

The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll

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CONTACT: CLIFF ZUKIN
OR MONIKA McDERMOTT

A story based on the survey findings presented in this release and background memo will appear in the Sunday, April 22 Star-Ledger. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to "*The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll.*"

THE NEW JERSEY 2001 ELECTIONS--6 MONTHS OUT:

McGREEVEY AND DEMOCRATS WELL POSITIONED

With the governor's office and both houses of the legislature at stake in November's election, New Jersey's electorate is leaning Democratic, threatening eight years of Republican ownership of the governor's mansion and 10 years of Republican control of both houses of the state legislature.

The most recent Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll finds Democrat Jim McGreevey, who is running unopposed in his party's primary, comfortably in front of his two potential Republican opponents: acting Governor Donald DiFrancesco and Jersey City Mayor Bret Schundler, who this June will be running in a primary for the right to oppose the Woodbridge Democrat.

In addition, more registered voters now say they would vote for Democratic candidates for the state assembly than was the case in either 1999 or 1997, the last two times legislative candidates faced the state's voters.

Among all registered voters, McGreevey leads DiFrancesco by a margin of 44 to 26 percent; he leads Schundler by a slightly larger margin of 46 to 22 percent. McGreevey's 18 percentage point lead over DiFrancesco is up 5 points from last January; the 24 point gap between McGreevey and Schundler is the same as it was last January.

The survey was conducted with a scientific sample of 632 registered voters interviewed by telephone between April 11 and 17th. The sampling error for the poll is ± 4 percentage points.

When asked how they would vote "if the election for the State Assembly were held today," 42 percent of registered voters say they would vote for the Democratic candidates in their district, while 33 percent indicate they would vote for the Republicans. Another 22 percent say they are undecided, while the remaining few would either split their ballots or vote for a candidate of another party. This 9 percentage point Democratic advantage on the current survey is in contrast to a net three percentage point Democratic advantage in September of 1999, and a net four percentage point Democratic advantage in September of 1997, the last time the Governor's office was on the ballot.

The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll • Eagleton Institute of Politics

33 Livingston Avenue, Suite 202, New Brunswick, New Jersey 08901-1980

Director: Cliff Zukin x712 • Associate Director: Monika McDermott x706

Graduate Research Assistants: Dana Birnberg x871 • Peyton Craighill x871 • Jen Nersesian x874

Phone: 732-932-2499 - Website: <http://slerp.rutgers.edu> - Fax: 732-932-1107

Cliff Zukin, director of the Rutgers-based poll cautioned, “The election is still six months away, and the generic ballot question we asked does not predict the results in any of the state’s 40 legislative districts. However, as of April 2001 we clearly have an electorate that is leaning Democratic. McGreevey is more favorably regarded than either of his potential Republican opponents, and Democrats outnumber Republicans among registered voters. Coupled with greater Democratic fundraising and a redistricting plan that appears to advantage the Democrats—if it withstands court challenges—the Republicans may be starting behind in their bid to retain the governorship and hold on to majorities in both houses of the legislature.”

McGreevey, who very nearly defeated Christie Whitman in 1997, is well regarded by the state’s registered voters: 37 percent express a favorable opinion of the Woodbridge Mayor, while only 8 percent hold an unfavorable opinion of him, with the remaining majority of 55 percent expressing no opinion. In contrast, favorable opinions of acting Governor DiFrancesco outnumber unfavorable ones by a margin of just 21 to 15 percent, with 64 percent expressing no opinion. Views of Schundler, running as a conservative Republican, are even more unformed: statewide 80 percent of registered voters have no impression of him. Among those who do, favorable opinions outnumber unfavorable ones by a margin of 13 to 7 percent.

Among registered Republicans, 34 percent have a favorable opinion of DiFrancesco while 15 percent express an unfavorable assessment of him. The comparable figures for Schundler are 24 percent favorable and 6 percent unfavorable.

Zukin noted, “One of the surprising findings of this survey is that more people are able and willing to express an opinion of McGreevey than of their (acting) Governor. Given the recent heavy scrutiny of his business dealings, we suspect the high level of ‘don’t know’ answers may reflect an ambivalence towards DiFrancesco, rather than lack of knowledge about him.”

Poll findings suggest that McGreevey’s substantial early lead over his potential Republican opponents is the result of two factors. First, self-identified Democrats have come to outnumber self-identified Republicans by a significant margin. The survey finds 38 percent of registered voters saying they consider themselves to be Democrats while just 24 percent say they are Republicans. Another 26 percent identify as independents and six percent as members of another party.

Second, Republicans’ support for their potential candidates is clearly lukewarm as of now. While 70 percent of Democrats say they would vote for McGreevey when paired against DiFrancesco, only 62 percent of Republicans say they would vote for DiFrancesco. McGreevey gets 73 percent of Democratic ballots when paired against Schundler, while just 58 percent of Republicans say they would vote for Schundler at this point in time.

Zukin again cautioned, “While our polling reflects the opinions of all registered voters in April; it is often the case that Republicans turn out in higher numbers on Election Day in November. Turnout is

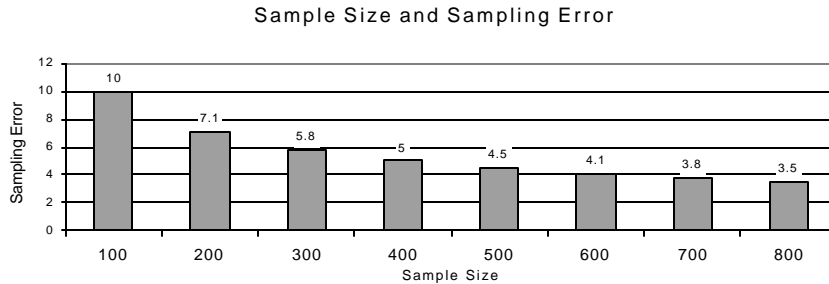
always a critical factor. Moreover, as Election Day nears, one can expect currently unenthusiastic Republicans to return home to the GOP, tightening up the race.”

The state’s independent voters, often a critical group in determining the outcome of elections, are clearly still up for grabs, even while currently tilting towards McGreevey. Among this group McGreevey leads DiFrancesco by 39 to 24 percent, leaving at least one-third undecided. When paired against Schundler, McGreevey currently holds a larger 38 to 17 percent advantage among independents, with about four-in-ten expressing no preference at this point in time.

In assessing the overall results of the survey, Zukin commented, “polls conducted this far in advance of an election have no predictive value; they merely give the lay of the land at a specific point in time. In politics, six months is an eternity. Still, if you were Jim McGreevey, you probably could not help but smile.”

BACKGROUND MEMO – RELEASE (EP131-3) April 22, 2001

The latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers* Poll was conducted by telephone from April 11- 17 with a scientifically selected random sample of 632 New Jersey registered voters. 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 is ± 4 percent, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of New Jersey adult residents were found to have a favorable opinion of the acting governor Donald DiFrancesco, 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. 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. The verbatim wording of all questions asked is 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. The questions referred to in this release are as follows:

“If the election for Governor were held today and the candidates were [CHOICES ROTATED] Donald DiFrancesco [Dee – Fran – *Sess* – Ko), the Republican, and Jim McGreevey, the Democrat, for whom would you vote – DiFrancesco or McGreevey?” (G2)

	<u>DiFrancesco</u>	<u>McGreevey</u>	<u>Neither/ Other</u>	<u>Wouldn't Vote</u>	<u>DK/ Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<u>Registered Voters</u>							
April 2001	26%	44%	4%	1%	26%	101%	(632)
--January 2001	26	39	3	1	31	100	(649)
<u>Party ID</u>							
-- Democrat	6	70	5	--	18	99	(236)
-- Independent	24	39	3	1	33	100	(208)
-- Republican	62	14	5	--	19	100	(155)
<u>Gender</u>							
--Male	29	43	4	--	24	100	(298)
--Female	23	44	5	1	27	100	(334)
<u>Race</u>							
--White	30	41	4	1	24	100	(480)
--Blacks/Hispanics	12	56	7	1	25	101	(114)
<u>Ideology</u>							
--Liberal	15	66	3	--	16	100	(141)
--Moderate	22	44	4	1	29	100	(337)
--Conservative	46	25	6	--	22	99	(141)
<u>Region of State</u>							
--North	26	43	4	1	26	100	(273)
--Central	27	49	3	1	21	101	(176)
--South	26	38	6	--	29	99	(177)

	<u>DiFrancesco</u>	<u>McGreevey</u>	<u>Neither/ Other</u>	<u>Wouldn't Vote</u>	<u>DK/ Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<u>2000 Presidential Vote</u>							
--Gore	14	63	4	1	19	101	(284)
--Bush	51	20	6	--	23	100	(208)

If the election for Governor were held today and the candidates were [**CHOICES ROTATED**] Bret Schundler [*Shund – ler*], the Republican, and Jim McGreevey, the Democrat, for whom would you vote – Schundler or McGreevey? (G3)

	<u>Schundler</u>	<u>McGreevey</u>	<u>Neither/ Other</u>	<u>Wouldn't Vote</u>	<u>DK/ Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<u>Registered Voters</u>							
April 2001	22%	46%	3%	1%	28%	100%	(632)
--January 2001	19	43	4	1	32	99	(649)
<u>Party ID</u>							
-- Democrat	5	73	2	1	19	100	(236)
-- Independent	17	38	5	1	38	99	(208)
-- Republican	58	17	2	1	22	100	(155)
<u>Gender</u>							
--Male	23	45	3	--	29	100	(298)
--Female	21	46	3	1	28	99	(334)
<u>Race</u>							
--White	25	43	3	1	28	100	(480)
--Blacks/Hispanics	12	61	3	--	25	101	(114)
<u>Ideology</u>							
--Liberal	10	66	5	1	19	101	(141)
--Moderate	17	45	3	1	33	99	(337)
--Conservative	46	30	2	1	22	101	(141)
<u>Region of State</u>							
--North	23	45	3	1	28	100	(273)
--Central	20	51	3	1	25	100	(176)
--South	22	43	4	--	30	99	(177)
<u>2000 Presidential Vote</u>							
--Gore	9	67	4	--	19	99	(284)
--Bush	46	25	3	--	26	100	(208)

“And if the election for State Assembly were held today, would you vote for the Republican or Democratic candidates for Assembly in your district?” (G4)

	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democratic</u>	<u>Split/Other</u>	<u>DK/Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Registered Voters						
April 2001	33%	42%	2%	22%	99%	(632)
--September 1999	31	34	5	30	100	(516)
--September 1997	29	33	--	38	100	(673)
<u>Party ID</u>						
-- Democrat	4	84	1	10	99	(236)
-- Independent	31	29	4	36	100	(208)
-- Republican	88	--	--	12	100	(155)
<u>Gender</u>						
--Male	40	38	2	20	100	(298)
--Female	28	46	2	25	101	(334)
<u>Race</u>						
--White	39	36	3	22	100	(480)
--Blacks/Hispanics	13	69	--	17	99	(114)
<u>Ideology</u>						
--Liberal	16	70	1	13	100	(141)
--Moderate	30	41	3	26	100	(337)
--Conservative	60	22	--	17	99	(141)
<u>Region of State</u>						
--North	35	44	2	20	101	(273)
--Central	30	46	2	23	101	(176)
--South	35	37	2	26	100	(177)
<u>2000 Presidential Vote</u>						
--Gore	11	69	2	18	100	(284)
--Bush	67	11	2	20	100	(208)

“Is your opinion of Donald DiFrancesco (Dee – fran – sess – ko) favorable or unfavorable, or don’t you really have an opinion of him?” (PF1)

	<u>Favorable</u>	<u>Unfavorable</u>	<u>DK/No Opinion</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Registered Voters	21%	15%	64%	100%	(632)
<u>Follow politics</u>					
--Regularly	24	23	53	100	(280)
--Sometimes	21	16	63	100	(210)
--Once in a while	19	4	77	100	(112)
<u>Party ID</u>					
-- Democrat	11	19	71	101	(236)
-- Independent	23	15	62	100	(208)
-- Republican	34	15	51	100	(155)

"Is your opinion of Jim McGreevey favorable or unfavorable, or don't you really have an opinion of him?" (PF2)

	<u>Favorable</u>	<u>Unfavorable</u>	<u>DK/No Opinion</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Registered Voters	37%	8%	55%	100%	(632)
<u>Follow politics</u>					
--Regularly	49	11	39	99	(280)
--Sometimes	35	8	57	100	(210)
--Once in a while	23	3	74	100	(112)
<u>Party ID</u>					
-- Democrat	51	3	47	101	(236)
-- Independent	34	6	60	100	(208)
-- Republican	24	19	57	100	(155)

"Is your opinion of Bret Schundler (Shun – dler) favorable or unfavorable, or don't you really have an opinion of him?" (PF3)

	<u>Favorable</u>	<u>Unfavorable</u>	<u>DK/No Opinion</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Registered Voters	13%	7%	80%	100%	(632)
<u>Follow politics</u>					
--Regularly	20	12	68	100	(280)
--Sometimes	14	3	83	100	(210)
--Once in a while	1	3	96	100	(112)
<u>Party ID</u>					
-- Democrat	7	9	85	101	(236)
-- Independent	15	6	79	100	(208)
-- Republican	24	6	71	101	(155)

Composite Table of Party Identification in New Jersey

	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Independent</u>	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Other-DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Registered Voters	38%	26%	24%	11%	99%	(632)
<u>Gender</u>						
--Male	34	30	29	7	100	(298)
--Female	42	23	20	15	100	(334)