

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

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(Release 154-1)

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WE'VE GOT A RACE: **NJ GUBERNATORIAL RACE STARTS OUT** **COMPETITIVELY**

Corzine Support Below 50 Percent; Forrester Has Edge Among Independents

Voters Split on Which Candidate Best Able to Handle Property Taxes, Corruption

The first *Star-Ledger/Eagleton Rutgers Poll* conducted after the New Jersey gubernatorial primary on June 7 reveals that front-runner Senator Jon Corzine's edge over Republican nominee Doug Forrester is a shallow one, with voters divided over which candidate is best able to handle two of the key issues facing the state: property taxes and corruption.

In a poll conducted between June 8 and 10 among registered voters, Corzine leads Forrester in a head-to-head match up by 10 points – 43 to 33 percent (with 17 percent undecided). While both candidates have strong support among their own partisan bases, Forrester holds an early edge among self-identified Independents (35 percent to 29 percent). Corzine's 10 point advantage over Forrester extends to voters' perceptions of the two candidates, with 51 percent rating Corzine favorably (up from 44 percent in May) and 41 percent giving Forrester a positive rating (up from 38 percent in May).

"Although Corzine is still the frontrunner, Forrester's early standing among Independents is a strong sign that we have a real race on our hands," said Jeffrey Levine, director of the *Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll*. "Even after a tough primary race, Forrester has not only shored up his own base, but also broken with tradition and grabbed an early lead among Independents."

The last Republican to face Corzine in a statewide election – Bob Franks in the 2000 U.S. Senate race – trailed Corzine at a similar point in the race (June of 2000) among Independents (43 percent to 27 percent).

"Of course, early ballot tests only tell part of the story. At this point in the race, voters'

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perceptions of the candidate's relative ability to address key issues facing the state are just as revealing. A look at these measures suggests an even more tenuous Corzine advantage," said Levine.

This year, voters are clear about what they want from their next governor. Although they want attention to familiar issues like education and healthcare, "reducing property taxes" and "eliminating corruption among state elected officials" top the list of issues considered most essential for the next governor to address. However, on both issues, neither candidate has an advantage; Corzine and Forrester are each seen as best able to handle property taxes and corruption by approximately a third of voters. Approximately another third are unwilling to give either candidate the edge.

"The fact that property tax reduction is so important to voters this year presents a real problem for Corzine. Forrester's credibility on the issue rivals Corzine's, and tax-cutting is a traditional 'Republican' issue. If tax cuts become the focus of the debate this year, Forrester has good reason to feel optimistic about his chances," Levine noted.

Of course, November is a long time off, and voters are far from settled on either candidate. Among all registered voters, 23 percent say they are either undecided (17 percent) or inclined to vote for some other candidate (6 percent). And, even those voters who are willing to state a candidate preference express uncertainty about their choice. Almost four in five of those willing to express support for Corzine (37 percent) or Forrester (40 percent) say that they still "might change their mind" before Election Day.

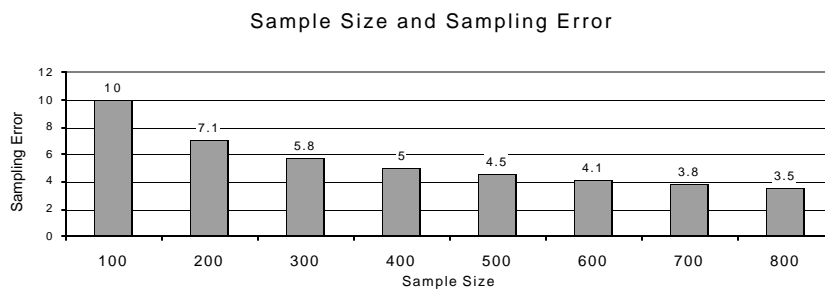
As the general campaign heats up, the candidates face some additional challenges in their efforts to reach voters:

- Few currently rate Corzine's time in office as one of significant achievement. As in our February and May polls, the majority of voters (64 percent) continue to say that Corzine has either minor (41 percent) or no real accomplishments (23 percent) as a Senator.
- Much of Forrester's current appeal stems from a dislike of other candidates rather than approval of his positions. A third (33 percent) of Forrester's supporters say they would vote for him because they "don't like the other candidates," while just 29 percent say they would so because they agree with his positions on the issues.
- Forrester's primary victory drove up his 'negatives.' Between our pre-primary poll in May and our post-primary poll in June, Forrester's unfavorability rating rose from 14 percent to 23 percent.

BACKGROUND MEMO – RELEASE (EP 154-1) June 12, 2005

The latest *Star-Ledger*/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll was conducted from June 8 to 10 with a scientifically selected random sample of 600 New Jersey registered voters. All of the figures in this release are based on the statewide registered voter sample.

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 is ± 4.0 percent, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of New Jersey registered voters were found to have a favorable opinion of a gubernatorial candidate, one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 46 and 54 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 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 referred to in this release are as follows:

As you may know, there will be an election for governor of New Jersey this fall, November of 2005. How much interest do you have in the upcoming gubernatorial election – a lot, some, a little, or none at all?
(RL2)

POLL 154 / June 2005	<u>A lot</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>A Little</u>	<u>None at all</u>	<u>DK/RF</u>	(n)
Registered Voters	51%	29%	12%	7%	2%	(600)
<u>Party ID</u>						
--Democrat	49	29	13	7	1	(211)
--Independent	54	30	11	4	2	(176)
--Republican	57	27	9	6	1	(159)
<u>Gender</u>						
--Male	50	31	12	7	1	(282)
--Female	52	28	12	6	2	(318)
<u>Age</u>						
--18-49	43	31	5	3	18	(267)
--50-64	36	37	9	2	17	(177)
--65+	49	33	3	1	14	(146)
<u>Region of State</u>						
--North	53	27	13	6	2	(274)
--Central	55	27	10	6	2	(156)
--South	46	36	9	9	1	(154)
February 2005						
Registered Voters	55%	29%	10%	5%	1%	(678)

Now I'm going to read to you a list of issues that the next Governor of New Jersey may address. Which one of the following issues should be the top priority for the next Governor to address? (READ AND ROTATE) (MP2)

	<u>June 2005, Poll 154/ Registered voters</u>	<u>May 2005/ Registered Voters</u>
<u>(n)</u>	(600)	(519)
<u>Dealing with the state's budget crisis</u>	12%	13%
<u>Improving the quality of education</u>	11%	17%
<u>Protecting the state from terrorist attacks</u>	11%	9%
<u>Reducing property taxes</u>	34%	26%
<u>Increasing access to quality healthcare</u>	13%	15%
<u>Eliminating corruption among state elected officials</u>	17%	14%
<u>None of the above</u>	1%	*
<u>Other</u>	1%	4%
<u>Don't know/refused</u>	2%	2%

Please tell me if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of the following people. If you haven't heard of them or don't have an opinion of them, just tell me and we'll move on. [IF FAVORABLE OR UNFAVORABLE, ASK:] Would you say you have a strongly favorable/unfavorable opinion or a somewhat favorable/unfavorable opinion? (PF1-PF2)

POLL 154 / June 2005	Favorable	Unfavorable	Not Heard of	No opinion	DK/RF	(n)
JON CORZINE						
Registered Voters	51%	25%	3%	18%	3%	(600)
Party ID						
--Democrat	75	6	5	11	3	(211)
--Independent	47	30	3	18	2	(176)
--Republican	30	48	-	18	4	(159)
May 2005						
Registered Voters	44%	25%	4%	24%	3%	(519)
February 2005						
Registered Voters	53%	22%	9%	15%	2%	(678)
DOUGLAS FORRESTER						
Registered Voters	41%	23%	6%	26%	5%	(600)
Party ID						
--Democrat	25	34	9	27	5	(211)
--Independent	47	20	3	27	3	(176)
--Republican	60	12	5	19	4	(159)
May 2005						
Registered Voters	38%	14%	18%	27%	3%	(519)
February 2005						
Registered Voters	25%	15%	29%	26%	26%	(678)

Corzine-Forrester

“If the election for governor were held today, for whom would you vote (ROTATE) Jon Corzine, the Democrat, Doug Forrester, the Republican or some other candidate for governor?” (G1)

	<u>Corzine</u>	<u>Forrester</u>	<u>Some other</u>	<u>Wouldn't Vote</u>	<u>DK/Undecided</u>	<u>(n)</u>
POLL 154 / June 2005						
Registered Voters	43%	33%	6%	2%	17%	(600)
<u>Party ID</u>						
--Democrat	83	6	1	1	9	(211)
--Independent	29	35	9	1	26	(176)
--Republican	10	72	6	3	9	(153)
<u>Gender</u>						
--Male	41	32	7	3	17	(282)
--Female	44	33	5	1	17	(318)
<u>Age</u>						
--18-49	43	31	5	3	18	(267)
--50-64	36	37	9	2	17	(177)
--65+	49	33	3	1	14	(146)
<u>Region of State</u>						
--North	44	33	5	2	17	(274)
--Central	43	32	6	3	16	(156)
--South	38	36	7	2	18	(154)
	<u>Corzine</u>	<u>Forrester</u>	<u>Some other</u>	<u>Wouldn't Vote</u>	<u>DK/Undecided</u>	<u>(n)</u>
May 2005						
Registered Voters	42%	29%	9%	3%	17%	(519)
February 2005						
Registered Voters	46%	23%	12%	2%	17%	(678)

Are you very sure about voting for [FILL NAME – Q.G1/Q.G1a]; or might you change your mind before Election Day? (T) (G2)

[ASKED ONLY OF THOSE WHO SAID “*JON CORZINE OR DOUG FORRESTER*” IN Q.G1 OR Q.G1a]

POLL 154 / June 2005	Very Sure	Might Change	DK/RF	(n)
Registered Voters				
Corzine	61%	37%	2%	(255)
Forrester	59%	40%	2%	(195)
 February 2005				
Registered Voters				
Corzine	57	42	1	(373)
Forrester	46	52	2	(156)

[ASKED ONLY OF CORZINE VOTERS] Thinking generally, which of the following best describes why you would vote for Jon Corzine for governor? Would you say you would vote for Jon Corzine because.....[FILL REASON]? (READ AND ROTATE) (G3)

POLL 154 / June 2005	<u>Don't like others</u>	<u>Most qualified</u>	<u>Not know others</u>	<u>Agree with positions</u>	<u>None</u>	<u>DK/ RF</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Registered Voters	14%	21%	20%	33%	11%	-	(273)
<u>Party ID</u>							
--Democrat	14	22	16	34	14	-	(178)
<u>Gender</u>							
--Male	18	23	19	32	7	-	(125)
--Female	11	19	21	35	15	-	(148)

[ASKED ONLY OF FORRESTER VOTERS] Thinking generally, which of the following best describes why you would vote for Doug Forrester for governor? Would you say you would vote for Doug Forrester because...[FILL REASON] (READ AND ROTATE)? (G4)

POLL 154 / June 2005	<u>Don't like others</u>	<u>Most qualified</u>	<u>Not know others</u>	<u>Agree with positions</u>	<u>None</u>	<u>DK/ RF</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Registered Voters	33%	11%	12%	29%	16%	-	(226)
<u>Party ID</u>							
--Republicans	33	7	10	30	20	-	(125)
<u>Gender</u>							
--Male	35	12	8	31	13	-	(105)
--Female	31	10	16	26	17	-	(121)

Regardless of which candidate for governor you support, which one of the candidates, (ROTATE AND READ OPTIONS #1-2), do you think would do the best job of...(READ AND ROTATE A-C) [IF SOME OTHER CANDIDATE, ASK:] If you had to choose between (READ OPTIONS #1-2)...? (IC1)

POLL 154 / June 2005

Which one of the candidates would do the best job of?

	<u>Corzine</u>	<u>Forrester</u>	<u>None of the above</u>	<u>All the same/equal</u>	<u>DK/RF</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Dealing with the state's budget crisis	38%	30%	4%	3%	25%	(600)
Reducing property taxes	33%	34%	6%	3%	25%	(600)
Eliminating corruption among state elected officials	31%	30%	8%	4%	27%	(600)

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Jon Corzine is handling his job as Senator? (J1)

POLL 154 / June 2005 Registered Voters	Approve 53%	Disapprove 20%	DK/RF 27%	(n) (600)
<u>Party ID</u>				
--Democrat	78	6	16	(211)
--Independent	49	22	29	(176)
--Republican	33	37	31	(159)
<u>Gender</u>				
--Male	51	24	26	(282)
--Female	55	17	27	(318)
<u>Age</u>				
--18-49	53	19	28	(267)
--50-64	52	23	25	(177)
--65+	54	21	25	(146)
	Approve	Disapprove	DK/RF	(n)
May 2005 Registered Voters	53%	23%	24%	(519)
February 2005 Registered Voters	61%	18%	21%	(678)

Thinking back over Corzine's term as Senator, would you say that he has major accomplishments to point to, minor accomplishments, or no real accomplishments? (J2)

POLL 154 / June 2005	Major	Minor	No Real Ones	DK/RF	(n)
Registered Voters	13%	41%	23%	23%	(600)
<u>Party ID</u>					
--Democrat	23	43	12	23	(211)
--Independent	11	44	26	20	(176)
--Republican	7	33	38	21	(159)
<u>Gender</u>					
--Male	11	40	29	20	(282)
--Female	15	41	18	26	(318)
<u>Age</u>					
--18-49	12	45	19	24	(267)
--50-64	15	40	29	16	(177)
--65+	13	34	23	30	(146)
	Major	Minor	No Real Ones	DK/RF	(n)
May 2005 Registered Voters	14%	46%	21%	19%	(519)
February 2005 Registered Voters	16%	45%	20%	19%	(678)