

The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll

NEW JERSEYANS TO THEIR NEXT SENATOR: "PAY ATTENTION TO MY POCKETBOOK!" TAXES AND ECONOMIC ISSUES GO FIRST ON THE AGENDA

EAGLETON NEW JERSEY PROJECT

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When asked to name the one problem their new Senator from New Jersey should put first on his agenda, taxes and economic issues lead the list, with 30 percent of registered voters mentioning these. Social issues such as gun control, welfare, problems of seniors and education are both mentioned by about one-in-five, followed closely by health issues (13%).

New Jerseyans were then given a list of nine issues and asked if they would be "very interested, somewhat interested or not too interested" in hearing the candidates for Senate discuss each of them. Four-out-of-five registered voters report that they would be very interested to hear the candidates address health care and education issues. Seven-out-of-ten respondents also report being very interested in hearing the candidates discuss Social Security, tax policy and the Federal budget surplus. And more than 6-in-10 are very interested in hearing them discuss gun control.

Much lower on voters' list of priorities are the death penalty, relations with other countries and campaign finance reform, with just over a third of registered voters saying they would be very interested to hear each of these issues discussed by Senate candidates.

These are some of the main findings of a statewide survey conducted by the Eagleton Institute of Politics in connection with its Campaign Forum. The survey interviewed a random sample of 618 self-described registered voters by telephone between June 8 and 13. The poll has a sampling error of a little over +/- 4 percentage points.

Ingrid W. Reed, director of the Eagleton New Jersey Project, commented: "The survey was designed to provide information about the issues of interest to the voters in the fall campaigns. It shows that even in good times New Jerseyans are concerned with economic issues, but that they also want candidates to discuss their proposals for education and

health care problems. We hope both the candidates and the media will make it possible for the voters to get a lively discussion of the issues they say concern them."

A similar poll in which some of the same questions were asked was conducted in 1998 when impeachment proceedings against President Clinton were underway. At that time, respondents also ranked education and health care as top concerns, with impeachment ranked dead last. Interest in Social Security remains at the same level when comparing responses in 2000 and 1998, but interest in the surplus increased by ten percentage points among registered voters who say they are affiliated with the two major parties. One of the issues included on both polls that shows little change in interest is campaign finance reform. Despite the visibility this issue received in the presidential primaries this year, only a third of New Jersey registered voters say they are very interested in this issue, the same amount of registered voters who demonstrated this level of interest two years ago.

As in 1998, Democrats, Republicans and Independents in 2000 all consider health care, education and Social Security important issues, with more than 70 percent of each party saying they are "very interested" in hearing them discussed. However, the level of interest that registered voters have in each issue differs by party affiliation. Some key differences based on party:

- Democrats, Republicans and Independents all consider education a high priority among issues for Senate candidates to discuss. However, Democrats' and Independents' level of interest in education is at the same level that it was in 1998, with 84 percent of Democrats and 75 percent of Independents saying that they would be very interested to hear this issue discussed, while the percentage of Republicans who express this much interest has dropped from 82 percent in 1998 to 72 percent in 2000. Thus, Republicans' level of interest in education has gone from mirroring that of Democrats' to be on par with that of Independents' over the last 2 years.
- While interest in the Federal budget surplus has risen among all 3 party affiliations, Republicans demonstrate the most interest in this issue, with 74 percent of Republicans saying they would be very interested to hear candidates discuss this, compared to 67 percent of Independents and 65 percent of Democrats. Republicans rank the surplus as important as they do education and health issues, while Democrats are much more likely (by a margin of 20 percentage points) to say they are very interested in education and health than in the surplus.
- A higher percentage of Democrats are very interested in having gun control and the death penalty discussed than are Republicans and Independents. Seventy percent of Democrats are very interested in Senate candidates discussing gun control, compared to 61 percent of Independents and 59 percent of Republicans.

- Nearly half (46%) of Democrats are very interested in candidates discussing the death penalty, compared to 41 percent of Republicans and only 33 percent of Independents.

There are relatively small differences in New Jerseyans' level of interest in particular issues based on gender, age, income and race. However, some interesting differences are:

- Considerably more women (72%) say they are very interested in gun control issues than do men (57%).
- Black and Hispanic New Jerseyans are more interested in the candidates discussing education and health care policy than are White New Jerseyans. Fully 92 percent of minorities are very interested in candidates discussing education, while only 74 percent of Whites express this much interest. Similarly, 89 percent of minorities are very interested in hearing candidates discuss health care, while only 79 percent of White New Jerseyans report being very interested in this topic.
- The youngest registered voters (those between the ages of 18 and 29) are the least interested in hearing campaign finance reform discussed. Only 12 percent of this age group are very interested, compared to 25 percent of those aged 30-49 who say they are very interested in this topic, and 44 percent of those aged 50 and older.

The survey also asked registered voters if they could recognize which U.S. Senator from New Jersey is not running for re-election this year—Frank Lautenberg or Bob Torricelli. More than half (56%) are able to identify Frank Lautenberg as the retiring Senator. Interestingly, more Republicans (62%) and Independents (61%) than Democrats of his own party (48%) correctly choose Lautenberg.

Reed noted that "while a substantial number of New Jerseyans know the Senator who served them for 18 years, more might have come up with his name if television stations in Philadelphia and New York paid more attention to New Jersey politicians and New Jersey issues. This lack of television coverage may account for the limited name recognition of Senator Lautenberg."

The survey of issues that interest voters will be used in an Eagleton Campaign Forum study of the 2000 congressional campaign activity which includes assessing how suggestions for better New Jersey campaigns made at the Eagleton Campaign Forum in 1997 are followed in the campaigns this fall. These suggestions include the idea that campaign activity and debates should focus on the issues, that candidates should "say it yourself" when attacking opponents and that candidates should take responsibility for independent ads of their behalf. The study conducted in 1998 by Reed and Gerald Pomper, Board of Governors Professor of Political Science, is titled Not Bad but Not Enough, and can be found on the Eagleton Institute of Politics website, <http://www.eagleton.rutgers.edu/NJProject/NJStudy.pdf>.

BACKGROUND MEMO — SENATE CANDIDATES ISSUES RELEASE, MONDAY, AUGUST 7, 2000

This survey done by the Eagleton Institute of Politics was conducted between June 8-13 with a scientifically selected random sample of 802 New Jersey adult residents interviewed by telephone. This sampling yielded a total of 618 respondents who reported being registered to vote. The figures in this release are based on this sample size. 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 registered voters is ± 4 percent, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of New Jersey registered voters were found to be very interested in Senate candidates discussing gun control, one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 46 and 54 percent (50 ± 4) 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, such as separate figures reported for Republicans, Independents or Democrats, 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 is reproduced in this background memo. The sample has been stratified based on county. The questions referred to in this release are as follows:

"New Jersey will be sending a new Senator to Washington this year. What is the one problem you would most like to see him take on--- What should be first on his agenda? What else, anything else?" **

	FIRST MENTION	ANY MENTION
TAXES—TOTAL	21%	34%
Taxes, general	3	5
Property taxes	4	5
Real estate taxes	1	1
Taxes too high	6	11
Social Security-payroll tax	6	10
Other Taxes	1	2
ECONOMIC ISSUES BESIDES TAXES— TOTAL	9	11
Maintain economic growth	1	1
Jobs and unemployment	3	3
High cost of living	--	1
Balance budget-deficit-surplus	2	2
Excess government spending	1	1
Fuel-gas prices	1	1
Other Economic	1	2

SOCIAL ISSUES—TOTAL	19	30
Gun control, gun violence	5	7
Crime	1	3
Homelessness	1	1
Racial problems-profiling—inequality	1	1
Welfare, poverty	2	3
Illegal drugs	1	1
Abortion	1	2
Urban problems, cities	--	1
High cost of housing	--	2
Problems of seniors, aged, nursing homes	3	3
Children’s issues	1	2
Immigration	1	1
Other Social Issues	2	3
EDUCATION ISSUES—TOTAL	18	26
Education, general	6	9
Education funding	4	6
Education quality	6	7
College education	--	1
Other Education	2	3
HEALTH ISSUES—TOTAL	13	24
Health, general	2	4
Cost of health care	2	3
Prescription drugs	2	4
Seniors and health care	3	4
Health Insurance—uninsured	3	5
Medicare	1	2
Other Health	--	2
TRANSPORTATION—TOTAL	9	14
Traffic congestion	--	1
Auto insurance	6	9
Public transportation	1	1
Roads	--	1
Other Transportation	2	2
ENVIRONMENT—TOTAL	7	13
Environment, general	1	2
Water quality-shore	1	3
Air quality	1	2
Open Space, growth and development, preservation, sprawl	3	4
Other environment	1	2
GOVERNMENT FUNCTIONING—TOTAL	5	7

Lobbyists	--	1
Money in politics, campaign finance	1	1
Bring integrity back to politics	1	1
Other Government Functioning	3	4
OTHER ISSUES	3	6
National defense, international relations	1	1
Bring back NJ's fair share from Washington	1	1
State identity-unify New Jersey's regions	1	1
TOTAL	104%	

**This was asked as an open-ended question, where response categories are not supplied to respondents. Interviewers were instructed to take up to five different responses, which were later coded. The "first mention" column contains responses on respondents' first answers and totals to just over 100% because of rounding. The "any mention" column contains responses in any of the substantive categories that were given on any one of the five answers, and thus totals to over 100%

"I'm going to read you a list of issues and would like you to tell me how interested you would be in hearing the candidates for the Senate discussing them. For each one I read please just tell me if you would be VERY interested, SOMEWHAT interested or NOT TOO interested. First (ROTATE ITEMS)...very, somewhat or not too interested in hearing the candidates discuss this?"

Percent Who Say They Would Be "Very Interested" to Hear Senate Candidates Discuss Each Issue, by Party Affiliation and Year

Issues	Total		Democrat		Republican		Independent	
	2000	1998	2000	1998	2000	1998	2000	1998
Education	78	80	84	84	72	82	75	74
Health	80	79	86	84	73	78	80	76
Social Security	72	75	76	78	72	75	70	74
Surplus	70	64	65	55	74	64	67	63
Campaign Finance Reform	32	32	32	24	30	34	36	40
Tax Policy*	70		66		76		66	
Gun Control*	64		70		59		61	

Death Penalty*	39	46	41	33				
Relations with other countries*	35	33	34	38				
(n)	(618)	(669)	(207)	(199)	(167)	(170)	(181)	(263)

*These issues were only included in the 2000 survey. Issues that were included in the 1998 survey but dropped from the 2000 survey were: open space preservation, welfare reform, transportation and impeachment.

	<u>Very Interested</u>	<u>Somewhat Interested</u>	<u>Not too Interested</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total %</u>	<u>(n)</u>
HEALTH CARE						
Statewide sample, 2000	80%	17%	2%	--	99%	(618)
<u>Gender</u>						
--Male	74	23	3	--	100	(309)
--Female	87	11	1	1	100	(309)
<u>Age</u>						
--18-29	82	17	1	--	100	(77)
--30-49	75	22	3	--	100	(251)
--50+	85	13	1	1	100	(272)
<u>Race</u>						
--White	79	18	2	1	100	(475)
--Black/Hispanic	89	9	2	--	100	(111)
<u>Income</u>						
--Under 35K	85	14	1	--	100	(107)
--35K to <70K	85	14	1	1	101	(198)
--70K+	73	23	4	--	100	(221)
CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM						
Statewide sample, 2000	32%	40%	26%	2%	100%	(618)
<u>Gender</u>						
--Male	31	39	29	2	101	(309)
--Female	34	42	23	2	101	(309)
<u>Age</u>						
--18-29	12	51	38	--	101	(77)

--30-49	25	43	31	--	99	(251)
--50+	44	34	19	3	100	(272)
<u>Race</u>						
--White	33	41	25	1	100	(475)
--	23	43	32	3	101	(111)
Black/Hispanic						
<u>Income</u>						
--Under 35K	39	38	21	2	100	(107)
--35K to <70K	29	41	30	--	100	(198)
--70K+	33	42	25	--	100	(221)
SOCIAL SECURITY						
Statewide sample, 2000	72	23	5	--	100	(618)
<u>Gender</u>						
--Male	70	23	7	--	100	(309)
--Female	74	22	3	1	100	(309)
<u>Age</u>						
--18-29	61	30	9	--	100	(77)
--30-49	65	29	6	--	100	(251)
--50+	82	14	3	1	100	(272)
<u>Race</u>						
--White	71	23	6	1	101	(475)
--	77	23	1	--	101	(111)
Black/Hispanic						
<u>Income</u>						
--Under 35K	80	18	2	--	100	(107)
--35K to <70K	73	23	3	1	100	(198)
--70K+	67	25	8	--	100	(221)
TAX POLICY						
Statewide sample, 2000	70	23	6	1	100	(618)
<u>Gender</u>						
--Male	72	20	7	1	100	(309)
--Female	67	27	6	1	101	(309)
<u>Age</u>						
--18-29	74	18	8	--	100	(77)
--30-49	68	25	8	--	101	(251)
--50+	69	24	5	2	100	(272)
<u>Race</u>						
--White	69	23	7	1	100	(475)
--	70	23	6	--	99	(111)

Black/Hispanic

Income

--Under 35K	66	23	10	--	99	(107)
--35K to <70K	67	25	6	2	100	(198)
--70K+	73	23	5	--	101	(221)

EDUCATION

Statewide sample, 2000	78%	18%	4%	--	100%	(618)
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Gender

--Male	73	21	5	--	99	(309)
--Female	82	15	3	--	100	(309)

Age

--18-29	86	14	--	--	100	(77)
--30-49	80	16	4	--	100	(251)
--50+	73	22	4	--	99	(272)

Race

--White	74	21	5	--	100	(475)
--	92	7	1	--	100	(111)

Black/Hispanic

Income

--Under 35K	76	22	2	--	100	(107)
--35K to <70K	76	19	5	--	100	(198)
--70K+	81	15	4	--	100	(221)

USING

FEDERAL

BUDGET

SURPLUS

Statewide sample, 2000	68	28	4	1	101	(618)
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Gender

--Male	70	26	4	--	100	(309)
--Female	66	29	4	1	100	(309)

Age

--18-29	57	38	5	--	100	(77)
--30-49	64	32	4	--	100	(251)
--50+	75	20	4	1	99	(272)

Race

--White	68	27	4	1	100	(475)
--	68	30	3	--	99	(111)

Black/Hispanic

Income

--Under 35K	74	24	2	--	100	(107)
--35K to <70K	68	28	4	1	101	(198)

--70K+	67	28	5	--	100	(221)
GUN CONTROL						
Statewide sample, 2000	64	24	11	1	100	(618)
<u>Gender</u>						
--Male	57	27	15	1	100	(309)
--Female	72	20	7	1	100	(309)
<u>Age</u>						
--18-29	68	26	6	--	100	(77)
--30-49	61	25	13	1	100	(251)
--50+	68	21	9	1	99	(272)
<u>Race</u>						
--White	63	25	10	1	99	(475)
-- Black/Hispanic	69	19	12	--	100	(111)
<u>Income</u>						
--Under 35K	74	21	6	--	101	(107)
--35K to <70K	68	19	13	1	101	(198)
--70K+	57	32	11	--	100	(221)
DEATH PENALTY						
Statewide sample, 2000	39%	40%	19%	2%	100%	(618)
<u>Gender</u>						
--Male	38	38	23	2	101	(309)
--Female	40	42	16	1	99	(309)
<u>Age</u>						
--18-29	47	30	23	--	100	(77)
--30-49	39	42	19	1	101	(251)
--50+	39	41	18	3	101	(272)
<u>Race</u>						
--White	38	40	21	1	100	(475)
-- Black/Hispanic	43	39	17	1	100	(111)
<u>Income</u>						
--Under 35K	45	36	19	--	100	(107)
--35K to <70K	38	44	16	2	100	(198)
--70K+	36	40	23	1	100	(221)
RELATIONS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES						

Statewide sample, 2000	35	48	17	--	100	(618)
<u>Gender</u>						
--Male	34	49	16	--	99	(309)
--Female	35	48	17	--	100	(309)
<u>Age</u>						
--18-29	23	61	16	--	100	(77)
--30-49	26	53	21	--	100	(251)
--50+	47	40	13	1	101	(272)
<u>Race</u>						
--White	36	48	15	--	99	(475)
--	27	49	24	--	100	(111)
Black/Hispanic						
<u>Income</u>						
--Under 35K	45	40	15	--	100	(107)
--35K to <70K	29	53	18	--	100	(198)
--70K+	32	52	16	--	100	(221)

"Do you happen to know the name of the US Senator from New Jersey who is not running for re-election this year—is it Frank Lautenberg, Bob Torricelli, or aren't you sure?"

	<u>Lautenberg</u>	<u>Torricelli</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total%</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Statewide Sample, 2000	56%	15%	29%	100%	(618)
<u>Party ID</u>					
--Democrat	48	18	33	99	(207)
--Independent	61	15	24	100	(181)
--Republican	62	11	27	100	(167)