

# 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 Thursday, September 12 Star-Ledger. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to “*The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll.*”

## THE SENATE RACE 2002:

### A REFERENDUM ON TORRICELLI

There’s good and bad news for incumbent U.S. Senator Robert Torricelli in the latest Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll. The good news is that his Republican opponent Douglas Forrester remains largely unknown to New Jersey voters. The bad news is that even as Torricelli is running mainly against himself, he’s not ahead. Among those potential voters who choose Forrester or Torricelli, or say they lean towards one or the other, the candidates are within a percentage point of one another—41 percent Torricelli to 40 percent for Forrester, a statistical tie.

However, among “likely voters”—those who display greater interest, care more about the outcome, and have histories of more consistently participating in elections—Forrester actually leads Torricelli by a margin of 44 to 39 percent. Again, a very close Senate race, by either measure.

The difference in voting preferences between the pool of *potential* voters and the smaller number of *likely* voters, suggests that turnout will be a major factor in the outcome of the race. And at this point in September 2002, it works to the advantage of the Republicans. Currently, Democrats show less interest in the race for Senate than Republicans, and even less than independent voters, who traditionally trail both sets of partisans.

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

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These are some of the main findings of the latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll*, conducted with a statewide sample of 804 New Jerseyans 18 and older by telephone between September 3-8. This release is based on 537 potential voters, those who say they “definitely” or “probably” will vote on November 5, while some numbers are based on the subset of 357 voters deemed to have a highest likelihood of actually voting in the election. The sampling error is  $\pm 4$  percentage points for the former, and  $\pm 6$  percentage points for the latter.

Torricelli is the lightning rod of the election, and there has been a tremendous backlash against him following the Senate ethics committee’s admonishment of him. The new poll suggests that Torricelli himself is the driving force of support for Forrester. More of those planning to vote for Forrester actually say they are voting *against* Torricelli (49%) than say they are voting *for* Forrester (40%) percent. In contrast, more of those intending to vote for Torricelli say they are casting an affirmative vote for their candidate (60%) than against his opponent (30%).

Currently, just 29 percent of potential voters have a favorable opinion of the state’s senior senator, while 36 percent hold an unflattering view of him and a large 35 percent express no opinion. Even among Democrats, Torricelli’s core constituent group, only 50 percent say their image of him is positive; many—35 percent—are reserving judgment at this time. Independents offer more negative than positive opinions of him by a margin of 38 to 27 percent, and Republican are overwhelmingly negative by a margin of 65 to 8 percent.

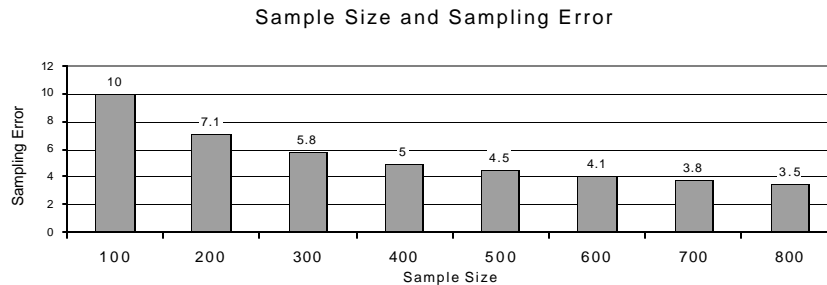
About three-quarters of Democrats (74%) say they either will vote for or lean towards Torricelli. While few have defected to Forrester (9 percent), Torricelli enjoys less solid Democratic support than Forrester does from Republicans (83%). Cliff Zukin, director of the Rutgers-based survey commented, “The soft Democratic support for Torricelli is a sign of serious trouble for him. These voters aren’t undecided because they are unfamiliar with Torricelli. Rather, they are uncertain of him. He has much work to do to solidify his base and win back former supporters.”

In contrast, Forrester remains pretty much of a blank slate. Among potential voters statewide, his early introduction has been modestly favorable—27 positive and 10 percent negative—leaving a massive 63 percent venturing no opinion of him. Even 44 percent of Republicans offer no opinion of their standard bearer, although those who do are quite positive (53 favorable to 3 unfavorable). Independents split 27 favorable to 14 unfavorable over Forrester, with most—59 percent—expressing no opinion.

Democrats for the moment may be sitting on their hands. Currently, 47 percent of Republicans say they have “a lot” of interest in the race for Senate, with another 35 percent having “some” interest. And, 44 percent of independents have a lot of interest in the contest. In contrast, however, it is just 35 percent of Democrats who have “a lot” of interest in the Senate (although another 46 percent have some interest).

**BACKGROUND MEMO – RELEASE (EP138-2) September 12, 2002**

The latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers* Poll was conducted by telephone from September 3 to September 8 with a scientifically selected random sample of 804 New Jersey adults. The figures in this release are based on a subgroup of 537 potential voters – New Jerseyans who identified themselves as registered voters who will “definitely” or “probably” go to the polls this November. This release also includes results for a sub-sample of 357 voters who are considered most likely to go to the polls, based on their interest in the election, politics in general, and past voting history. 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  $\pm 4.2$  percent, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of potential 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 45.8 and 54.2 percent ( $50 \pm 4.2$ ) 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:

**COMPOSITE -- SENATE VOTE:**

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

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

“Are you very sure about voting for [CANDIDATE FROM Q3] or might you change your mind before election day?” [Q4a]

**IF "UNDECIDED" OR "DON'T KNOW" TO Q3:**

“At this moment do you lean more towards Torricelli or more towards Forrester?” [Q4b]

	<u>Firm</u> <u>RT</u>	<u>Soft</u> <u>RT</u>	<u>Lean</u> <u>RT</u>	<u>Undec</u> <u>-ided</u>	<u>Lean</u> <u>DF</u>	<u>Soft</u> <u>DF</u>	<u>Firm</u> <u>DF</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>September 2002 Potential Voters</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>102%</b>	<b>(537)</b>
<i>Party Affiliation</i>										
--Democrat	50	20	4	16	2	3	4	1	100	(184)
--Independent	9	22	7	24	8	9	19	2	100	(142)
--Republican	4	1	1	11	10	17	56	--	100	(165)
<i>Region of NJ</i>										
--North	23	15	4	17	7	9	23	2	100	(214)
--Central	27	12	4	17	10	6	23	1	100	(152)
--South	19	15	3	22	3	11	26	2	101	(170)
<i>Gender</i>										
--Male	22	14	3	17	4	9	29	2	100	(248)
--Female	24	14	4	20	9	8	19	2	100	(289)
<i>Likely Voters</i>	27	10	2	14	7	9	28	3	100	(357)

“Would you say you are voting more for (CANDIDATE FROM Q3 OR Q4b) or more against the other candidate?” [Q6]

	<u>More for...</u>	<u>More against...</u>	<u>Both [VOL.]</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>September 2002 Potential Voters</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(428)</b>
Torricelli Voters	60	30	2	7	99	(212)
Forrester Voters	40	49	6	6	101	(216)
<i>Likely Voters</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>41</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>(299)</i>

“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]?” [Q7]

	<u>Favorable</u>		<u>Unfavorable</u>		<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
	<u>Very</u>	<u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Very</u>			
<b>September 2002 Potential Voters</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(537)</b>
<i>Party Affiliation</i>							
-- Democrat	19	31	8	6	35	99	(184)
-- Independent	4	23	14	24	35	101	(142)
-- Republican	5	3	25	40	27	100	(165)
<i>Vote Choice</i>							
--Torricelli	23	41	7	2	27	100	(193)
--Forrester	2	1	23	56	19	101	(182)
--Undecided	2	12	18	5	63	100	(153)
<i>Likely Voters</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>101</i>	<i>(357)</i>

“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]?” [Q8]

	<u>Favorable</u>		<u>Unfavorable</u>		<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
	<u>Very</u>	<u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Very</u>			
<b>September 2002 Potential Voters</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(537)</b>
<i>Party Affiliation</i>							
-- Democrat	3	7	6	7	77	100	(184)
-- Independent	9	18	8	6	59	100	(142)
-- Republican	23	30	2	1	44	100	(165)
<i>Vote Choice</i>							
--Torricelli	1	4	11	12	72	100	(193)
--Forrester	29	38	--	--	34	101	(182)
--Undecided	2	11	3	1	84	101	(153)
<i>Likely Voters</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>55</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>(357)</i>

“How much interest do you have in the election for Senator - - a lot, some, a little or none at all?”  
[Q9]

	<u>A Lot</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>A Little</u>	<u>None at All</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>September 2002 Potential Voters</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>(537)</b>
<i>Party Affiliation</i>							
--Democrat	35	46	17	2	--	100	(184)
--Independent	44	37	16	1	2	100	(142)
--Republican	47	35	15	1	2	100	(165)
<i>Likely Voters</i>	58	31	9	1	2	101	(357)