

The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll

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(Release 156-1)

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FORRESTER NARROWS GAP IN GUBERNATORIAL RACE

Independent Voters Shift to the Republican as Democrat Corzine's Lead Dwindles

Republican Doug Forrester has made significant gains in the race for governor, trailing Democrat Jon Corzine by seven points among likely voters and 10 points among registered voters, according to a *Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll* conducted Oct. 3-6. The last *Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll*, conducted Sept. 6-9, had Corzine leading Forrester by 18 points among likely voters and 20 points among registered voters.

Several factors help to explain the narrowing of the race, said poll Director Murray Edelman. Both campaigns have stepped up their advertising since the last poll and the candidates are covered more prominently in the news. Around the time of the September poll, Corzine was the only one making significant ad buys.

In September, Forrester also was battling negative publicity over legal issues surrounding BeneCard Services Inc., an insurance company that Forester owns, and an affiliated insurance company in Washington, D.C. At the same time, Corzine had been facing questions about having converted a mortgage loan into a gift for a former girlfriend, Carla Katz, president of a Communications Workers of America local that represents state employees.

Since then, BeneCard has faded from media attention and Forrester may be using his image as a family man to indirectly keep the Carla Katz issue alive, Edelman said.

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

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Forrester may have also gained from the media coverage of his performance in the first televised debate between the two candidates.

In addition, voters in early September may have focused more on news coverage of the Bush Administration's response to Hurricane Katrina and rising gas prices than New Jersey politics. "Throughout the time and shortly before the polling period, respondents were confronted with images of the devastation of the hurricane and stories of the incompetence of the Republican administration," Edelman said. "Add to this the steeply rising gas prices and respondents may have voiced their displeasure in their answers to the poll questions. The effect of this factor appears to be short lived."

According to the latest poll of 638 likely voters, Forrester has made inroads among a number of key groups. Among independent voters, he trails Corzine by four points – 41 percent to 37 percent. In September, the gap among independent likely voters was 18 points. Forrester also has pulled ahead of Corzine among white voters with a six-point lead, while he lagged behind Corzine by 10 points among white likely voters last month. Forrester has narrowed the gap to five points among likely voters with at least some college education, while the margin was 16 points last month. In addition, the race has tightened considerably among middle-aged likely voters, those ages 30 to 49 and 50 to 64.

A promising sign for Forrester, and somewhat of a worrisome one for Corzine, is the stability of their electoral support. Sixty-five percent of likely voters who back Forrester say they are very sure of their vote, up from 59 percent in September. The percentage of Forrester supporters who said they might change their minds has dropped from 38 percent in September to 33 percent in the latest poll. At the same time, Corzine's support has softened slightly. Sixty-two percent of likely voters who back Corzine say they are very sure of their vote, down from 66 percent in September. The proportion saying they might change their minds has grown from 33 percent in September to 37 percent in the latest poll.

Edelman said that there has already been a good deal of change and there is plenty of opportunity for more changes with the large numbers of undecided voters and those who still might change their minds.

“One thing is certain, however,” he added. “There is a great deal of money sitting on the side ready to subject voters to attack ads in the last few weeks of the campaign. Pollsters won’t be the only ones happy when this campaign is over. “

Favorability ratings also shifted in the latest poll, but primarily for Corzine. Forty-six percent of likely voters said they had a favorable opinion of Corzine, down from 53 percent in September. The senator’s unfavorability rating climbed four points, to 31 percent, from September to the latest poll. Forrester’s numbers showed little change.

A look at the issues gives some insight into the dynamics of the race. Likely voters continue to rank property tax relief as the most important issue for the next governor to address, followed by eliminating corruption among public officials. Those two issues have topped the list throughout the campaign. Forrester has made inroads on the corruption issue. When asked who would do a better job of eliminating corruption among state elected officials, 35 percent of likely voters said Forrester, and 28 percent said Corzine. That is a 180-degree swing from the September survey, when Corzine led Forrester on the issue 33 percent to 30 percent among likely voters. And among the 17 percent choosing corruption as the most important issue, Forrester leads by two to one.

The candidates remain neck and neck on the measure of who would do the best job of reducing property taxes, with Forrester edging Corzine 35 percent to 33. However among the 31 percent choosing property taxes as the most important issue, Forrester leads 45 percent to 36 percent.

About half of likely voters say they have heard or read anything about the candidates’ proposals to provide property tax relief, an increase of 9 percentage points for Corzine and 10 points for Forrester. But voters also agree that the candidates still have a lot of explaining to do. By margins of nearly three to one, likely voters say Forrester and Corzine have not adequately explained how they would pay for their plans.

“If you don’t know how the candidates are going to pay for their property tax plans, you’ll be glad to know you have a lot of company,” Edelman said.

Voters are giving the candidates mixed signals in opinions about each candidate’s stance on taxes. For example, voters are more likely to favor Corzine’s position on a no-new taxes pledge. Sixty-one percent of registered voters said they would prefer that a candidate pledge to do everything possible not to raise taxes, with a tax increase as a last

resort. Thirty-one percent want the gubernatorial candidates to pledge not to raise taxes even if it means deep spending cuts.

But when presented with various aspects of the candidates' property tax relief plans, without a mention of the names of the candidates backing the plans, voters were more likely to support Forrester's positions.

Fifty-five percent of registered voters said it is possible for the state to reduce the local property tax burden without raising state taxes or cutting important services, mirroring Forrester's stance. Thirty-five percent said that would not be possible.

A majority of registered voters also said they would prefer that local property tax relief apply to all households, not just those making less than \$200,000, as Corzine has proposed. Fifty-four percent favored across-the-board relief, as Forrester has proposed, while 42 percent want the relief targeted toward households making less than \$200,000. Support was greatest among households earning \$200,000 or more.

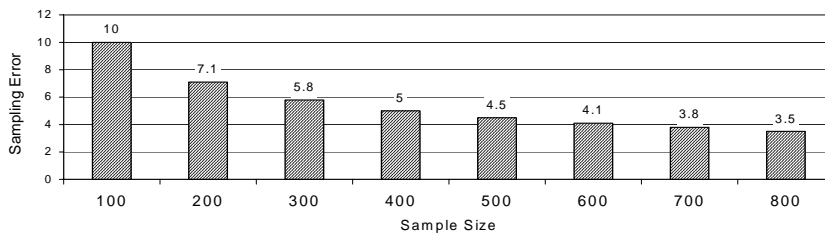
"As these characteristics of the plans become more widely known to the electorate, that could mean more movement toward Forrester," Edelman said. "As you might expect, the higher income households are more likely to back tax relief for all households."

BACKGROUND MEMO – RELEASE (EP 156-1) October 9, 2005

The latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers* Poll was conducted from October 3 to 6 with a scientifically selected random sample of 833 New Jersey adults. The random sample of 833 New Jersey adults yielded 703 registered adult residents to vote in New Jersey. This release also includes results for a sub-sample of 638 registered voters who are considered likely to vote in the gubernatorial election, based on their interest and stated plans to vote in the election. Most of the figures in this release are based on the sub-sample of likely voters.

All surveys are subject to sampling error, which is the expected probable difference between interviewing everyone in a population versus a scientific sample drawn from that population. The sampling error for the statewide sample of 833 New Jersey adults is ± 3.4 percent, at a 95 percent confidence interval. The sampling error for the statewide sample of 703 registered voters is ± 3.7 percent, at a 95 percent confidence interval. The sampling error for the sub-sample of 638 likely voters is ± 3.9 percent, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of New Jersey likely 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 46.1 and 53.9 percent (50 ± 3.9) had all New Jersey likely 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.

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:

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)

[Includes "Leaners" from G1a]

POLL 156 / Oct 2005	<u>Corzine</u>	<u>Forrester</u>	<u>Some Other</u>	<u>Wouldn't Vote</u>	<u>Undecided/ DK/RF</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Likely Voters	44%	37%	---	1%	18%	638
<u>Party ID</u>						
--Democrat	80%	8%	---	---	12%	185
--Republican	10%	75%	---	2%	13%	162
--Independent	41%	37%	---	1%	20%	215
<u>Gender</u>						
--Male	37%	42%	---	1%	20%	309
--Female	50%	33%	---	1%	17%	329
<u>Race</u>						
--White	37%	43%	---	1%	18%	501
--Nonwhite	65%	16%	---	1%	18%	103
<u>Age</u>						
--18-29	***	***	---	***	***	***
--30-49	43%	37%	---	2%	19%	243
--50-64	40%	43%	---	---	17%	201
--65+	43%	35%	---	3%	19%	135
<u>Education</u>						
--High school and below	42%	34%	---	1%	22%	161
--Some college and above	44%	39%	---	1%	16%	458
<u>Region of State</u>						
--North	41%	43%	---	1%	15%	239
--Central	51%	31%	---	2%	16%	201
--South	40%	38%	---	1%	22%	162
Registered Voters	44%	34%	---	3%	19%	703

	<u>Corzine</u>	<u>Forrester</u>	<u>Some Other</u>	<u>Wouldn't Vote</u>	<u>Undecided/ DK/RF</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2005 Likely Voters	49%	31%	---	1%	19%	476
Party ID						
--Democrat	82%	4%	---	2%	12%	163
--Republican	11%	70%	---	---	19%	132
--Independent	44%	26%	---	2%	29%	130
Race						
--White	45%	35%	---	1%	19%	398
--Nonwhite	71%	7%	---	2%	20%	62
Age						
--18-29	***	***	---	***	***	***
--30-49	48%	30%	---	2%	20%	173
--50-64	47%	36%	---	2%	15%	163
--65+	48%	29%	---	---	23%	116
Education						
--High school and below	48%	28%	---	2%	22%	92
--Some college and above	49%	33%	---	1%	17%	374
Region of State						
--North	50%	34%	---	1%	15%	191
--Central	49%	30%	---	2%	20%	145
--South	47%	29%	---	2%	22%	126
September 2005 Registered Voters	48%	28%	---	3%	22%	700
	<u>Corzine</u>	<u>Forrester</u>	<u>Some Other</u>	<u>Wouldn't Vote</u>	<u>Undecided/ DK/RF</u>	<u>(n)</u>
June 2005 Registered Voters	46%	38%	---	2%	15%	600
May 2005 Registered Voters	44%	36%	---	3%	16%	519
February 2005 Registered Voters	52%	29%	---	2%	17%	575

***Subgroup contains less than 50.

Corzine-Forrester

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

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

[Includes “Leaners” from G1a]

POLL 156 / Oct 2005	<u>Very Sure</u>	<u>Might Change</u>	<u>DK/RF</u>	<u>(n=524)</u>
Likely Voters				
Corzine	62%	37%	1%	268
Forrester	65%	33%	2%	248
Registered Voters				<u>(n=564)</u>
Corzine	58%	40%	2%	295
Forrester	63%	34%	3%	260
September 2005				<u>(n=476)</u>
Likely Voters				
Corzine	66%	33%	1%	229
Forrester	59%	38%	4%	153
September 2005				<u>(n=700)</u>
Registered Voters				
Corzine	59%	39%	1%	333
Forrester	51%	47%	3%	201

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.

[ROTATE] (PF1-PF2)

[ASKED ONLY OF THOSE WHO SAID "A LOT OR SOME" IN QRL2 OR "DEFINITELY OR PROBABLY WILL" IN QRL3]

POLL 156 / Oct 2005	Favorable	Unfavorable	Not Heard of	No opinion	DK/RF	(n)
JON CORZINE						
Likely Voters	46%	31%	1%	17%	5%	638
<u>Party ID</u>						
--Democrat	74%	7%	3%	12%	4%	185
--Republican	21%	55%	1%	18%	5%	162
--Independent	42%	36%	---	18%	4%	215
	Favorable	Unfavorable	Not Heard of	No opinion	DK/RF	(n)
September 2005 Likely Voters	53%	27%	---	16%	4%	476
September 2005 Registered Voters	48%	22%	2%	23%	5%	700
June 2005 Registered Voters	51%	25%	3%	18%	3%	600
May 2005 Registered Voters	44%	25%	4%	24%	3%	519
February 2005 Registered Voters	53%	22%	9%	15%	2%	678

POLL 156 / Oct 2005	Favorable	Unfavorable	Not Heard of	No opinion	DK/RF	(n)
DOUGLAS FORRESTER						
Likely Voters	41%	25%	2%	27%	5%	638
Party ID						
--Democrat	18%	40%	6%	32%	5%	185
--Republican	68%	12%	---	16%	3%	162
--Independent	43%	23%	1%	29%	5%	215
	Favorable	Unfavorable	Not Heard of	No opinion	DK/RF	(n)
September 2005 Likely Voters	43%	24%	2%	27%	4%	476
September 2005 Registered Voters	35%	22%	4%	34%	5%	700
June 2005 Registered Voters	41%	23%	6%	26%	5%	600
May 2005 Registered Voters	38%	14%	18%	27%	3%	519
February 2005 Registered Voters	25%	15%	29%	26%	26%	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) (MP1)

	<u>Oct 2005,</u> <u>Poll 156/</u> <u>Likely voters</u>	<u>Sept 2005,</u> <u>Poll 155/</u> <u>Likely voters</u>
<u>(n)</u>	(638)	(476)
<u>Dealing with the state's budget crisis</u>	13%	14%
<u>Improving the quality of education</u>	14%	15%
<u>Protecting the state from terrorist attacks</u>	9%	7%
<u>Reducing property taxes</u>	31%	28%
<u>Increasing access to quality healthcare</u>	11%	11%
<u>Eliminating corruption among state elected officials</u>	17%	19%
<u>None of the above</u>	---	---
<u>Other</u>	3%	3%
<u>Don't know/refused</u>	3%	3%

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-F) [IF SOME OTHER CANDIDATE, ASK:] If you had to choose between (READ OPTIONS #1-2)...? (CA1)

POLL 156 / Oct 2005 – Likely Voters						
<u>Which one of the candidates would do the best job of?</u>	<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	37%	33%	4%	3%	22%	638
Improving the quality of education	40%	24%	6%	6%	25%	638
Protecting the state from terrorist attacks	27%	26%	13%	10%	24%	638
Reducing property taxes	33%	35%	9%	3%	21%	638
Increasing access to quality healthcare	40%	22%	9%	5%	24%	638
Eliminating corruption among state elected officials	28%	35%	13%	5%	20%	638

POLL 155 / Sept 2005 – Likely Voters

<u>Which one of the candidates would do the best job of?</u>	<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	43%	30%	4%	1%	22%	476
Improving the quality of education	43%	21%	4%	3%	29%	476
Protecting the state from terrorist attacks	30%	24%	9%	9%	29%	476
Reducing property taxes	35%	35%	5%	1%	24%	476
Increasing access to quality healthcare	43%	19%	5%	2%	31%	476
Eliminating corruption among state elected officials	33%	30%	10%	3%	25%	476

Have you heard or read anything about Jon Corzine's plan to reduce property tax bills for homeowners? (PT1)

[ROTATE (PT1-PT1a) and (PT3-PT3a)]

POLL 156 / Oct 2005	Yes	No	DK/RF	(n)
Likely Voters	49%	49%	2%	638
<u>Party ID</u>				
--Democrat	57%	41%	1%	185
--Republican	42%	55%	3%	162
--Independent	52%	45%	3%	215
<u>Race</u>				
--White	50%	48%	2%	501
--Nonwhite	47%	51%	2%	103
<u>Age</u>				
--18-49	44%	54%	2%	279
--50-64	53%	45%	2%	201
--65+	57%	40%	3%	135
<u>Education</u>				
--High school and below	48%	50%	2%	161
--Some college and above	50%	48%	2%	458
<u>Region of State</u>				
--North	50%	49%	1%	239
--Central	50%	48%	2%	201
--South	48%	49%	4%	162
September 2005				
Likely Voters	40%	59%	1%	476
September 2005				
Registered Voters	33%	65%	2%	700

Do you think Jon Corzine has or has not adequately explained how to pay for that plan?
(PT1a)

[ROTATE (PT1-PT1a) and (PT3-PT3a)]

[ASKED ONLY OF THOSE WHO SAID "YES" IN QPT1]

POLL 156 / Oct 2005	<u>Has explained</u>	<u>Has not explained</u>	<u>DK/RF</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Likely Voters	24%	64%	12%	323
<u>Party ID</u>				
--Democrat	34%	53%	13%	108
--Republican	21%	69%	10%	71
--Independent	15%	75%	10%	116

Have you heard or read anything about Doug Forrester's plan to reduce property tax bills for homeowners? (PT3)

[ROTATE (PT1-PT1a) and (PT3-PT3a)]

POLL 156 / Oct 2005	Yes	No	DK/RF	(n)
Likely Voters	53%	45%	3%	638
<u>Party ID</u>				
--Democrat	44%	53%	2%	185
--Republican	67%	32%	1%	162
--Independent	56%	40%	4%	215
<u>Race</u>				
--White	59%	39%	2%	501
--Nonwhite	34%	63%	2%	103
<u>Age</u>				
--18-49	44%	54%	2%	279
--50-64	62%	35%	3%	201
--65+	64%	35%	2%	135
<u>Education</u>				
--High school and below	48%	50%	2%	161
--Some college and above	56%	42%	3%	458
<u>Region of State</u>				
--North	56%	42%	3%	239
--Central	50%	48%	3%	201
--South	54%	45%	1%	162
September 2005				
Likely Voters	43%	56%	2%	476
September 2005				
Registered Voters	34%	64%	2%	700

Do you think Doug Forrester has or has not adequately explained how to pay for that plan? (PT3a)

[ROTATE (PT1-PT1a) and (PT3-PT3a)]

[ASKED ONLY OF THOSE WHO SAID "YES" *IN QPT1*]

POLL 156 / Oct 2005	<u>Has explained</u>	<u>Has not explained</u>	<u>DK/RF</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Likely Voters	22%	66%	12%	363
<u>Party ID</u>				
--Democrat	11%	74%	15%	94
--Republican	31%	53%	16%	110
--Independent	18%	75%	7%	133

There is talk of having the candidates for governor take a pledge not to raise taxes during their administration. Which position would you prefer most in a candidate: (READ AND ROTATE RESPONSE CATEGORIES) (TX1)

POLL 156 / Oct 2005	<u>Absolute pledge not to raise taxes even if it means spending cuts</u>	<u>Pledge to do everything possible not to raise taxes with an increase only after all other options fail</u>	<u>DK/RF</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Registered Voters	31%	61%	7%	703
<u>Party ID</u>				
--Democrat	26%	65%	8%	203
--Republican	38%	55%	7%	170
--Independent	26%	67%	7%	238
<u>Race</u>				
---White	30%	63%	7%	545
---Nonwhite	33%	61%	6%	122
<u>Age</u>				
---18-49	33%	61%	5%	316
---50-64	25%	68%	7%	211
---65+	33%	54%	12%	149
<u>Education</u>				
---High school and below	36%	57%	6%	191
---Some college and above	28%	65%	8%	490
<u>Region of State</u>				
--North	36%	58%	6%	265
--Central	25%	68%	8%	217
--South	28%	64%	8%	180
All Adults	31%	61%	9%	833

Do you believe the state can or cannot substantially reduce the LOCAL property tax burden without raising state taxes or cutting important services? (TX2)

POLL 156 / Oct 2005	<u>State CAN reduce property tax without raising state taxes or cutting services</u>	<u>State CANNOT reduce property tax without raising state taxes or cutting services</u>	<u>DK/RF</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Registered Voters	55%	35%	10%	703
<u>Party ID</u>				
--Democrat	51%	36%	13%	203
--Republican	59%	31%	9%	170
--Independent	53%	38%	9%	238
<u>Race</u>				
---White	53%	38%	9%	545
---Nonwhite	62%	27%	11%	122
<u>Age</u>				
---18-49	61%	32%	7%	316
---50-64	49%	43%	9%	211
---65+	49%	32%	19%	149
<u>Education</u>				
---High school and below	59%	29%	12%	191
---Some college and above	53%	38%	8%	490
<u>Region of State</u>				
--North	55%	36%	9%	265
--Central	56%	36%	8%	217
--South	56%	33%	11%	180
All Adults	56%	33%	12%	833

In thinking about plans to provide property tax relief, should the relief be targeted only to households with annual incomes of less than \$200,000, or should the relief be provided to all households? (PT5)

POLL 156 / Oct 2005	<u>Household with annual incomes less than \$200,000</u>	<u>All households</u>	<u>DK/RF</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Registered Voters	42%	54%	4%	703
<u>Party ID</u>				
--Democrat	44%	50%	6%	203
--Republican	35%	63%	2%	170
--Independent	44%	53%	2%	238
<u>Race</u>				
---White	46%	52%	3%	545
---Nonwhite	30%	64%	6%	122
<u>Age</u>				
---18-49	38%	60%	2%	316
---50-64	46%	51%	3%	211
---65+	46%	44%	10%	149
<u>Education</u>				
---High school and below	39%	55%	5%	191
---Some college and above	44%	54%	3%	490
<u>Region of State</u>				
--North	38%	57%	4%	265
--Central	45%	52%	3%	217
--South	46%	51%	4%	180
All Adults	41%	54%	5%	833

In thinking about plans to provide property tax relief, should the relief be targeted only to households with annual incomes of less than \$200,000, or should the relief be provided to all households? (PT5)

BY

Is your total family income before taxes \$200,000 or more? (D8a)

Property Tax Relief (PT5) by Family Income (D8a)

POLL 156 / Oct 2005 – Registered Voters	Property tax relief (PT5)			
Family income Before taxes \$200,000 (D8a)	<u>Household with annual incomes less than \$200,000</u>	<u>All households</u>	<u>DK/RF</u>	<u>(n=703)</u>
Yes	24%	74%	2%	56
No	44%	52%	4%	536