

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

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A story based on the survey findings presented in this release and background memo will appear in the Tuesday, June 11, Star-Ledger. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to "*The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll.*"

## THE RACE FOR SENATE BEGINS

### *Forrester Faces an Uphill Battle*

The general election campaign for United States Senator from New Jersey begins with a double-digit advantage for incumbent Democrat Bob Torricelli, according to a new survey by the *Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll*. Among registered voters, Torricelli currently leads Republican challenger Doug Forrester by 14 points – 43 percent to 29 percent. When those who lean toward a candidate are included, Torricelli's lead widens to 48 percent to 31 percent for Forrester.

Forrester remains an unknown entity to most New Jersey voters, despite his victory in last week's Republican senate primary. Nearly three-quarters of registered voters statewide – 72 percent – have yet to form an opinion of the Republican candidate. On the positive side for Forrester, among those who do have an opinion of him, favorable opinions outnumber unfavorable ones by more than four to one.

The Poll's interim director, Monika McDermott, comments: "The race is about where we would expect it to be at this early stage. Torricelli has the powerful advantages of incumbency and familiarity, while Forrester faces the perennial struggle of first-time statewide candidates in New Jersey of getting his name and his message across to voters throughout the state."

The *Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll* was conducted by telephone among 626 registered voters, from June 4<sup>th</sup> through 9<sup>th</sup>. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus four percentage points.

Torricelli's lead in the Senate race is fueled by strong support within his base and a lead among New Jersey's crucial bloc of independent voters. Seventy-three percent of self-described Democrats say they would vote for Torricelli if the election were held

today. In addition, Torricelli leads Forrester 38 percent to 23 percent among independent voters, although many – 28 percent – are undecided at this point.

Forrester also enjoys strong support among his base voters as 77 percent of Republicans would currently vote for him. He has yet to consolidate support among conservative voters, however. Just over half – 54 percent – of conservatives choose Forrester in the senate race while over one quarter currently support Torricelli.

Other breakdowns in the vote include:

- There is little gender gap at this early stage of the race – men and women both give Torricelli a 14-point advantage, but women are less likely to have made a choice overall in the race.
- Geographically Forrester has the most support among southern New Jersey residents, where he ties Torricelli with 37 percent to 38 percent. In central New Jersey Torricelli leads by 13 points, and in the North he holds a 22-point advantage.
- Forrester begins the race with a base of support among high income and well-educated voters, trailing Torricelli by only four percentage points among voters with college degrees.

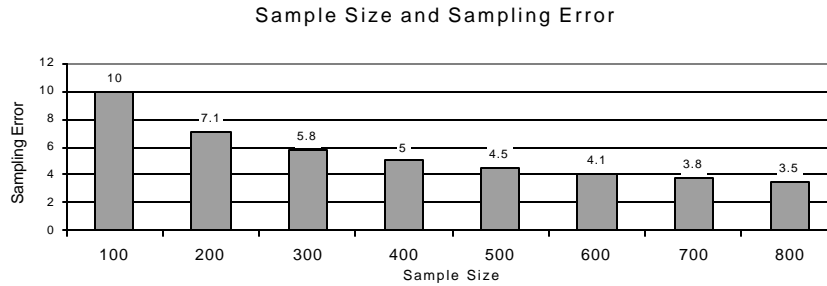
While 21 percent of voters are undecided at this early stage of the campaign, among those who have made a choice more than six in ten say their choice is set and will not change between now and November. Overall, 63 percent of those who support a candidate say their minds are made up, including 61 percent of Torricelli's supporters and 65 percent of Forrester's. Over one-third – 36 percent – of those who currently express a preference reserve the right to change their minds before casting their votes in November.

Torricelli receives lukewarm ratings from voters on a personal level, but relatively positive marks as senator. Currently, 33 percent of New Jersey voters view him favorably (either very or somewhat), while 23 percent view him unfavorably – numbers virtually unchanged from March. When asked for degrees of feeling, 12 percent of voters say they view the senator *very* unfavorably – the same number that view him *very* favorably. About half of voters approve of the job he's been doing as senator, while 22 percent disapprove and 29 percent have no opinion.

Discrepancies in candidate familiarity are working to Torricelli's advantage. Forty-four percent of voters do not currently have an opinion of Torricelli, but among that group he still leads Forrester 34 percent to 23 percent. In contrast, Forrester trails badly among voters who have yet to form an opinion of him. While overall Forrester's numbers are favorable – 23 percent hold a favorable opinion of him compared to only 5 percent who view him unfavorably – among those who have no opinion of him, 49 percent support Torricelli and only 17 percent support him.

**BACKGROUND MEMO – RELEASE (EP137-1) June 11, 2002**

The latest *Star-Ledger*/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll was conducted by telephone from June 5 to June 9 with a scientifically selected random sample of 802 New Jersey adults, 626 of whom reported that they are registered to vote. The figures in this release are based on the subgroup of registered voters. 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 this release is  $\pm 4.0$  percent, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of registered voters in New Jersey were found to have a lot of interest in the election for senator, one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 46.0 and 54.0 percent ( $50 \pm 4.0$ ) had all registered voters in New Jersey 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:

How much interest do you have in the election for Senator - - a lot, some, a little or none at all?  
[Q2]

	<u>A Lot</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>A Little</u>	<u>None at All</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total %</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>June 2002 -- Registered Voters</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(626)</b>
<i>Party affiliation</i>							
--Democrat	29	34	23	13	1	100	(244)
--Independent	37	29	20	14	--	100	(196)
--Republican	42	38	16	4	--	100	(163)

If the election for United States Senator were held today, for whom would you vote—[CHOICES ROTATED] Bob Torricelli, the Democrat, or Doug Forrester, the Republican.[Q3]

	<u>Torricelli</u>	<u>Forrester</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Would Not Vote</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total %</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>June 2002 -- Registered Voters</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>(626)</b>
<i>Party affiliation</i>							
--Democrat	73	6	3	2	16	100	(244)
--Independent	38	23	9	3	28	101	(196)
--Republican	6	77	1	2	15	101	(163)
<i>Ideology</i>							
--Liberal	64	12	5	3	16	100	(139)
--Moderate	43	26	3	2	27	101	(334)
--Conservative	27	54	6	--	13	100	(143)
<i>Region of NJ</i>							
--North	47	25	5	2	20	99	(290)
--Central	43	30	3	1	23	100	(154)
--South	38	37	4	2	18	99	(173)
<i>Gender</i>							
--Men	46	32	5	2	15	100	(293)
--Women	41	27	4	2	26	100	(333)
<i>Income</i>							
-- <\$35,000	47	22	5	3	23	100	(113)
-- \$35-70,000	46	28	5	2	18	99	(173)
-- >\$70,000	43	35	4	2	17	100	(263)
<i>Education</i>							
--High school or less	47	25	3	3	22	100	(152)
--Some college	40	29	8	--	22	99	(193)
--College graduate	40	36	3	2	18	99	(277)
<i>Torricelli opinion (Q6)</i>							
--Favorable	81	9	--	--	10	100	(213)
--Unfavorable	8	71	6	--	15	100	(163)
--DK/No opinion	34	23	6	5	33	101	(250)
<i>Forrester opinion (Q7)</i>							
--Favorable	18	74	2	--	6	100	(151)
--DK/No opinion	49	17	5	3	27	101	(438)
<i>Torricelli job approval (Q8)</i>							
--Approve	68	15	2	--	15	100	(301)
--Disapprove	10	71	8	--	11	100	(160)

**COMPOSITE -- SENATE VOTE W/LEANERS (Q3 + Q4):**

If the election for United States Senator were held today, for whom would you vote—[CHOICES ROTATED] Bob Torricelli, the Democrat, or Doug Forrester, the Republican.[Q3]

*ASKED OF UNDECIDED VOTERS:* At this moment do you lean more towards Torricelli or more towards Forrester? [Q4]

	<u>Torricelli</u>	<u>Forrester</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Would Not Vote</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total %</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>June 2002 -- Registered Voters</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>(626)</b>
<i>Party affiliation</i>							
--Democrat	79	7	3	2	9	100	(244)
--Independent	43	25	9	3	20	100	(196)
--Republican	8	80	1	2	10	101	(163)

**ASKED OF THOSE WHO MADE A CHOICE IN Q3:**

Are you very sure about voting for [FILL CANDIDATE FROM Q3] or might you change your mind before election day?[Q5]

	<u>Very Sure</u>	<u>Might Change</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total %</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>June 2002 -- Registered Voters</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>101%</b>	<b>(465)</b>
Torricelli voters	61	37	2	100	(266)
Forrester voters	65	34	2	99	(199)
<i>Party affiliation</i>					
--Democrat	64	33	2	101	(195)
--Independent	51	47	2	100	(122)
--Republican	69	30	1	100	(139)

**QUESTIONS 6 AND 7 ROTATED:**

Is your opinion of Bob Torricelli 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]?[Q6]

	<u>Favorable</u>		<u>Unfavorable</u>		<u>DK/No</u> <u>Opinion</u>	<u>Total</u> <u>%</u>	<u>(n)</u>
	<u>Very</u>	<u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Very</u>			
<b>June 2002 -- Registered Voters</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(626)</b>
<i>Party affiliation</i>							
-- Democrat	21	27	8	3	41	100	(244)
-- Independent	7	21	12	12	47	99	(196)
-- Republican	4	14	14	26	42	100	(163)
<i>Previous surveys</i>							
--March 2002 -- Registered Voters		31		24	44	99	(645)
--April 2001 -- Registered Voters		27		17	56	100	(605)
--June 1998 -- Registered Voters		51		14	35	100	(464)

Is your opinion of Doug Forrester 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]?[Q7]

	<u>Favorable</u>		<u>Unfavorable</u>		<u>DK/No</u> <u>Opinion</u>	<u>Total</u> <u>%</u>	<u>(n)</u>
	<u>Very</u>	<u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Very</u>			
<b>June 2002 -- Registered Voters</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(626)</b>
<i>Party affiliation</i>							
-- Democrat	3	8	2	4	82	99	(244)
-- Independent	3	14	3	2	77	99	(196)
-- Republican	14	34	2	1	50	101	(163)
<i>Previous surveys</i>							
--March 2002 -- Registered Voters		7		1	92	100	(328)

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Bob Torricelli is handling his job as Senator?[Q8]

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>June 2002 -- Registered Voters</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(626)</b>
<i>Party affiliation</i>					
-- Democrat	72	8	20	100	(244)
-- Independent	42	24	34	100	(196)
-- Republican	26	43	32	101	(163)
<i>Previous surveys</i>					
--March 2002 -- Registered Voters	42	26	32	100	(645)