

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

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McGREEVEY RETAINS HIS ISSUE ADVANTAGE *Voters View the Economy and Taxes as Increasingly Important*

Democrat Jim McGreevey is heading into the final four weeks of the campaign with a large issue advantage over his rival, Republican Bret Schundler. Voters currently see McGreevey's positions on key campaign issues as more in tune with their own, and on the issues voters themselves care most about, McGreevey outdistances Schundler in vote share.

Education, which ranks first on a list of issues, could prove to be McGreevey's biggest strength. Seventy-seven percent of likely voters say that education is an "extremely important" issue to them. And when it comes to the candidates' positions on education funding, 44 percent of voters feel that McGreevey's position is closest to their own, while only 27 percent think Republican Bret Schundler's position is. In addition, seven in ten likely voters continue to rate automobile insurance rates, a McGreevey issue from four years ago, as "extremely important."

As the economy worsens, property taxes and the condition of the state economy have risen in importance and now rival education and automobile insurance rates in voters' minds. When asked about a host of different campaign issues, 72 percent of voters currently say the economy is "extremely important" to them personally, and 71 percent say the same about property taxes. But while economic issues have been central to Schundler's campaign, it is unclear whether their prominence will benefit him, as McGreevey currently leads Schundler among voters who place a priority on these issues.

Most voters also care about the environment and gun control, although other campaign issues – suburban sprawl, abortion and Parkway tolls – are of lesser importance. Two-thirds of likely voters (67 percent) feel that the environment is "extremely important" and six in ten rate gun control the same way.

These are some of the main findings of the most recent Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll, conducted September 22 through 26 among 424 likely voters. The poll has a margin of error of plus or minus 5 percentage points.

Associate director of the Rutgers-based poll, Monika McDermott, points out: "It's interesting how little issue priorities have changed over the past month. While the state's entire focus has been on

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the terrorist attacks of September 11th and their aftermath, voters haven't forgotten about perennial issues like education, automobile insurance and taxes.”

Other key findings include:

- Sixty-five percent of New Jersey voters feel that abortion should be legal in at least most cases – including 59 percent of Republicans and 64 percent of Catholics.
- Sixty-eight percent of voters favor the idea of removing tolls from the Garden State Parkway, but when they hear what the financial ramifications could be, support drops to 26 percent.
- Voters are split over whether, if the state budget hits a shortfall in the tightening economy, they would rather see services cut or taxes raised: 49 percent would choose to cut state services but 43 percent would choose to raise taxes.

In general, more voters feel that McGreevey is an ideological match for them than Schundler is. Just over half of likely voters (51 percent) say that McGreevey's views on the issues are “just about right” for them, compared to 42 percent who feel that Schundler's views are. But despite the conventional wisdom that Schundler would be too conservative for New Jersey, voters are no more likely to view Schundler's positions as extreme than they are to view McGreevey's. Just over a third (35 percent) feel that Schundler's views are too conservative, but a nearly equal 33 percent feel that McGreevey's positions are too liberal for them.

On specific issues, McGreevey also has an advantage. The poll asked in depth about three of the central themes in the candidates' campaigns so far – education funding, abortion and Parkway tolls – and found that voters' preferences are currently more in line with McGreevey's stated positions than they are with Schundler's. And for the most part, voters know it. Voters place a priority on funding public schools, they are pro-choice on abortion, and while they support removing tolls from the Garden State Parkway in principle, they balk at the cost.

Education

Sixty-five percent of likely voters say they would prefer that if the state were to spend more money on education that it be given to the public schools, rather than used as tax credits to help build scholarship funds for disadvantaged children to go to private schools. Only 27 percent of voters say they would prefer that any extra money go to the tax credits rather than to the public schools. Schundler has proposed the scholarship fund tax credits, while McGreevey has criticized the plan as drawing funds away from the public schools.

Voters place such a priority on public school funding, they even appear ready to override their usual aversion to taxes in order to fund the schools. When asked to choose between higher taxes and

more money for the schools, or lower taxes and less money for the schools, 56 percent of New Jersey voters choose higher taxes and more public school funds. Thirty-two percent of voters say they would prefer lower taxes and less money for the schools.

Voters see their own positions on education funding as closer to McGreevey's position than to Schundler's. Overall, 44 percent of likely voters feel McGreevey's position on education funding is closer to their own, while only 27 percent feel that Schundler's is, and another 27 percent don't know. These beliefs are reflected in the vote – among those who say that education is “extremely important” 48 percent support McGreevey and 29 percent support Schundler.

McDermott adds: “Education is voters’ top issue, and public schools, rather than private, are their top funding priority. This works wholly to McGreevey’s benefit as voters see him as the candidate who shares these concerns. Schundler faces a daunting task ahead in trying to convince them otherwise.”

Abortion

When it comes to whether abortion should be legal or illegal, 30 percent of likely voters feel it should be legal in all cases and another 35 percent feel it should be legal in most cases. Seventeen percent of voters would prefer that abortion be illegal in most cases, and one in ten would like to see it illegal in all cases. Even 64 percent of Catholic voters and 59 percent of Republican voters feel that abortion should be mostly or completely legal.

Overall, 42 percent of likely voters feel that McGreevey's position on abortion is closest to their own, while only 19 percent feel that Schundler's is. Among those who support having abortions mostly legal, 53 percent see McGreevey as the candidate closer to their own position. And among those who prefer abortion mostly illegal, 50 percent say Schundler's position is closest to their own.

Unlike education, however, abortion is not a dominant issue on voters' agendas these days. Only 43 percent of likely voters say abortion is an “extremely important” issue to them personally, while 27 percent say it is “fairly important” and another 27 percent call it “not that important.” And while McGreevey is more in line with attitudes towards abortion overall, among those who feel it is of utmost importance, the issue is as likely to benefit Schundler as it is McGreevey. Only half of those who find the issue “extremely important” would like abortions to be legal in at least most cases, while the other half would like to see them mostly or totally illegal.

Parkway Tolls

Voters like the idea of removing tolls from the Garden State Parkway, but when given potential fiscal ramifications of the plan, they turn against it. When asked their first thoughts on removing all tolls from the Parkway, two-thirds of likely voters (68 percent) say they favor the idea. Only 25 percent of voters oppose the idea. But when asked how they would feel about the toll removal if it meant “the state would have to spend more than one hundred million dollars a year to make up for the Parkway's revenue

loss,” sentiments change dramatically. After hearing the financial details of the deal, 61 percent of voters oppose removing the tolls, and only 26 percent favor it.

On this issue voters are unclear who better represents their views. Despite the Schundler campaign’s push on this issue, 46 percent of likely voters say they do not know whose position, Schundler’s or McGreevey’s, is closer to their own. Twenty-six percent believe McGreevey’s position to be closer to their own, while 24 percent believe Schundler’s to be.

And at this point in the race, the issue of Parkway tolls does not look to be pivotal. Only 22 percent of voters feel that the removal of Parkway tolls is an “extremely important” issue to them personally, while 37 percent say it is only “fairly important” and a 40 percent plurality say the issue is “not that important.”

The Economy

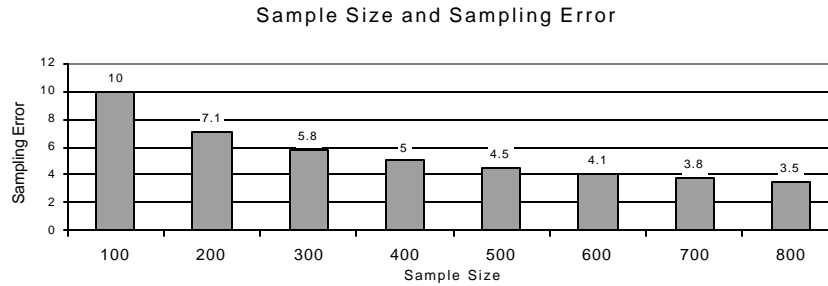
The worsening economy may present the next governor with a tough trade-off between state services and state taxes, and at this point, voters are somewhat divided over what the best solution would be. Just under half of voters (49 percent) say that if forced to choose between raising taxes and cutting state services they would prefer state services be cut. But a substantial 43 percent of likely voters say that they would prefer to see taxes raised – 35 percent say to raise income taxes and 8 percent think property taxes should be boosted.

Perhaps for this reason, it is unclear which candidate, if either, will benefit from increasing economic concerns. While Schundler has made property taxes and the state budget centerpieces of his campaign, he trails McGreevey among voters who find these issues important. Among those who rate the state economy and budget as “extremely important,” McGreevey leads Schundler by 13 points – 44 percent to 31 percent. Schundler performs better among those who rate property taxes extremely important, but he still trails McGreevey 35 percent to 43 percent.

McDermott sums up the findings: “On a whole host of campaign issues McGreevey has the advantage over Schundler, as voters generally find McGreevey’s positions more in tune with their own. Even on the issue of taxes, a Republican issue if ever there were one, many traditionally tax-averse New Jersey voters seem willing to consider another way.”

BACKGROUND MEMO – RELEASE (EP133-3) October 8, 2001

The latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers* Poll was conducted by telephone from September 22-26 with a scientifically selected random sample of 895 New Jersey adult residents, including 669 who reported being registered to vote. This sample yielded 424 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 for likely voters is ± 5 percent, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of New Jersey likely voters were found to consider education a top priority, one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 45 and 55 percent (50 ± 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 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:

“I am going to read a list of some of the issues that might come up in this year’s election for Governor. As I read each one, please tell me how important that issue is to you personally – extremely important, fairly important, or not that important. Is [FILL – RANDOMIZE A-H] extremely important, fairly important or not that important of an issue to you personally?” [Q11]

	<u>Extremely important</u>	<u>Fairly important</u>	<u>Not that important</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<u>EDUCATION</u>						
September 2001						
Likely Voters	77%	19%	4%	--	100%	(424)
<i>Party ID</i>						
-- Democrat	81	17	2	--	100	(149)
-- Independent	79	18	3	--	100	(119)
-- Republican	70	22	7		99	(142)
<u>Previous Surveys</u>						
August 2001, Likely Voters	80	18	3	--	101	(395)
<u>THE STATE ECONOMY AND BUDGET</u>						
September 2001						
Likely Voters	72%	26%	2%	--	100%	(424)
<i>Party ID</i>						
-- Democrat	72	25	3	--	100	(149)
-- Independent	67	31	2	--	100	(119)
-- Republican	75	23	1	1	100	(142)
<u>Previous Surveys</u>						
August 2001, Likely Voters	66	32	2	1	101	(395)

	<u>Extremely important</u>	<u>Fairly important</u>	<u>Not that important</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<u>PROPERTY TAXES</u>						
September 2001						
Likely Voters	71%	23%	5%	1%	100%	(424)
<i>Party ID</i>						
-- Democrat	60	31	8	1	100	(149)
-- Independent	72	22	7	--	101	(119)
-- Republican	80	17	3	1	101	(142)
<u>Previous Surveys</u>						
August 2001, Likely Voters	66	29	4	1	100	(395)
<u>SUBURBAN SPRAWL AND TRAFFIC PROBLEMS</u>						
September 2001						
Likely Voters	48%	37%	14%	1%	100%	(424)
<i>Party ID</i>						
-- Democrat	46	37	15	2	100	(149)
-- Independent	48	40	11	1	100	(119)
-- Republican	49	35	16	0	100	(142)
<u>Previous Surveys</u>						
August 2001, Likely Voters	50	40	10	--	100	(395)
<u>AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE RATES</u>						
September 2001						
Likely Voters	70%	23%	6%	1%	100%	(424)
<i>Party ID</i>						
-- Democrat	75	17	7	1	100	(149)
-- Independent	67	25	6	1	99	(119)
-- Republican	66	27	7	--	100	(142)
<u>Previous Surveys</u>						
August 2001, Likely Voters	68	26	6	1	101	(395)
<u>TOLLS ON THE GARDEN STATE PARKWAY</u>						
September 2001						
Likely Voters	22%	37%	40%	1%	100	(424)
<i>Party ID</i>						
-- Democrat	22	38	39	1	100	(149)
-- Independent	22	28	48	2	100	(119)
-- Republican	21	45	35	0	101	(142)
<u>ENVIRONMENT</u>						
September 2001						
Likely Voters	67%	28%	4%	--	99%	(210)
<u>Previous Surveys</u>						
August 2001, Likely Voters	62	33	4	0	99	(395)
<u>GUN CONTROL</u>						
September 2001						
Likely Voters	60%	25%	15%	--	100%	(214)

	<u>Extremely important</u>	<u>Fairly important</u>	<u>Not that important</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
ABORTION						
September 2001						
Likely Voters	43%	27%	27%	3%	100%	(214)

“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?” [Q12, Q13]

	<u>A lot</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>A little</u>	<u>Nothing</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2001							
SCHUNDLER—Likely Voters							
	19%	44%	25%	11%	2%	101%	(424)
<i>Party ID</i>							
--Democrat	9	44	31	14	3	101	(149)
--Independent	18	39	26	14	3	100	(119)
--Republican	31	47	16	6	1	101	(142)
MCGREEVEY—Likely Voters							
	29%	46%	18%	6%	1%	100%	(424)
<i>Party ID</i>							
--Democrat	32	44	18	3	2	99	(149)
--Independent	27	49	17	6	--	99	(119)
--Republican	28	43	20	8	1	100	(142)

“If the state were going to spend more money on education, which do you think should be a higher priority – giving the money to public schools for things like increasing teacher salaries and reducing class sizes, OR giving the money as tax credits for scholarship donations that help send disadvantaged children to private or parochial schools?” [Q14]

	<u>Give money to public schools</u>	<u>Give money as tax credits</u>	<u>Neither</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2001						
Likely Voters	65%	27%	3%	4%	99%	(424)
<i>Party ID</i>						
--Democrat	74	19	2	5	100	(149)
--Independent	69	25	2	3	99	(119)
--Republican	53	39	5	3	100	(142)
<i>Gender</i>						
-- Male	59	34	3	4	100	(208)
-- Female	71	21	4	4	100	(216)

ASKED OF THOSE WHO HAD AN OPINION IN Q14:

“From what you know so far, which candidate for Governor do you think comes closest to your position on education spending -- Bret Schundler or Jim McGreevey?” [Q15]

	<u>Bret Schundler</u>	<u>Jim McGreevey</u>	<u>Neither /Both</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2001						
Likely Voters	27%	44%	2%	27%	100%	(394)
<u>Q14</u>						
--Money to public schools	16	52	3	30	100	(280)
--Money as tax credits	53	27	--	20	100	(114)
<u>Party ID</u>						
--Democrat	6	72	4	18	100	(140)
--Independent	22	46	2	31	101	(113)
--Republican	53	13	1	33	100	(130)
<u>Q11</u>						
--Education extremely important	25	47	3	25	100	(307)

“Do you think abortion should be legal in ALL cases, legal in MOST cases, NOT legal in MOST cases, or NOT legal in ALL cases?” [Q16]

	<u>Legal in ALL cases</u>	<u>Legal in MOST cases</u>	<u>NOT legal in MOST cases</u>	<u>NOT legal in ALL cases</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2001							
Likely Voters	30%	35%	17%	10%	8%	100%	(424)
<u>Party ID</u>							
--Democrat	42	30	13	6	9	100	(149)
--Independent	29	39	19	7	7	101	(119)
--Republican	20	39	19	16	6	100	(142)
<u>Gender</u>							
-- Male	28	35	21	8	8	100	(208)
--Female	31	36	13	11	9	100	(216)
<u>Religion</u>							
--Catholic	24	40	18	12	7	101	(201)
--Protestant	31	27	20	11	11	100	(112)
<u>Q11</u>							
--Abortion extremely important	28	22	25	22	4	101	(94)

ASKED OF THOSE WHO HAD AN OPINION IN Q16:

“From what you know so far, which candidate for Governor do you think comes closer to your position on abortion -- Bret Schundler or Jim McGreevey?” [Q17]

	<u>Bret Schundler</u>	<u>Jim McGreevey</u>	<u>Neither /Both</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2001 Likely Voters	19%	42%	2%	37%	100%	(389)
<i><u>Q16</u></i>						
--Mostly legal	6	53	3	39	101	(279)
--Mostly illegal	50	17	1	32	100	(110)
<i><u>Party ID</u></i>						
--Democrat	5	63	1	31	100	(134)
--Independent	20	37	4	38	99	(113)
--Republican	32	26	1	41	100	(132)

“There has been some discussion lately about removing the tollbooths from the Parkway and making the roadway free to all traveling it. Just your first impression: do you favor or oppose this idea?” [Q18]

	<u>Favor</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2001 Likely Voters	68%	25%	7%	100%	(424)
<i><u>Party ID</u></i>					
--Democrat	66	28	7	99	(149)
--Independent	66	27	7	100	(119)
--Republican	70	24	7	101	(142)

ASKED OF THOSE WHO FAVOR REMOVING THE TOLLS IN Q18:

“And would you favor or oppose this idea if removing the tollbooths meant the state would have to spend more than one-hundred-million-dollars a year to make up for the Parkway’s revenue loss?” [Q19]

	<u>Favor</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>"Oppose" in Q18</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2001 Likely Voters	26%	36%	13%	25%	100%	(424)
<i><u>Party ID</u></i>						
--Democrat	23	39	11	28	101	(149)
--Independent	26	31	16	27	100	(119)
--Republican	30	36	10	24	100	(142)

“From what you know so far, which candidate for Governor do you think comes closer to your position on Parkway tolls -- Bret Schundler or Jim McGreevey? [Q20]

	Bret Schundler	Jim McGreevey	Neither /Both	DK	Total	(n)
September 2001 Likely Voters	24%	26%	4%	46%	100%	(424)
<i>Party ID</i>						
--Democrat	9	42	4	45	100	(149)
--Independent	22	25	4	49	100	(119)
--Republican	42	12	4	42	100	(142)
<i>Q19</i>						
--Favor	42	25	2	31	100	(113)
--Oppose (Q18 & 19)	17	29	5	50	100	(254)

ASKED OF THOSE WHO HAD AT LEAST "A LITTLE" KNOWLEDGE OF THE CANDIDATE IN Q12:

“Do you think Bret Schundler’s views on most issues are too liberal for you, too conservative for you, or just about right?” [Q21]

	Too liberal	Too conservative	Just about right	DK	Total	(n)
September 2001 Likely Voters	6%	35%	42%	17%	100%	(367)
<i>Party ID</i>						
--Democrat	7	59	17	17	100	(123)
--Independent	6	38	38	18	100	(101)
--Republican	4	13	71	13	101	(131)

ASKED OF THOSE WHO HAD AT LEAST "A LITTLE" KNOWLEDGE OF THE CANDIDATE IN Q13:

“Do you think Jim McGreevey’s views on most issues are too liberal for you, too conservative for you, or just about right?”[Q22]

	Too liberal	Too conservative	Just about right	DK	Total	(n)
September 2001 Likely Voters	33%	2%	51%	14%	100%	(396)
<i>Party ID</i>						
--Democrat	7	2	85	5	99	(141)
--Independent	32	2	47	19	100	(112)
--Republican	63	3	18	16	100	(130)

“As you may know, most of the funding for public schools in New Jersey comes from local property taxes. If you had to choose, would you prefer higher taxes and more money for the public schools, or lower taxes and less money for the public schools?” [QJP2A]

	<u>Higher taxes, more money for schools</u>	<u>Lower taxes, less money for schools</u>	<u>Keep as it is now / Neither</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2001						
Likely Voters	56%	32%	6%	7%	101%	(424)
<i>Party ID</i>						
--Democrat	69	22	4	6	101	(149)
--Independent	59	31	8	2	100	(119)
--Republican	40	45	6	9	100	(142)

“Given the condition of the national economy, some people are projecting that the New Jersey state government might face budget shortfalls in the next few years. If that were to happen and you had to choose, which would you prefer – raising taxes to keep state services at their current level, or cutting state services to keep taxes at their current level? IF RAISE TAXES: Which tax would you rather have raised – the state income tax, or local property tax?” [QJP2B]

	<u>Raise taxes – state income tax</u>	<u>Raise taxes – local property tax</u>	<u>Cut state services</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2001						
Likely Voters	35%	8%	49%	9%	101%	(424)
<i>Party ID</i>						
--Democrat	41	8	42	9	100	(149)
--Independent	40	9	45	6	100	(119)
--Republican	24	5	61	10	100	(142)

COMPOSITE TABLE OF VOTE AND ISSUES

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

	<u>Bret Schundler</u>	<u>Jim McGreevey</u>	<u>Other Candidate</u>	<u>Would not Vote</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2001							
Likely Voters who said “extremely important” to issue in Q11.							
Education	29%	48	2	--	21	100	(326)
The State Economy And Budget	31%	44	3	--	22	100	(304)
Property Taxes	35%	43	3	--	20	101	(300)
Automobile Insurance Rates	27%	51	3	--	20	101	(290)
Suburban Sprawl And Traffic Problems	32%	46	3	1	19	101	(208)

COMPOSITE TABLE OF ISSUES AND VOTE

“I am going to read a list of some of the issues that might come up in this year’s election for Governor. As I read each one, please tell me how important that issue is to you personally – extremely important, fairly important, or not that important. Is [FILL – RANDOMIZE A-H] extremely important, fairly important or not that important of an issue to you personally?” [Q11]

LIKELY VOTERS	<u>McGreevey Voters</u>	<u>Schundler Voters</u>
<u>September 2001</u>		
Education extremely important	80%	72%
--August 2001 Likely Voters	86	71
Auto Insurance extremely important	78	60
--August 2001 Likely Voters	73	61
Property Taxes extremely important	66	79
--August 2001 Likely Voters	64	70
NJ Economy / Budget extremely important	72	73
--August 2001 Likely Voters	69	59
Sprawl and Traffic extremely important	49	49
--August 2001 Likely Voters	50	48
Parkway Tolls extremely important	22	20
(n)	(130)	(193)