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Released: **Monday, May 11, 2015**

## **NEW JERSEY: CHARGES HANG OVER MENENDEZ**

*But most think he should be allowed to stay in office until settled*

*West Long Branch, NJ* – Most New Jerseyans who have heard about the federal indictment against Sen. Bob Menendez think it was politically motivated but still say he is probably guilty of the charges. The ***Monmouth University Poll*** found that the senator’s approval rating took a hit since the charges, but it still remains above water as most say he should be given the chance to clear his name before having to resign from office.

Most New Jerseyans (79%) have heard about the recent indictment of New Jersey’s senior U.S. Senator for bribery and misuse of office. Fully 6-in-10 (60%) of this group say Menendez is probably guilty of the charges levied against him while just 24% say he is probably not guilty. Majorities of Republicans (63%), independents (63%), and Democrats (53%) who have heard of the charges say the senator is probably guilty. At the same time, a slim majority (51%) of those who have heard about the indictment think it is the result of retaliation by his political enemies, while 35% say politics have nothing to do with it.

“Many New Jerseyans seem to agree with Sen. Menendez that these charges were the result of a political witch hunt. They part ways, though, when it comes to whether he is actually guilty of the alleged crimes,” said Patrick Murray, director of the independent Monmouth University Polling Institute.

Two-thirds of all New Jersey adults (68%) think Menendez should be allowed to wait and see how the charges against him are settled instead of having to resign right away. Only 28% think he should resign from office now. There are no major differences in this finding based on partisan affiliation or whether the poll responders had already heard about the charges before being contacted by Monmouth.

Despite the recent indictment, Sen. Menendez's approval rating remains marginally positive with more New Jersey adults approving (42%) rather than disapproving (37%) of the job he is doing. There are notable differences in this opinion, though, based on how much New Jerseyans have heard about the charges. Those who have heard a lot about the indictment hold a negative opinion of Menendez – 42% approve and 50% disapprove; those who have heard a little are divided – 37% approve and 35% disapprove; and those who have heard nothing about the charges are positive about the senator's job performance – 51% approve and just 17% disapprove.

Sen. Menendez's job rating has fallen somewhat among registered voters in New Jersey since the indictments were announced. It stood at 49% approve and 27% disapprove in February, compared to 42% approve and 38% disapprove now. The current rating is similar to his prior low point in April 2013 after news emerged that a federal grand jury was investigating Menendez. Then, 44% of Garden State voters approved and 38% disapproved, but his numbers improved in subsequent polls.

“One of Menendez's predecessors complained about us being ‘such an unforgiving people,’ but it looks like New Jersey voters are willing to give their current senator the benefit of the doubt for now,” said Murray.

The state's junior senator, Cory Booker, is doing much better than his counterpart. Booker receives a 50% approve to 21% disapprove rating among all New Jersey adults and a 51% to 21% rating among registered voters. These results are identical to Booker's voter rating from three months ago.

Turning to the Commander-in-Chief, Pres. Barack Obama receives a 51% approve to 43% disapprove rating among all New Jerseyans, but a more narrow 48% approve to 46% disapprove rating among the state's voters. This marks a decline in his Garden State voter rating from February, when a majority (54%) approved of the president's job performance and 42% disapproved. Fully 8-in-10 (80%) Democrats approve, while 45% of independents and just 14% of Republicans feel the same. The decline from February to the current poll is mainly due to a drop in approval among New Jersey Republicans.

Turning to state government, just one-third (33%) of all New Jersey adults approve of the job the state legislature is doing while almost half (47%) disapprove. Among the state's voters, 33% approve and 48% disapprove. The state legislature's voter rating has declined, but not significantly, from 37% approve to 46% disapprove in February.

The *Monmouth University Poll* was conducted by telephone with 500 New Jersey adults, including 441 registered voters, from May 1 to 3, 2015. The total sample has a margin of error of  $\pm 4.4$  percent and the registered voter sample has a margin of error of  $\pm 4.7$  percent. The poll was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute in West Long Branch, NJ.

## DATA TABLES

The questions referred to in this release are as follows:

(\* Some columns may not add to 100% due to rounding.)

### 1. Do you approve or disapprove of the job the state legislature is doing?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep
Approve	<b>33%</b>	33%	32%	34%	29%	43%
Disapprove	<b>47%</b>	48%	40%	44%	51%	41%
(VOL) Don't know	<b>20%</b>	19%	28%	22%	20%	16%

TREND: Registered Voters	May 2015	Feb. 2015	Sept. 2014	June 2014	April 2014	Feb. 2014	Jan. 2014	Dec. 2013	Sept. 2013	April 2013	Feb. 2013	Dec. 2012	Sept. 2012	July 2012	April 2012	Feb. 2012
Approve	33%	37%	35%	36%	38%	38%	47%	44%	38%	41%	40%	43%	32%	34%	37%	34%
Disapprove	48%	46%	46%	48%	46%	47%	35%	38%	36%	42%	35%	34%	43%	45%	41%	42%
(VOL) Don't know	19%	17%	19%	17%	15%	14%	18%	19%	27%	17%	25%	22%	25%	21%	23%	24%
Unwtd N	441	712	680	717	690	690	470	698	674	694	697	726	715	678	692	709

TREND: Registered Voters Continued	Oct. 2011	Aug. 2011	May 2011	Feb. 2011	July 2010	April 2010	Feb. 2010	July 2009	Feb. 2009	Sept. 2008	July 2008	April 2008	March 2008	Oct. 2007	Feb. 2007
Approve	33%	35%	32%	29%	25%	19%	24%	31%	23%	29%	27%	28%	25%	32%	34%
Disapprove	45%	48%	48%	45%	49%	57%	49%	48%	55%	50%	47%	55%	53%	43%	42%
(VOL) Don't know	22%	17%	20%	26%	26%	24%	27%	22%	22%	21%	26%	17%	22%	25%	23%
Unwtd N	693	730	725	718	747	719	716	792	721	709	889	720	719	688	681

### 2. Do you approve or disapprove of the job Barack Obama is doing as president?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep
Approve	<b>51%</b>	48%	64%	80%	45%	14%
Disapprove	<b>43%</b>	46%	29%	16%	45%	83%
(VOL) Don't know	<b>6%</b>	6%	7%	4%	10%	2%

TREND: Registered Voters - Second Term	May 2015	Feb. 2015	Sept. 2014	June 2014	April 2014	Feb. 2014	Jan. 2014	Dec. 2013	Sept. 2013	April 2013	Feb. 2013
Approve	48%	54%	41%	45%	49%	49%	44%	47%	50%	55%	60%
Disapprove	46%	42%	54%	51%	47%	47%	50%	47%	41%	42%	33%
(VOL) Don't know	6%	4%	5%	4%	3%	5%	6%	6%	8%	2%	7%
Unwtd N	441	712	680	717	690	690	470	698	674	694	697

TREND: Registered voters - First Term	Dec. 2012	April 2012	Feb. 2012	Oct. 2011	Aug. 2011	May 2011	Sept. 2010	July 2010	April 2010	Feb. 2010	Oct. 2009	July 2009
Approve	58%	54%	51%	47%	52%	60%	47%	51%	54%	53%	54%	59%
Disapprove	35%	41%	42%	46%	39%	36%	44%	42%	41%	38%	33%	29%
(VOL) Don't know	6%	5%	6%	7%	9%	4%	9%	6%	5%	9%	14%	12%
Unwtd N	726	692	709	693	730	725	726	747	719	716	785	792

[QUESTIONS 3 AND 4 WERE ROTATED]

### 3. Do you approve or disapprove of the job Bob Menendez is doing as United States Senator?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep
Approve	<b>42%</b>	42%	43%	49%	40%	33%
Disapprove	<b>37%</b>	38%	32%	33%	33%	52%
(VOL) Don't know	<b>21%</b>	20%	25%	17%	26%	15%

TREND: <i>Registered voters only</i>	May 2015	Feb. 2015	Sept. 2014	June 2014	April 2014	Feb. 2014	Dec. 2013	April 2013	Feb. 2013	April 2012	Feb. 2012	Oct. 2011	Aug. 2011	May 2011	July 2010	Oct. 2008	April 2008	Jan. 2008
Approve	42%	49%	45%	47%	51%	49%	47%	44%	41%	40%	41%	43%	38%	46%	38%	34%	41%	37%
Disapprove	38%	27%	30%	34%	31%	30%	27%	38%	31%	25%	26%	29%	33%	28%	33%	25%	31%	25%
(VOL) Don't know	20%	24%	26%	19%	18%	21%	26%	18%	28%	35%	33%	28%	29%	26%	29%	41%	28%	37%
Unwtd N	441	712	680	717	690	690	698	694	697	692	709	693	730	725	747	900	720	698

4. Do you approve or disapprove of the job Cory Booker is doing as United States Senator?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep
Approve	<b>50%</b>	51%	44%	70%	45%	29%
Disapprove	<b>21%</b>	21%	20%	11%	21%	40%
(VOL) Don't know	<b>29%</b>	27%	36%	19%	34%	31%

TREND: <i>Registered voters only</i>	May 2015	Feb. 2015	Sept. 2014	June 2014	April 2014	Feb. 2014	Dec. 2013
Approve	51%	51%	42%	48%	47%	47%	37%
Disapprove	21%	21%	23%	25%	23%	20%	21%
(VOL) Don't know	27%	27%	35%	27%	30%	32%	43%
Unwtd N	441	712	680	717	690	690	698

5. Recently, Senator Menendez was charged with bribery and misusing his public office by providing assistance to someone who gave him donations and gifts as well as not reporting these gifts at the time. Have you heard a lot, a little, or nothing at all about this?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep
A lot	<b>41%</b>	42%	32%	44%	36%	46%
A little	<b>38%</b>	40%	28%	33%	41%	38%
Nothing at all	<b>21%</b>	18%	40%	23%	23%	16%

[Questions 6 & 7 were asked only of those who have heard about the charges against Menendez: n=420, moe=+/-4.8%]

6. Based on what you have heard, do you think Menendez is probably guilty or probably not guilty of these charges?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep
Probably guilty	<b>60%</b>	58%	74%	53%	63%	63%
Probably not guilty	<b>24%</b>	25%	16%	26%	23%	23%
(VOL) Don't know	<b>16%</b>	17%	10%	22%	14%	14%

7. Based on what you have heard, do you think these charges and the evidence that was presented to support these charges were the result of retaliation against Menendez by his political enemies or did politics have nothing to do with it?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep
Retaliation by political enemies	<b>51%</b>	52%	43%	49%	49%	57%
Politics nothing to do with it	<b>35%</b>	34%	45%	34%	36%	35%
(VOL) Don't know	<b>14%</b>	14%	12%	16%	15%	7%

8. As a New Jersey resident, do you think Senator Menendez should resign from office now or should he be allowed to wait and see how the charges against him are settled?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep
Resign now	<b>28%</b>	26%	37%	27%	28%	27%
Allowed to wait	<b>68%</b>	70%	61%	70%	69%	65%
(VOL) Don't know	<b>4%</b>	4%	2%	3%	3%	8%

The *Monmouth University Poll* was sponsored and conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute from May 1 to 3, 2015 with a statewide random sample of 500 adult residents, including 375 contacted via live interview on a landline telephone and 125 via live interview on a cell phone, in English. Monmouth is responsible for all aspects of the survey questionnaire design, data weighting and analysis. Final sample is weighted for region, age, education, gender and race based on US Census information. Data collection support provided by Braun Research (field) and SSI (RDD sample). For results based on this sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling has a maximum margin of plus or minus 4.4 percentage points (unadjusted for sample design). Sampling error can be larger for sub-groups (see table below). In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

POLL DEMOGRAPHICS (weighted)			
34% Dem	50% Male	28% 18-34	63% White
46% Ind	50% Female	39% 35-54	13% Black
20% Rep		33% 55+	15% Hispanic
			9% Asian/Other
Registered Voter Sample (weighted)			
36% Dem	45% Male	21% 18-34	67% White
42% Ind	55% Female	41% 35-54	13% Black
22% Rep		38% 55+	14% Hispanic
			6% Asian/Other

	MARGIN OF ERROR					
	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep
Unweighted N	500	441	59	153	226	111
moe	4.4%	4.7%	12.8%	7.9%	6.5%	9.3%

It is the Monmouth University Polling Institute's policy to conduct surveys of all adult residents, including voters and non-voters, on issues that affect them. Specific voter surveys are conducted when appropriate during election cycles.

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