

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

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(Release 138-4)

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A story based on the survey findings presented in this release and background memo will appear in the Tuesday, September 17 Star-Ledger. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to "*The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll.*"

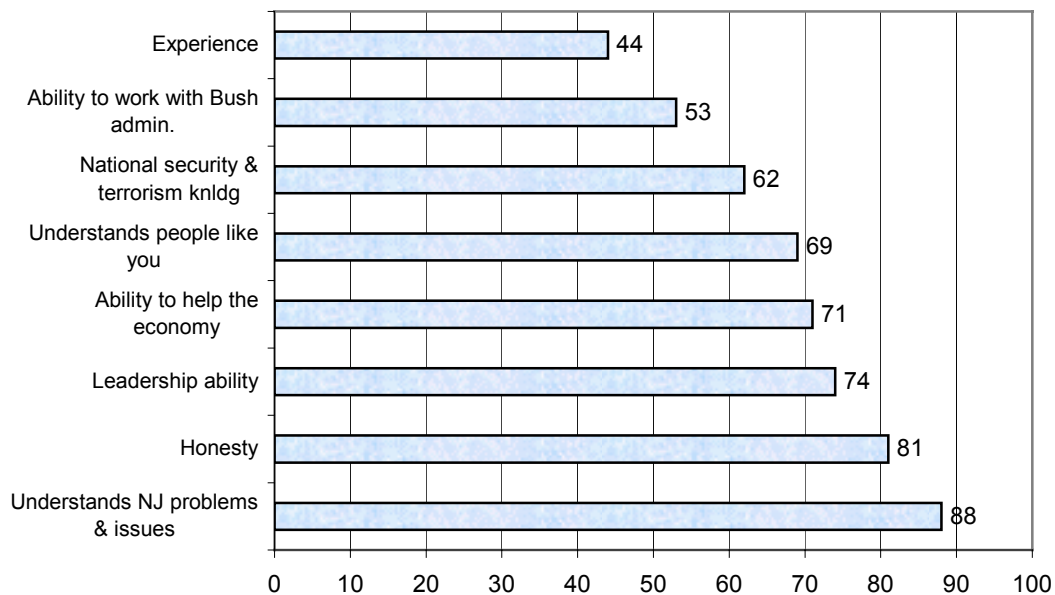
2002 ELECTION POTPOURRI:

ISSUES, CANDIDATE QUALITIES, ENGAGEMENT and THE CONGRESS

Issues and Qualities

While Democrat Bob Torricelli better understands the problems facing the state, Republican Doug Forrester is more honest. So say New Jersey voters. And with these as their top two concerns, it is little wonder the race for the Senate is so close in mid-September.

Percent Viewing Each Quality as "Very Important"



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

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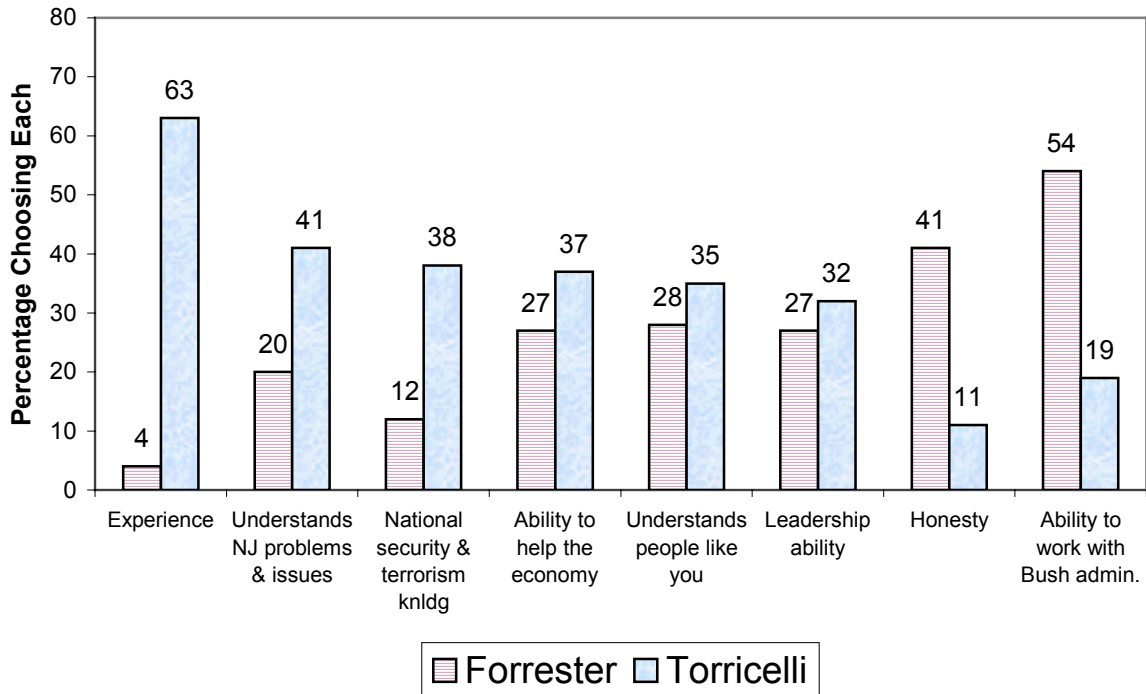
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The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll asked potential voters to rate the importance of eight issues or candidate qualities in deciding their vote for Senate. At the top, 88 percent say an “understanding of the problems and issues facing New Jersey” is *very important* to them. Torricelli has a commanding advantage on this quality—41 percent give him the edge compared to 20 percent who select Forrester. But “honesty” is also deemed to be very important by 81 percent. And among this group 41 percent say Forrester is more honest, while 11 percent choose Torricelli.

In addition to these top two issues, about seven-in-ten say that a candidate’s leadership ability (74%), ability to help the economy (71%), and an “understanding of people like you” (69%) are very important considerations in deciding for whom to vote. Just over six-in-ten cite the candidate’s “knowledge about national security and terrorism” (62%) as a very important consideration. This is trailed by an “ability to work with the Bush administration” (53%) and “experience” (44%) as voters’ primary concerns.

Candidate Choice on "Very Important" Qualities

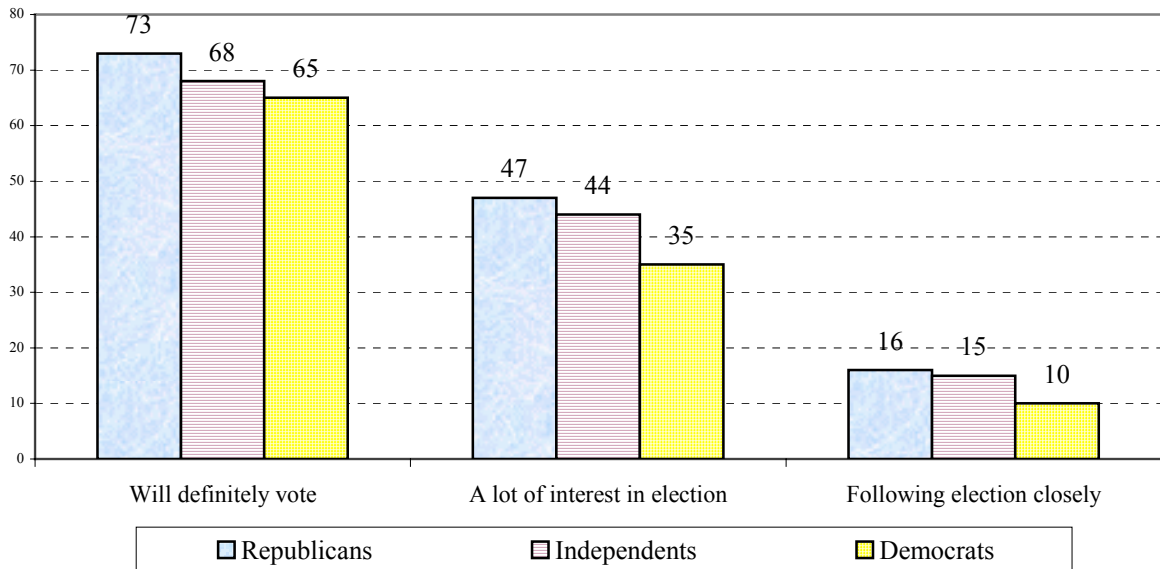


Toricelli holds large advantages over Forrester on three of the eight areas asked about: his knowledge of national security and terrorism and his experience, in addition to better understanding problems facing the state. The incumbent Democrat holds a narrow lead as the candidate more likely to help the economy, understand peoples’ problems, and exercise leadership. The Republican challenger holds a significant advantage in being able to work with the Bush administration, in addition to being perceived as more honest.

Ethics and Engagement

Few potential voters have been paying much attention to the Senate contest—just 14 percent say they have been following it “very closely.” While another 45 percent have observed the race “somewhat closely,” many (41%) have not been following it closely at all. But, while many potential voters have yet to tune into the Senate election, word of Torricelli’s problems with campaign contributions has filtered down to them. Among those saying they definitely or probably will vote in the election, 38 percent say they have heard “a lot” about the Senate ethics committee’s admonishment of the state’s senior senator and 34 percent have heard “some.” At the time the survey was taken, just 17 percent said they had not heard anything about this.

Engagement in the Election



Democrats are clearly less engaged than are Republicans and even independents at this point in time. The proportion of Democrats who say they will “definitely vote” (as opposed to probably vote) trails the other two. Moreover, fewer Democrats say they have “a lot” of interest in the election or have been following the election “very closely.”

The Congress

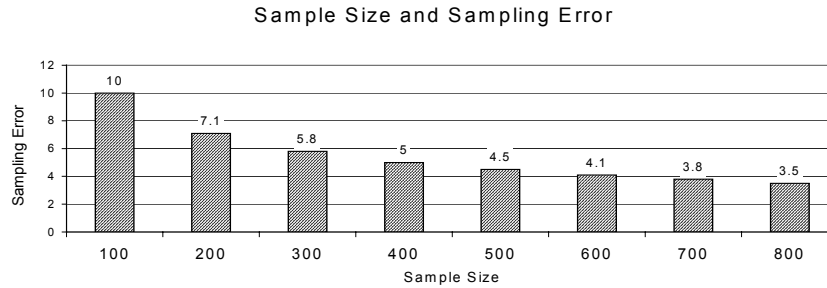
Democrats’ lack of engagement may hurt them in the Congressional races in the state. While the larger base of *potential* voters favors Democratic candidates for Congress in their districts by a small margin of 38 to 35 percent, the smaller number of *likely* voters favors Republican candidates by a margin of 40 to 34 percent. While this generic ballot question cannot be used to determine who might win in any of the state’s 13 congressional districts, it has proven to be a bellwether of general state sentiment in the past. In 1998, when Democrats did well in the elections, more registered voters sampled in September said they would vote for Democrats than Republicans by a margin of 31 to 24 percent. However in 1994, when Republicans ended up doing very well, more told Eagleton they intended to vote for the Republican in their district (38%) than the Democrat (33%) in the September pre-election survey.

Overall, potential voters have a slight affinity to seeing the Democrats control the Congress after the 2002 elections (34% to 31%), while likely voters have a slight tilt towards Republicans (36% to 33%).

The survey was conducted between September 3 and 8 with a random sample of 537 registered voters saying they “definitely” or “probably” will vote in the November 5 Senate election. The margin of error for this group is about ± 4 percentage points. The preferences of likely voters are based on an expected turnout of about 57 percent of those registered, or a sample of 357. The sampling error for this figure is ± 6 percentage points.

BACKGROUND MEMO – RELEASE (EP138-4) September 17, 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. 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 ± 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 ± 4.2) had all registered voters in New Jersey 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?”
[Q9]

	<u>A lot</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>A little</u>	<u>None</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2002							
-- Potential Voters	41%	41%	16%	1%	1%	100%	(537)
<u>Party Affiliation</u>							
--Democrat	35	46	17	2	--	100	(184)
--Independent	44	37	16	1	2	100	(142)
--Republican	47	35	15	1	2	100	(158)
<u>Vote Choice</u>							
--Torricelli	46	36	17	--	1	100	(193)
--Forrester	52	35	10	1	3	101	(182)
--Undecided	21	52	23	3	1	100	(153)

“And how closely have you been following the campaign for Senator -- very closely, somewhat closely, or not very closely so far?” [Q10]

	<u>Very Closely</u>	<u>Somewhat closely</u>	<u>Not very closely</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2002 -- Potential Voters	14%	45%	41%	--	100%	(537)
<i>Party Affiliation</i>						
--Democrat	10	49	41	--	100	(184)
--Independent	15	39	44	1	99	(142)
--Republican	16	46	37	--	99	(165)
<i>Vote Choice</i>						
--Torricelli	15	52	32	1	100	(193)
--Forrester	19	50	31	--	100	(182)
--Undecided	5	32	63	--	100	(153)

“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?”[Q11]

	<u>Issues</u>	<u>Qualities</u>	<u>Neither/Other</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2002 -- Potential Voters	69%	21%	9%	1%	100%	(537)
<i>Party Affiliation</i>						
--Democrat	82	13	3	1	99	(184)
--Independent	67	23	9	1	100	(142)
--Republican	59	28	12	1	100	(165)
<i>Gender</i>						
--Men	65	25	9	1	100	(248)
--Women	72	18	9	1	100	(289)
<i>Vote Choice</i>						
--Torricelli	88	8	4	--	100	(193)
--Forrester	50	39	11	--	100	(182)
--Undecided	69	16	13	1	99	(153)

“When thinking about how you will vote in the upcoming Senate election how important is the candidate’s (A. Understanding of the problems and issues facing New Jersey, B. Honesty, C. Knowledge about national security and terrorism, D. Understanding of people like you, E. Leadership ability, F. Ability to help the economy, G. Experience, H. Ability to work with the Bush administration) in making your vote choice – very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not at all important?” [Q12]

	<u>Very important</u>	<u>Somewhat important</u>	<u>Not very important</u>	<u>Not important at all</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2002 --Potential Voters							
<u>Understands problems & issues facing NJ</u>	88%	11%	1%	--	1%	101%	(537)

	<u>Very important</u>	<u>Somewhat important</u>	<u>Not very important</u>	<u>Not important at all</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<i><u>Vote Choice</u></i>							
--Torricelli	86	13	1	--	--	100	(193)
--Forrester	86	11	1	1	1	100	(182)
--Undecided	90	8	--	--	1	99	(153)
<u>Honesty</u>	81%	15%	1%	2%	1%	100%	(537)
<i><u>Vote Choice</u></i>							
--Torricelli	64	31	1	2	1	99	(193)
--Forrester	96	4	--	--	--	100	(182)
--Undecided	87	8	1	2	1	99	(153)
<u>Knowledge about national security & terrorism</u>	62%	30%	5%	2%	1%	100%	(537)
<i><u>Vote Choice</u></i>							
--Torricelli	62	28	7	2	1	100	(193)
--Forrester	60	32	5	2	1	100	(182)
--Undecided	67	28	4	--	1	100	(153)
<u>Understanding of people like you</u>	69%	22%	5%	2%	2%	100%	(537)
<i><u>Vote Choice</u></i>							
--Torricelli	73	17	7	1	2	100	(193)
--Forrester	69	25	5	--	--	99	(182)
--Undecided	63	26	4	3	4	100	(153)
<u>Leadership ability</u>	74%	22%	3%	1%	1%	101%	(537)
<i><u>Vote Choice</u></i>							
--Torricelli	73	23	2	1	--	99	(193)
--Forrester	78	21	1	--	--	100	(182)
--Undecided	70	24	5	1	1	101	(153)
<u>Ability to help the economy</u>	71%	24%	3%	1%	2%	101%	(537)
<i><u>Vote Choice</u></i>							
--Torricelli	76	21	1	1	--	99	(193)
--Forrester	67	27	6	--	1	101	(182)
--Undecided	70	23	2	1	4	100	(153)
<u>Experience</u>	44%	43%	10%	2%	1%	100%	(537)
<i><u>Vote Choice</u></i>							
--Torricelli	55	40	4	--	1	100	(193)
--Forrester	32	48	17	3	1	101	(182)
--Undecided	46	44	8	2	1	101	(153)
<u>Ability to work with the Bush administration</u>	53%	33%	9%	4%	1%	100%	(537)
<i><u>Vote Choice</u></i>							
--Torricelli	45	34	13	8	1	101	(193)
--Forrester	72	22	4	2	--	100	(182)
--Undecided	42	45	8	2	3	100	(153)

(Only asked of those who rated the quality as "Very Important" in Q12)

"Now let me read you back some items you said were very important. Which candidate (A. Has a better understanding of the problems and issues facing New Jersey, B. Is more honest, C. Has more knowledge about national security and terrorism, D. Better understands people like you, E. Is a better leader, F. Is more likely to help the economy, G. Has more experience, H. Can better work with the Bush administration) Doug Forrester or Bob Torricelli?" [Q13]

	<u>Forrester</u>	<u>Torricelli</u>	<u>Both/Neither</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2002						
--Potential Voters						
<u>Understands the problems and issues facing NJ</u>	20%	41%	5%	34%	100%	(468)
<i>Vote Choice</i>						
--Torricelli	1	81	1	16	99	(165)
--Forrester	57	13	8	22	100	(156)
--Undecided	4	23	4	70	101	(138)
<u>Honest</u>	41	11	4	44	100%	(437)
<i>Vote Choice</i>						
--Torricelli	10	36	8	46	100	(122)
--Forrester	82	1	1	16	100	(175)
--Undecided	18	2	3	77	100	(133)
<u>Knowledgeable about national security & terrorism</u>	12%	38%	4%	46%	100%	(332)
<i>Vote Choice</i>						
--Torricelli	3	63	1	33	100	(119)
--Forrester	29	24	6	41	100	(110)
--Undecided	6	24	4	65	99	(100)
<u>Understands people like you</u>	28%	35%	4%	33%	100%	(373)
<i>Vote Choice</i>						
--Torricelli	1	75	3	21	100	(142)
--Forrester	73	6	1	20	100	(127)
--Undecided	11	17	6	66	100	(97)
<u>Is a better leader</u>	27%	32%	1%	40%	100%	(396)
<i>Vote Choice</i>						
--Torricelli	1	73	--	26	100	(142)
--Forrester	72	3	2	23	100	(142)
--Undecided	7	11	--	81	99	(107)
<u>Likely to help the economy</u>	27%	37%	1%	35%	100%	(380)
<i>Vote Choice</i>						
--Torricelli	4	79	--	16	99	(148)
--Forrester	77	4	1	19	101	(122)
--Undecided	8	14	1	77	100	(105)
<u>Has more experience</u>	4%	63%	1%	32%	100%	(239)
<i>Vote Choice</i>						
--Torricelli	--	85	--	15	100	(107)
--Forrester	16	52	1	31	100	(55)
--Undecided	2	36	2	60	100	(73)

	<u>Forrester</u>	<u>Torricelli</u>	<u>Both/Neither</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<u>Ability to work with the Bush administration</u>	54%	19%	2%	26%	101%	(286)
<i>Vote Choice</i>						
--Torricelli	27	51	2	21	101	(86)
--Forrester	90	2	1	8	101	(128)
--Undecided	27	10	1	62	100	(67)

“Have you heard or read anything about investigations into Torricelli’s 1996 campaign fundraising and his being severely admonished by the Senate ethics committee?(IF YES, PROBE: How much – a lot, some, or not much?)” [Q17]

	<u>A lot</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Not Much</u>	<u>Not Heard Anything</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2002							
-- Potential Voters	38%	34%	8%	17%	2%	99%	(537)
<i>Party Affiliation</i>							
--Democrat	34	34	11	18	2	99	(184)
--Independent	44	32	7	17	--	100	(142)
--Republican	40	36	5	15	3	99	(165)
<i>Vote Choice</i>							
--Torricelli	39	33	10	17	1	100	(193)
--Forrester	51	33	2	13	2	101	(182)
--Undecided	20	40	12	23	4	99	(153)

“There will also be an election for the U.S. House of Representatives in your district this November. If the election were held today, would you vote for the Republican candidate or the Democratic candidate?” [Q18]

	<u>Republicans</u>	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>DK/ Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2002						
-- Potential Voters	35%	38%	1%	26%	100%	(537)
<i>Party Affiliation</i>						
--Democrat	7	78	--	15	100	(184)
--Independent	29	29	--	42	100	(142)
--Republican	83	2	--	15	100	(165)
<i>Vote Choice</i>						
--Torricelli	10	71	--	18	99	(193)
--Forrester	81	7	--	13	101	(182)
--Undecided	17	31	1	50	99	(153)
<i>Likely Voters</i>	40	34	1	25	100	(357)
<i>Previous Surveys**</i>						
September 1998,	24	31	5	40	100	(669)
--Registered voters						
September 1996	33	37	1	29	100	(841)
--Registered voters						
September 1994	38	33	1	28	100	(801)
--Registered voters						
September 1992	35	41	1	23	100	(801)
--Registered voters						

**Previous years wording “And as of now, do you plan to vote for the Democratic or Republican candidate running for Congress in your district?”

“Who would you like to see control the House and Senate in Washington – the Republicans or the Democrats, or aren’t you sure?” [Q19]

	<u>Republicans</u>	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Split Houses</u>	<u>Doesn't matter</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2002							
-- Potential Voters	31%	34%	2%	3%	30%	100%	(622)
<i>Party Affiliation</i>							
--Democrat	4	75	3	1	18	101	(208)
--Independent	24	21	3	7	45	100	(165)
--Republican	77	1	2	1	20	101	(187)
<i>Vote Choice</i>							
--Torricelli	5	69	1	2	23	100	(193)
--Forrester	77	4	1	1	17	100	(182)
--Undecided	17	28	5	5	45	100	(153)
<i>Likely Voters</i>	36	33	2	4	25	100	(357)