%	32%	16%	5%	100%	(802)
June, 1997	9%	40%	29%	17%	5%	100%	(802)
February/March, 1997	10%	42%	29%	15%	5%	101%	(800)
September, 1996	12%	41%	29%	12%	6%	100%	(808)
February, 1996	9%	40%	34%	15%	3%	101%	(804)
November, 1995	9%	43%	32%	10%	6%	100%	(803)
September, 1995	8%	40%	36%	10%	6%	100%	(804)
May, 1995	11%	42%	29%	11%	7%	100%	(802)
February, 1995	13%	43%	28%	12%	4%	100%	(801)
September, 1994	12%	40%	33%	9%	6%	100%	(801)
June, 1994	11%	39%	29%	7%	14%	100%	(801)
February, 1994	9%	28%	28%	5%	31%	101%	(801)

"How would you rate the job Bill Clinton is doing as President – excellent, good, only fair or poor?" [C1]

	Excellent	Good	Only fair	Poor	Don't know	Total	(n)
<b>September, 1998</b>							
<b>Total</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>101%</b>	<b>(804)</b>
<b>By Party ID</b>							
<b>Democrat</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(229)</b>
<b>Independent</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>(338)</b>
<b>Republican</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>101%</b>	<b>(195)</b>
<b>Registered Voters</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(669)</b>

PAST SURVEYS

October, 1997	9%	48%	30%	10%	4%	101%	(800)
February/March, 1997	8%	43%	34%	13%	1%	99%	(800)
September, 1996	9%	46%	30%	14%	2%	101%	(808)
February, 1996	8%	39%	35%	16%	3%	101%	(804)
September, 1995	5%	34%	39%	21%	1%	100%	(804)

February, 1995	4%	28%	41%	25%	1%	99%	(801)
September, 1994	6%	33%	38%	20%	2%	99%	(801)
February, 1994	12%	39%	35%	13%	1%	100%	(801)
October, 1993	5%	30%	40%	19%	6%	100%	(801)
June, 1993	5%	23%	45%	25%	2%	100%	(801)
February, 1993	15%	29%	26%	18%	12%	100%	(801)