

# The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll

August 26, 2001  
(Release 132-1)

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A story based on the survey findings presented in this release and background memo will appear in the Sunday, August 26 Star-Ledger. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to "*The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll.*"

## McGREEVEY BEGINS FALL CAMPAIGN WITH COMMANDING LEAD

As summer vacation season ends Democratic gubernatorial candidate Jim McGreevey is enjoying smooth sailing, while his Republican opponent Bret Schundler is stuck in traffic somewhere on the Parkway. Ten weeks before election day McGreevey holds a commanding 49 to 30 percent lead among likely voters, with about two in ten undecided. With those who say they "lean" towards a candidate added to the tabulation, McGreevey's advantage over Schundler expands to a margin of 54 to 33 percent.

In a three-way race with State Senator Bill Schluter (running as an independent) added to the mix, McGreevey outpolls Schundler by 48 to 29 percent, with Schluter receiving four percent.

These are the latest figures in New Jersey's 2001 gubernatorial election, released today by the Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll, which interviewed 660 registered voters between August 15 and 21. The poll's findings are based on the 60 percent of those registered voters (395) it deemed most likely to vote in the election. The findings are subject to a sampling error of plus or minus 5 percentage points.

The poll suggests that fall could be a rewarding season for Democrats in general, as all 120 seats in both houses of the legislature are at stake. When asked how they would vote "if the election for the State Assembly were held today," 40 percent of likely voters say they plan to vote for the Democratic candidates in their district, while 34 percent indicate they would vote for the Republicans. Another 24 percent say they are undecided, while the remaining few would either split their ballots or vote for a candidate of another party. The Democratic advantage in the current survey is larger than was found two and four years ago, the last two times seats in the Assembly were up for public vote.

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Cliff Zukin, director of the Rutgers-based poll commented, “The Republicans must be seriously concerned about turning into the minority party after the 2001 elections. Not only did the legislative redistricting after the 2000 census advantage the Democrats, but there appears to be less enthusiasm than is common for the candidate at the top of their ticket. We could very well see a change in the control of government in Trenton from the Republicans to the Democrats at the end of the year unless the dynamics of the race change after Labor Day.”

McGreevey is far more positively regarded than Schundler at this point in time. Favorable impressions of the Woodbridge Mayor outnumber unfavorable ones among likely voters by more than four to one – 58 percent to only 13 percent – with the remaining 29 percent expressing no opinion of him. In contrast, opinions about Schundler are clearly mixed: 38 percent have a positive view of the Jersey City Mayor, while 21 percent hold an unflattering opinion of him. Four in ten express no clear opinion of Schundler.

Not only is Schundler less favorably viewed than McGreevey, he is also viewed in more partisan terms. While Schundler is well regarded by fellow Republicans (70 percent favorable, 2 percent unfavorable), independents are only marginally positive (35 percent to 22 percent), and Democrats are hostile (13 percent favorable, 39 percent unfavorable). McGreevey, on the other hand, actually receives slightly more positive (28 percent) than negative (23 percent) assessments from Republicans, is very popular among the state’s critical group of independent voters (53 percent favorable to 14 percent unfavorable), and is almost uniformly positively regarded by Democrats (88 percent favorable, 3 percent unfavorable).

Poll findings suggest that McGreevey’s substantial lead over Schundler is rooted in a number of factors:

- McGreevey has a huge lead among the state’s independent swing voters at this point in time. Currently 50 percent of likely independent voters say they plan to vote for McGreevey, compared to just 18 percent for Schundler. Thirty percent are undecided.
- There is a remarkable gender gap, even by New Jersey standards: McGreevey leads Schundler by 52 to 24 percent among likely women voters, compared to a lesser margin of 46 to 37 percent among men likely to vote in the election. Women are also anchoring the Democratic margin in intended Assembly voting: women prefer Democratic candidates for the Assembly by a margin of 45 to 27 percent; men prefer Republican candidates by a narrower 41 to 34 percent.
- Self-identified Democrats outnumber self-identified Republicans even among the smaller core group of likely voters, where Republicans often have an edge. The survey finds 38 percent of likely voters saying they consider themselves to be Democrats while 34 percent say they are Republicans. Another 21 percent identify as independents.

- Finally, as a group, Republicans give less support to Schundler than Democrats give to McGreevey. While 70 percent of Republicans say they plan to vote for their candidate, 85 percent of Democrats say they intend to vote for McGreevey.

With the primaries over, the candidates are becoming more familiar to the electorate. Just over half of likely voters – 53 percent – say they feel they know “a lot” or “some” about Schundler, with another 30 percent saying they know at least “a little” about him. Many, 39 percent, describe the Jersey City Mayor as a conservative, 13 percent as a moderate, four percent as a liberal, and 42 percent offer no opinion.

Just fewer than three-quarters of likely voters – 72 percent – say they have heard or read at least “some” about McGreevey. One-quarter describe the Woodbridge Mayor as a liberal and 35 percent describe him as a moderate. Just five percent believe he is a conservative, with a third expressing no opinion of his ideology.

Zukin noted, “McGreevey is perceived as being closer to the ideological center of the state than is Schundler at this point in time, and moderate candidates have a better track record of winning the gubernatorial than do candidates from either the left or the right. When one looks back over the past 30 years or so, to Governors Cahill, Byrne, Kean, Florio, and Whitman, one sees a succession of moderate Governors, regardless of party. A major challenge facing Schundler over the next two and a half months is to get to the center of the political spectrum, where most of the voters are.”

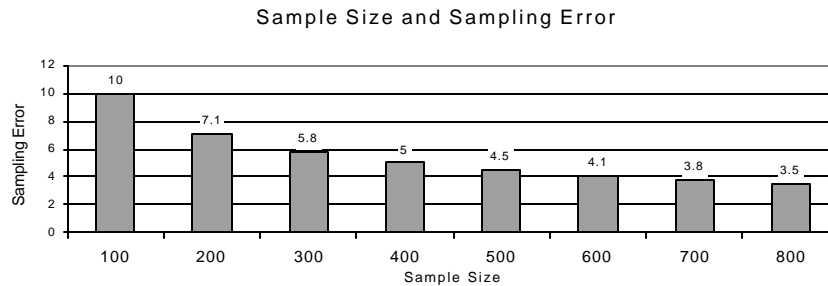
Just one in five of the Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll’s likely voters describe themselves as either liberal (22 percent) or conservative (22 percent), with the clear majority (56 percent) saying they are “somewhere in between.”

Schundler can take hope from one statistic in the poll’s findings—just 19 percent of likely voters say they have been following the gubernatorial election “very closely” so far, meaning that there is great potential for change as New Jersey voters tune in more closely to the election after Labor Day. Another 59 percent have been following the election “somewhat closely” and 22 percent have been following the campaign for Governor “not very closely” so far.

Additionally, one-third (34 percent) of New Jersey’s likely voters think the outcome of the 2001 election will make a “great deal” of difference in how state government is run over the next few years, with another half (48 percent) feeling the outcome will at least make “some” difference in how the state conducts its business.

**BACKGROUND MEMO – RELEASE (EP132-1) August 26, 2001**

The latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers* Poll was conducted by telephone from August 15-21 with a scientifically selected random sample of 660 New Jersey adults who reported being registered to vote. This sample yielded 395 adult residents deemed most likely to vote in the November election. The figures in this release are based on this likely voter 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  $\pm 5$  percent, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of New Jersey likely voters were found to support Bret Schundler for Governor, one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 45 and 55 percent ( $50 \pm 5$ ) had all New Jersey likely 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 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, for whom would you vote [PROGRAMMING: ROTATE CHOICES] Bret Schundler [SHUN – dler], the Republican, or Jim McGreevey, the Democrat?” [Q4]

	<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>
<b>August 2001</b>							
<b>Likely Voters</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(395)</b>
<u>Party ID</u>							
--Democrat	3	85	1	--	11	100	(150)
--Independent	18	50	2	--	30	100	(105)
--Republican	70	8	2	--	21	101	(133)
<u>Gender</u>							
--Male	37	46	2	--	16	101	(184)
--Female	24	52	1	--	23	100	(211)
<b>Previous Surveys</b>							
April 2001							
Registered Voters*	22	46	3	1	28	100	(632)
January 2001							
Registered Voters*	19	43	4	1	32	99	(649)
September 1997	<u>Whitman (R)</u>	<u>McGreevey (D)</u>					
Registered Voters*	45	33	3	2	17	100	(673)
September 1993	<u>Whitman (R)</u>	<u>Florio (D)</u>					
Likely Voters	37	47	--	1	15	100	(595)
September 1989	<u>Courter (R)</u>	<u>Florio (D)</u>					
Likely Voters	30	51	--	2	17	100	(712)

\* previous survey sample of registered voters, compared to current sample of likely voters

**COMPOSITE VOTE WITH LEANERS**

“If the election for Governor were held today, for whom would you vote [PROGRAMMING: ROTATE CHOICES] Bret Schundler [SHUN – dler], the Republican, or Jim McGreevey, the Democrat?” [Q4]

**IF UNDECIDED:** “At this moment do you lean more towards Schundler or more towards McGreevey?” [Q5]

	<u>Schundler</u>	<u>McGreevey</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Wouldn't Vote</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>August 2001</b>							
<b>Likely Voters</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>2%</b>	--	<b>12%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>(395)</b>
<i>Party ID</i>							
--Democrat	5	89	1	--	5	100	(150)
--Independent	20	56	2	--	22	100	(105)
--Republican	76	12	2	--	11	101	(133)

**ASKED OF THOSE WHO CHOSE A CANDIDATE IN Q4**

“Are you very sure about voting for (FILL CANDIDATE FROM Q4); or might you change your mind before Election Day?” [Q6]

	<u>Very sure</u>	<u>Might change</u>	<u>DK/Refused</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>August 2001</b>					
<b>Likely Voters</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(312)</b>
<i>Probable vote</i>					
--Schundler	72	27	1	100	(119)
--McGreevey	74	25	1	100	(193)

“If you had three candidates to choose from for Governor -- [PROGRAMMING: ROTATE CHOICES] Bret Schundler [SHUN – dler], the Republican, Jim McGreevey, the Democrat, and Bill Schluter [SHLOOT – er], an independent, for whom would you vote?

**IF SCHUNDLER OR SCHLUTER – CLARIFY:** Is that Schundler, the Republican, or Schluter, the independent?” [Q7]

	<u>Schundler</u>	<u>McGreevey</u>	<u>Schluter</u>	<u>Neither/ Other</u>	<u>Wouldn't Vote</u>	<u>DK/ Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>August 2001</b>								
<b>Likely Voters</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>1%</b>	--	<b>19%</b>	<b>101%</b>	<b>(395)</b>
<i>Party ID</i>								
--Democrat	3	83	4	0	1	9	100	(150)
--Independent	16	50	4	1	0	30	101	(105)
--Republican	69	8	3	1	0	20	101	(133)

**COMPOSITE VOTE WITH LEANERS**

“If you had three candidates to choose from for Governor -- **[PROGRAMMING: ROTATE CHOICES]** Bret Schundler [SHUN – dler], the Republican, Jim McGreevey, the Democrat, and Bill Schluter [SHLOOT – er], an independent, for whom would you vote?

**IF SCHUNDLER OR SCHLUTER – CLARIFY:** Is that Schundler, the Republican, or Schluter, the independent?” [Q7]

**IF UNDECIDED:** “At this moment do you lean more towards Schundler [SHUN-dler] the Republican, McGreevey the Democrat, or Schluter [SHLOOT-er] the independent?” [Q8]

	<u>Schundler</u>	<u>McGreevey</u>	<u>Schluter</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Wouldn't Vote</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>August 2001</b>								
<b>Likely Voters</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>101%</b>	<b>(395)</b>
<i>Party ID</i>								
--Democrat	4	87	4	--	1	5	101	(150)
--Independent	20	54	4	1	--	21	100	(105)
--Republican	77	8	3	1	--	11	100	(133)

“And if the election for State Assembly were held today, would you vote for the Republican or Democratic candidates for Assembly in your district?” [Q9]

	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Split/Other</u>	<u>DK/Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>August 2001</b>						
<b>Likely Voters</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(395)</b>
<i>Party ID</i>						
--Democrat	83	2	1	13	99	(150)
--Independent	29	19	3	50	101	(105)
--Republican	2	82	3	14	101	(133)
<i>Gender</i>						
--Male	34	41	3	22	100	(184)
--Female	45	27	1	26	99	(211)
<b>Previous Surveys</b>						
April 2001						
Registered Voters*	42	33	2	22	99	(632)
September 1999						
Registered Voters*	34	31	5	30	100	(516)
September 1997						
Registered Voters*	33	29	--	38	100	(673)

\* previous survey sample of registered voters, compared to current sample of likely voters

**QUESTIONS 10A AND 10B ROTATED:**

Is your opinion of Democrat Jim McGreevey favorable or unfavorable, or don't you really have an opinion of him? **IF FAVORABLE OR UNFAVORABLE:** Is that very [favorable/unfavorable] or somewhat [favorable/unfavorable]? [Q10A]

	<u>Very favorable</u>	<u>Somewhat favorable</u>	<u>Somewhat unfavorable</u>	<u>Very unfavorable</u>	<u>DK/ No opinion</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>August 2001</b>							
<b>Likely Voters</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(395)</b>
<i>Party ID</i>							
--Democrat	43	45	1	2	9	100	(150)
--Independent	18	35	6	8	33	100	(105)
--Republican	5	23	9	14	48	99	(133)

Is your opinion of Republican Bret Schundler (SHUN – dler) favorable or unfavorable, or don't you really have an opinion of him? **IF FAVORABLE OR UNFAVORABLE:** Is that very [favorable/unfavorable] or somewhat [favorable/unfavorable]? [Q10B]

	<u>Very favorable</u>	<u>Somewhat favorable</u>	<u>Somewhat unfavorable</u>	<u>Very unfavorable</u>	<u>DK/ No opinion</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>August 2001</b>							
<b>Likely Voters</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>(395)</b>
<i>Party ID</i>							
--Democrat	1	12	16	23	47	99	(150)
--Independent	8	27	10	12	44	101	(105)
--Republican	37	33	2	--	29	101	(133)

How closely have you been following the campaign for Governor -- very closely, somewhat closely, or not very closely so far? [Q11]

	<u>Very closely</u>	<u>Somewhat closely</u>	<u>Not very closely</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>August 2001</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(395)</b>
<i>Party ID</i>						
--Democrat	21	61	17	1	100	(150)
--Independent	17	54	29	--	100	(105)
--Republican	18	60	22	--	100	(133)

“In your opinion, how much of a difference will the outcome of the election make in the way the New Jersey government is run over the next few years—a great deal of difference, some, or not very much difference?” [Q12]

	<u>Great Deal</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Not very much</u>	<u>No difference at all</u>	<u>Depends</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>August 2001</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>(395)</b>
<i>Party ID</i>								
--Democrat	42	45	8	1	1	3	100	(150)
--Independent	28	49	21	1	2	--	101	(105)
--Republican	32	51	14	1	1	2	101	(133)

“How much do you feel you know about (Bret Schundler/Jim McGreevey – CANDIDATE ORDER ROTATED) -- a lot, some, just a little, or nothing at all?” [Q13, Q15]

	<u>A lot</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>A little</u>	<u>Nothing</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>August 2001</b>							
<b>SCHUNDLER—Likely Voters</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(395)</b>
<i>Party ID</i>							
--Democrat	9	39	30	23	--	101	(150)
--Independent	12	32	37	18	--	99	(105)
--Republican	14	51	26	8	--	99	(133)
<b>MCGREEVEY—Likely Voters</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>101%</b>	<b>(395)</b>
<i>Party ID</i>							
--Democrat	21	61	14	3	1	100	(150)
--Independent	19	51	23	7	--	100	(105)
--Republican	15	47	29	8	1	100	(133)
<b>Previous Surveys</b>							
September 1997							
WHITMAN—Registered Voters*	18	57	24	--	--	99	(673)
MCGREEVEY—Registered Voters*	4	17	60	19	--	100	(673)
September 1993							
WHITMAN—Likely Voters	9	42	44	5	--	100	(590)
FLORIO—Likely Voters	41	45	13	1	1	100	(590)
September 1989							
COURTER—Likely Voters	6	29	46	18	--	99	(707)
FLORIO—Likely Voters	16	33	47	4	--	100	(707)

\* previous survey sample of registered voters, compared to current sample of likely voters

How would you describe (Bret Schundler/Jim McGreevey -- CANDIDATE ORDER ROTATED) in terms of his issue positions—as liberal, moderate, conservative, or aren’t you sure? [Q14, Q16]

	<u>Liberal</u>	<u>Moderate</u>	<u>Conservative</u>	<u>Depends</u>	<u>DK/ Know Nothing</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>August 2001</b>							
<b>SCHUNDLER</b>							
<b>Likely Voters</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>101%</b>	<b>(395)</b>
<i>Party ID</i>							
--Democrat	4	9	39	1	47	100	(150)
--Independent	2	7	44	4	44	101	(105)
--Republican	4	24	34	4	35	101	(133)
<b>MCGREEVEY</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>101%</b>	<b>(395)</b>
<b>Likely Voters</b>							
<i>Party ID</i>							
--Democrat	24	43	7	--	27	101	(150)
--Independent	18	42	1	4	35	100	(105)
--Republican	32	20	7	2	40	101	(133)



“Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling his job as President?”  
[Q20]

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>August 2001</b>					
Registered Voters	54%	33%	13%	100%	(660)
Likely Voters	55%	35%	10%	100%	(395)
<b><u>Previous Surveys</u></b>					
--January 2001					
Registered Voters	43	21	37	101	(649)

In politics today, do you consider yourself a Democrat, Republican, Independent, or something else? [QD1]

	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Independent</u>	<u>Something else</u>	<u>DK/ No opinion</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>August 2001</b>							
Likely Voters	38%	34%	21%	6%	1%	100%	(395)

Regardless of the political party you might favor, do you consider yourself to be liberal, conservative, or somewhere in between? [QD3]

	<u>Liberal</u>	<u>Moderate</u>	<u>Conservative</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>DK/ No Opinion</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>August 2001</b>							
Likely Voters	22%	56%	22%	1%	--	101%	(395)