

# The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll

EMBARGOED – NOT FOR RELEASE UNTIL: SUNDAY, JUNE 26, 1994

RELEASE: SL/EP 48-1 (EP 98-1)

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## RELEASE INFORMATION

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

Some figures in this release are based on a full sample of 801 New Jersey adults; other figures are based on the subsample of residents who are likely voters in this November's general election.

## **THE U. S. SENATE ELECTION: LAUTENBERG BEGINS WITH LEAD, BUT SUPPORT IS SOFT AND VOTER SENTIMENT FAVORS CHANGE**

As the race for U. S. Senate begins, a large majority (78%) of New Jersey voters either don't know or have not yet formed an overall opinion of Republican challenger Garabed (Chuck) Haytaian, and many (40%) do not have a general impression of 12 year Democratic incumbent Frank Lautenberg. It is not surprising then, that a majority of voters are not strongly committed to either candidate as this general election campaign gets underway.

The latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton* Poll was conducted by telephone from June 14 through June 22 with 801 New Jersey residents, including 620 New Jerseyans who are likely to vote in this November's election. Among the likely voters, 25 percent are sure they will vote for Lautenberg on election day, while another 30 percent say they would vote for the incumbent today but might change their mind by November — for a total of 55 percent who intend to vote for Lautenberg at this time.

Seventeen percent of voters are sure they will vote for Haytaian on election day, while another 12 percent say they would vote for the Republican today but might change their choice by November — for a total of 29 percent intending to vote for Haytaian at this time.

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### **ATTENTION RADIO STATIONS:**

Audio is available after 8:00 A.M. on Monday, June 27, 1994, from (908)932-3605 (Rutgers Feature Phone).

While current vote intentions favor Lautenberg, the survey finds that only about one-third (35%) of voters say the incumbent deserves to be re-elected to the U. S. Senate, with 42 percent saying it is time for a change.

"This campaign is beginning without much voter knowledge of the candidates, and with vote preferences favoring an incumbent who most voters do not think deserves re-election," commented Associate Poll Director Ken Dautrich. "Given these dynamics and the fact that the election is five months away, it isn't unreasonable to assume that either candidate has a realistic chance of winning."

All 801 New Jersey residents who were surveyed rated the job performance of Governor Whitman. Half of all state residents give Governor Whitman positive job performance ratings of excellent (11%) or good (39%), representing a 13 point increase since February.

### ***THE SENATE RACE***

With almost five months to go before election day there are many New Jersey voters who are not strongly committed to a candidate. While 42 percent of voters in New Jersey say they are firm about a candidate choice, another 42 percent express support for a candidate but say they might change their mind by November, and 13 percent are undecided.

If the election for U.S. Senator from New Jersey were held today, 55 percent of voters say they would cast a ballot for Democratic Senator Frank Lautenberg, 29 percent would vote for Republican Assembly Speaker Chuck Haytaian, 13 percent are undecided, and 3 percent would vote for another candidate.

More Lautenberg voters, however, report that they might change their mind before the election than those who are sure they will vote for the incumbent. Lautenberg's 55 percent support includes 25 percent who are sure they will vote for him on election day, and 30 percent who would vote for him today but might change their mind before the November election.

The 29 percent who currently plan to vote for Haytaian include 17 percent who say they will not change their mind and 12 percent who would vote for the Republican today, but might change before November.

The current poll shows that Democratic support for Lautenberg is stronger than Republican support for Haytaian. Among Democrats, 86 percent say they would vote for Lautenberg if the election were held today while 62 percent of Republicans would cast their ballot for Haytaian. Among

independents, 52 percent favor Lautenberg and 26 percent support Haytaian at this early stage in the campaign.

Even though 55 percent of voters would support Lautenberg if the election were held today, only about one-third (35%) say the incumbent deserves to be re-elected to the U.S. Senate, while 42 percent feel it is time for a change. Twenty-four percent of voters have not yet formed an opinion as to whether the incumbent Senator deserves another term. The potential for change is underscored in that fewer than 6-in-10 Lautenberg supporters say he deserves re-election (57%). Fifty-seven percent of Democrats, 28 percent of independents, and 17 percent of Republicans say Lautenberg should be re-elected.

The 35 percent who say Lautenberg deserves re-election represents a 6 point increase from four months ago when 29 percent felt he should be sent back to Washington.

As one might expect at this early point in the campaign, the incumbent enjoys a higher level of name recognition than the challenger. Thirty-five percent of voters can name Lautenberg as the Democratic candidate for the U.S. Senate, and an additional 62 percent recognize his name — for a total name recognition of 97 percent among voters. This compares to a total name recognition for Haytaian of 56 percent (21% can name him as the Republican candidate and another 35% recognize his name).

In addition to the 44 percent of voters who do not recognize Haytaian, another 34 percent have no overall impression of the Republican candidate for the U.S. Senate. Thirteen percent have a favorable impression of Haytaian and 8 percent have an unfavorable impression of him.

For Lautenberg, in addition to the 3 percent who do not recognize him, 37 percent of voters indicate they have not formed a general impression of the Democratic incumbent. Forty-four percent of New Jersey voters have a favorable impression and 17 percent have an unfavorable impression of Lautenberg.

### ***ISSUES IN THE CAMPAIGN***

When asked to identify the single most important problem facing the country that whoever is elected will have to face, over one-third (37%) of voters cite an economic problem. Specifically, 19 percent identify unemployment, 7% say taxes, and 11 percent cite another economic problem.

Health care is mentioned by 19 percent of New Jersey voters as the single most important issue in the U.S. Senate campaign. Also, 20 percent single out either crime (17%) or drug problems (3%) as their top concern.

Overall, 37 percent of New Jersey voters say that Frank Lautenberg would do a better job of handling the most important issue identified by voters, compared to 20 percent who say that Chuck Haytaian would do better. The plurality of voters — 43 percent — do not know which candidate would do better on the issue they consider most important.

### ***JOB PERFORMANCE RATINGS OF STATEWIDE ELECTED OFFICIALS***

Among all 801 state residents who were surveyed, half rate Governor Christie Whitman's performance as either excellent (11%) or good (39%), representing a 13 point increase over the past four months. Currently, 29 percent rate the Governor's performance as only fair, and 7 percent offer her a rating of poor. Fourteen percent do not have an opinion about her performance.

Associate Poll Director Ken Dautrich commented, "After five months in office, most residents have now formed an opinion of Whitman's performance as governor, and those opinions largely are positive ones. Making good on her campaign promise to cut the state income tax along with her open dialogue with residents are important contributors to her popularity."

Senator Bill Bradley is also given positive performance ratings of excellent (9%) or good (41%) from half of the state's residents. Thirty percent say he is doing an only fair job, 7 percent say poor, and the remaining 13 percent have no opinion.

Senator Frank Lautenberg receives positive performance grades of excellent (6%) or good (35%) from about 4-in-10 residents of New Jersey. Thirty-one percent say he is doing an only fair job, 8 percent rate his performance as poor, and 19 percent do not have an opinion.

The survey also indicates that for the first time since 1990, more residents feel that New Jersey is moving in the right direction (50%) than feel that the state has gotten off on the wrong track (39%). Last year at this time, 40 percent of state residents felt the state was moving in the right direction, and in 1992 only 33 percent felt that way.

**BACKGROUND MEMO — RELEASE SL/EP48-1 (EP98-1), SUNDAY, JUNE 26, 1994**

The latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton* Poll was conducted between June 14 and June 22, 1994, when a random sample of 801 New Jerseyans, 18 years and older, was interviewed by telephone. Figures based on this sample size are subject to a sampling error of about  $\pm 3.5$  percent at a 95 percent confidence interval. Unless otherwise indicated all figures refer to this group of voters.

Figures are also reported for those considered most likely to actually vote in the November election. This subset, identified as **LIKELY VOTERS** in this background memo, contains 620 respondents. The sampling error for this subset is about  $\pm 4.0$  percent.

Sampling error is the probable difference in results between interviewing everyone in the population versus a scientific sample taken from that population. Sampling error does not take into account other possible sources of error inherent in any study of public opinion. The questions and figures referred to in this release are presented below. The location of each question on the actual questionnaire is in brackets.

"How would you rate the job Christie Whitman is doing as Governor — excellent, good, only fair or poor?" [Q.2]

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>June, 1994</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(801)</b>
<b>June, 1994 - Likely Voters</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>(620)</b>
<i>Party ID</i>							
--Democrat	5	32	35	9	18	99	(272)
--Independent	11	40	26	9	16	102	(272)
--Republican	20	47	25	3	6	101	(215)
<i>Income</i>							
--Under \$20,000	10	46	24	5	15	100	(93)
--\$20,000 - \$30,000	4	33	34	7	22	100	(88)
--\$30,001 - \$50,000	12	38	29	6	15	100	(212)
--Over \$50,000	12	38	31	10	10	101	(302)
<i>Age</i>							
--18 - 29	7	51	26	5	11	100	(127)
--30 - 49	14	37	28	7	14	100	(335)
--50 - 64	8	35	36	6	14	99	(185)
--65 and over	11	32	26	10	21	100	(145)
<b><u>PAST SURVEYS</u></b>							
February, 1994	9	28	28	5	31	101	(801)

"How would you rate the job Bill Bradley is doing as Senator — excellent, good, only fair or poor?" [Q.3]

Only

Don't

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>June, 1994</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(801)</b>
<b>June, 1994 - Likely Voters</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>(620)</b>

Party ID

--Democrat	13	44	25	5	12	99	(272)
--Independent	8	38	32	9	13	100	(272)
--Republican	3	41	36	9	10	99	(215)

**PAST SURVEYS**

February, 1994	11	36	29	7	17	100	(801)
February, 1993	14	42	26	10	7	99	(801)
April, 1992	11	39	33	12	5	100	(800)

"How would you rate the job Frank Lautenberg is doing as Senator — excellent, good, only fair or poor?" [Q.4]

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>June, 1994</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>(801)</b>
<b>June, 1994 - Likely Voters</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>(620)</b>

Party ID

--Democrat	10	41	27	5	17	100	(272)
--Independent	3	32	36	9	20	100	(272)
--Republican	4	34	31	13	19	101	(215)

**PAST SURVEYS**

February, 1994	5	34	32	7	22	100	(801)
February, 1993	7	35	34	8	15	99	(801)
April, 1992	6	33	34	13	13	99	(800)

"Generally speaking, would you say things in New Jersey are going in the right direction, or have they pretty seriously gotten off on the wrong track?" [Q.5]

	<u>Right Direction</u>	<u>Wrong Track</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>June, 1994</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>101%</b>	<b>(801)</b>
<b>June, 1994 - Likely Voters</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>(620)</b>

Party ID

--Democrat	50	45	8	99	(214)
--Independent	46	42	12	100	(198)
--Republican	60	32	8	100	(176)

**PAST SURVEYS**

June, 1993	40	52	8	100	(800)
April, 1992	33	60	7	100	(799)
June 1991	37	55	8	100	(800)

"Do you know who the (Republican/Democratic) candidate for Senator is? [Q.9, Q.13] ASKED OF THOSE NOT NAMING CANDIDATE: The (Republican/Democratic) candidate is (Check Haytaian/Frank Lautenberg) — have you ever heard of him before?" [Q.10/Q.14]

	<u>Names</u>	<u>Recognizes</u>	<u>Doesn't Recognize</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>HAYTAIAN</b>					
<b>June, 1994 - Likely Voters</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(620)</b>

Party ID

--Democrat	17	31	51	99	(214)
--Independent	24	36	39	99	(198)
--Republican	23	38	39	100	(176)

**LAUTENBERG**

<b>June, 1994 - Likely Voters</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(620)</b>
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Party ID

--Democrat	33	64	3	100	(214)
--Independent	36	62	2	100	(198)
--Republican	38	59	3	100	(176)

ASKED OF THOSE NAMING OR HEARD OF CANDIDATE:

"How much do you think you know about (Haytaian/Lautenberg) — a lot, some, or a little?" [Q.12/Q.16]

	<u>A Lot</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>A Little</u>	<u>Not Know Candidate</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>HAYTAIAN</b>							
<b>June, 1994 - Likely Voters</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>101%</b>	<b>(620)</b>

**LAUTENBERG**

<b>June, 1994 - Likely Voters</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>(620)</b>
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"Is your general impression of (Lautenberg/Haytaian) favorable, unfavorable, or don't you have an opinion about him? PROBE: Is that very or somewhat (favorable/unfavorable)?" [Q.11, Q.15]

	<u>Very Favorable</u>	<u>Somewhat Favorable</u>	<u>Somewhat Unfavorable</u>	<u>Very Unfavorable</u>	<u>Doesn't Know Candidate</u>	<u>Don't Know/No Opinion</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>HAYTAIAN</b>								
<b>June, 1994 - Likely Voters</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>(620)</b>

Party ID

--Democrat	4	3	7	7	51	28	100	(214)
--Independent	4	9	5	4	39	39	100	(198)
--Republican	13	11	2	1	39	34	100	(176)

**LAUTENBERG**

<b>June, 1994 - Likely Voters</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>(620)</b>
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Party ID

--Democrat	23	36	4	2	3	32	100	(214)
--Independent	12	29	9	6	2	41	99	(198)
--Republican	6	20	19	15	3	36	99	(176)

"What do you think is the most important problem facing the country that whoever is elected Senator will have to face?" [Q.17]

**June, 1994**  
**Likely Voters**

Unemployment/jobs	19%
Taxes	7
Other economic issue	11
Crime	17
Education	2
Health care	19
Drug problems	3
Environment	1
Social services	3
International conflicts/Foreign policy	3
Family issues	1
Gov't performance	1
Moral issues	1
Other	5
Don't know	<u>5</u>
TOTAL	98%
(n)	(620)

"Regardless of which candidate you plan to vote for, who would do a better job handling this problem — Lautenberg or Haytaian?" [Q.18]

	<u>Lautenberg</u>	<u>Haytaian</u>	<u>Neither/ Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>June, 1994 - Likely Voters</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(586)</b>
<i>Party ID</i>					
--Democrat	57	6	36	99	(202)
--Independent	31	15	54	100	(188)
--Republican	20	45	36	101	(169)



"Suppose the election for Senator was held today and you had to choose right now. Would you vote for Chuck Haytaian, the Republican; or Frank Lautenberg, the Democrat? (IF CHOOSES CANDIDATE, PROBE: Are you very sure about your choice, or might you change your mind before the election?) (IF WOULDN'T VOTE NOW, PROBE: Would you not vote because you're undecided now, or don't you plan to vote in the election?)" [Q.19]

	<i>(Firm)</i> Sure About <u>Haytaian</u>	<i>(Soft)</i> Picks <u>Haytaian</u> (But might change)	<u>Initially Undecided</u>			<i>(Soft)</i> Picks <u>Lautenberg</u> (But might change)	<i>(Firm)</i> Sure About <u>Lautenberg</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
			Leans <u>Haytaian</u>	Does Not <u>Lean</u>	Leans <u>Lautenberg</u>					
<b>June, 1994 - Likely Voters</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(620)</b>
<i>Party ID</i>										
--Democrat	3	3	--	5	2	35	51	--	99	(214)
--Independent	12	14	2	11	6	36	16	4	101	(198)
--Republican	42	20	1	10	1	18	6	3	98	(176)
<i>Does Lautenberg deserve Re-election?</i>										
--Re-election	1	--	--	2	2	36	59	--	100	(215)
--Time for change	39	24	1	8	2	17	6	3	100	(261)
--Not sure	3	7	1	23	8	46	8	5	101	(144)

"Thinking about the job that Frank Lautenberg has done as U. S. Senator, do you think he deserves to be re-elected, or do you think it's time for a change?" [Q.22]

	<u>Deserves Re-election</u>	<u>Time For Change</u>	<u>Depends</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>June, 1994 - Likely Voters</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>101%</b>	<b>(620)</b>
<i>Party ID</i>						
--Democrat	57	24	5	14	100	(214)
--Independent	28	41	10	21	100	(198)
--Republican	17	66	4	13	100	(176)
<i>Vote Choice</i>						
--Lautenberg	57	18	9	15	99	(362)
--Undecided	7	36	10	47	100	(58)
--Haytaian	2	90	1	7	100	(184)
<b><u>PAST SURVEYS</u></b>						
February, 1994	29	48	6	17	100	(680)