

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 Friday, June 14 *Star-Ledger*. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to "*The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll*."

ISSUES IN THE RACE FOR SENATE

National Security and Terrorism Top Voters' List

Voters say that in this November's election for United States Senator from New Jersey their choice will be determined more by the candidates' positions on the issues than the candidates' personal qualities. And at this early stage of the election, the voters' issue agenda favors Democratic incumbent Bob Torricelli over his Republican challenger Doug Forrester. According to a new *Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll*, voters' top issue concerns in this election include national security and terrorism, health care and prescription drugs, and education.

Eight in ten registered voters say that the issue of national security and terrorism will be "extremely important" in influencing their vote for senate. Three-quarters say the same about the issue of health care and prescription drugs, and seven in ten rank education as "extremely important" to their vote. And among voters to whom these issues are most important, Torricelli holds large leads over Forrester in support. Only on the issue of government ethics does Forrester draw even with Torricelli.

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

Voters say issues will play a central role in their voting decisions in this year's senate race. When asked whether the candidates' issue positions or the candidates' qualities are more important in determining which candidate they support, an overwhelming 74 percent of voters choose issues, while only 17 percent say the candidates' qualities matter more to them.

When it comes to specific issues, national security and terrorism tops the list of issues included in this survey. Eighty-one percent of New Jersey registered voters say that national security and terrorism will be "extremely important" in influencing their vote this November.

Unlike most of the other issues, national security is one of the top concerns for voters of all partisan stripes: 82 percent of Democrats, 79 percent of independents, and 83 percent of Republicans rate it “extremely important.” Overall, only 15 percent of voters rate national security and terrorism as “fairly important,” and 2 percent say it is “not that important.”

Issue	% Extremely important			
	All	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
National security and terrorism	81%	82%	83%	79%
Health care and prescription drugs	74%	83%	63%	69%
Education	71%	81%	58%	68%
The economy	69%	72%	63%	69%
Social Security	63%	70%	51%	59%
Tax policy	62%	64%	65%	56%
Government ethics and the integrity of public officials	56%	52%	66%	50%
The environment	56%	62%	48%	51%

Health care and prescriptions drugs, education, and the economy all run second to national security on voters’ list of priorities for this election. Seventy-four percent of voters rate health care as “extremely important” to their support for a senate candidate, 71 percent rate education the same way, and 69 percent say the economy will be “extremely important” in determining their vote. The issues of Social Security and taxes fall into the next tier of concerns – 63 percent and 62 percent respectively rate these issues as “extremely important” to their decision-making in this election. At the bottom of the list of issues included in the survey are government ethics and the integrity of public officials, and the environment – although 56 percent majorities of voters still rate each as “extremely important.”

Most of these issue priorities fall out along traditional partisan lines, and independents are currently siding more with Democrats than with Republicans. Health care, education, and Social Security are all higher priorities for Democratic voters in the survey than they are for Republican voters. Independents’ priorities closely mirror those of Democrats, with health care, education and the economy among their top issues.

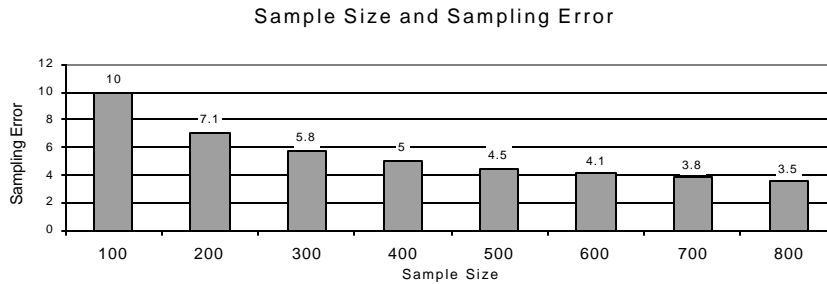
Republicans have somewhat different priorities, placing equal importance on the issues of taxes and government ethics as they do on health care and the economy. Education is a third tier concern for them – only 58 percent rate it “extremely important.”

“At this point, voters’ issue priorities work to Torricelli’s advantage” comments Monika McDermott, the interim director of the Rutgers-based poll. “While it’s still very early in the campaign, each side has already chosen a defining issue. Torricelli has been hammering away on health care and prescription drugs, while Forrester is focusing on government ethics and integrity. Our poll shows that each candidate’s priority caters to their base of support, but among the crucial independent voters in the electorate Torricelli’s issue is more of a winner right now.”

In vote preference, Torricelli currently leads Forrester by 14 points among registered voters – 43 percent to 29 percent. And on each issue but one, Torricelli maintains his double-digit lead in the race. Even among voters concerned with a traditionally Republican issue such as tax policy, Torricelli leads Forrester by 14 points – 44 percent to 30 percent. Only on the issue of government ethics and the integrity of public officials does Forrester narrow the gap. Among the 56 percent of voters who rate that issue as “extremely important,” Forrester and Torricelli are tied in the vote at 37 percent and 36 percent respectively.

BACKGROUND MEMO – RELEASE (EP137-2) June 14, 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 801 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 registered voters in this survey is ± 4.0 percentage points, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of registered voters in this survey said that the issue of the environment were an extremely important influence on their vote, one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 46.0 and 54.0 percent (50 ± 4.0) 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 you had to choose, which would you say is more important to you in deciding whom to support in the Senate election—the candidates’ positions on the issues, or the candidates’ personal qualities?[Q9]

	<u>Position on the Issues</u>	<u>Personal Qualities</u>	<u>Neither/Other</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
June 2002 -- Registered Voters	74%	17%	5%	4%	100%	(626)
<u>Party affiliation</u>						
-- Democrat	74	18	3	4	99	(244)
-- Independent	79	13	5	2	99	(196)
-- Republican	68	19	8	6	101	(163)

I am going to read a list of some of the issues that will probably be discussed in this year's Senate race. As I read each one, please tell me how important that issue will be in influencing your vote - extremely important, fairly important, or not that important. How important will [FILL-RANDOMIZE: A. *The environment*; B. *Education*; C. *National security and terrorism*; D. *Tax policy*; E. *Health care*; F. *Government ethics and the integrity of public officials*; G. *The economy*; H. *Social Security*] be in influencing your vote-extremely important, fairly important, or not that important?

	Extremely important	Fairly important	Not that important	Not at all important (vol.)	DK	Total	(n)
<u>THE ENVIRONMENT</u>							
June 2002 – Reg. Voters	56%	38%	6%	--	--	100%	(626)
<i>Party affiliation</i>							
-- Democrat	62	34	3	--	--	99	(244)
-- Independent	51	42	7	--	--	100	(196)
-- Republican	48	40	11	--	1	100	(163)
<u>EDUCATION</u>							
June 2002 – Reg. Voters	71	24	5	--	--	100	(626)
<i>Party affiliation</i>							
-- Democrat	81	16	2	--	--	99	(244)
-- Independent	68	25	7	--	--	100	(196)
-- Republican	58	34	7	--	1	100	(163)
<u>NATIONAL SECURITY & TERRORISM</u>							
June 2002 – Reg. Voters	81	15	2	--	1	99	(626)
<i>Party affiliation</i>							
-- Democrat	82	15	2	1	1	101	(244)
-- Independent	79	19	2	--	--	100	(196)
-- Republican	83	12	4	--	1	100	(163)
<u>TAX POLICY</u>							
June 2002 – Reg. Voters	62	32	5	--	1	100	(626)
<i>Party affiliation</i>							
-- Democrat	64	29	5	--	1	99	(244)
-- Independent	56	38	5	--	1	100	(196)
-- Republican	65	26	6	--	2	99	(163)
<u>HEALTH CARE & Rx DRUGS</u>							
June 2002 – Reg. Voters	74	21	4	--	--	99	(626)
<i>Party affiliation</i>							
-- Democrat	83	13	2	1	--	99	(244)
-- Independent	69	27	4	--	--	100	(196)
-- Republican	63	30	7	--	--	100	(163)

	<u>Extremely important</u>	<u>Fairly important</u>	<u>Not that important</u>	<u>Not at all important (vol.)</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<u>GOV'T ETHICS & INTEGRITY</u>							
June 2002 – Reg. Voters	56	34	8	1	1	100	(626)
<u>Party affiliation</u>							
-- Democrat	52	36	9	1	2	100	(244)
-- Independent	50	40	9	1	--	100	(196)
-- Republican	66	25	8	--	1	100	(163)
<u>THE ECONOMY</u>							
June 2002 – Reg. Voters	69	27	3	--	--	99	(626)
<u>Party affiliation</u>							
-- Democrat	72	24	4	--	--	100	(244)
-- Independent	69	29	2	--	--	100	(196)
-- Republican	63	33	3	--	1	100	(163)
<u>SOCIAL SECURITY</u>							
June 2002 – Reg. Voters	63	29	8	--	--	100	(626)
<u>Party affiliation</u>							
-- Democrat	70	25	5	--	--	100	(244)
-- Independent	59	33	9	--	--	101	(196)
-- Republican	51	36	14	--	--	101	(163)

DIVISION OF THE VOTE BY ISSUE CONCERN

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>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
June 2002 – Registered Voters	43%	29%	4%	2%	21%	99%	(626)
<u>Among voters who say issue is extremely important</u>							
-- The environment	47	23	5	2	23	100	(334)
-- Education	49	23	5	2	22	101	(436)
-- National Security & Terrorism	43	29	5	2	21	100	(487)
-- Tax Policy	44	30	4	2	21	101	(369)
-- Health Care & Prescription Drugs	48	23	5	2	22	100	(438)
-- Gov't Ethics and the Integrity of Public Officials	36	37	5	1	22	101	(358)
-- The Economy	44	26	4	2	24	100	(407)
-- Social Security	48	22	5	2	23	100	(360)