

Contact:

PATRICK MURRAY

732-263-5858 (office)

732-979-6769 (cell)

pdmurray@monmouth.edu

Released:

Sunday, October 5, 2008

*Please attribute this information to:
Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll*

*For more information:
Monmouth University Polling Institute
West Long Branch, NJ 07764
www.monmouth.edu/polling*

TIGHT RACE IN NEW JERSEY'S 7th DISTRICT

Lance leads Stender by 4, but many voters still undecided

The race to fill the open seat in New Jersey's 7th Congressional district is tight, according to a *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll* of voters living in that district. The poll finds 41% of registered voters prefer Republican State Senator Leonard Lance while 37% support Democrat Assemblywomen Linda Stender. Among likely voters, Lance leads Stender by 43% to 39%, with 4% choosing a third party candidate and a sizable 14% who are undecided.

The seat, which has been held by outgoing GOP Congressman Mike Ferguson since 2001, is one of a number of districts nationally that Democrats have targeted this year. In 2006, Stender came within 3,000 votes of unseating Ferguson.

Lance holds a 76% to 6% lead among his fellow Republicans, while Stender has a 74% to 11% advantage among Democratic voters. Independent voters prefer Lance by a slim 34% to 31% margin, although 27% of this voter group are still undecided.

Lance's overall position in the race is bolstered by a strong show of support in his home county of Hunterdon, where he holds a commanding 55% to 31% lead. He is also slightly ahead in the Somerset County portion of the district by 36% to 33%. Stender is tied with Lance 41% to 41% in her home county of Union, but claims a slight advantage in neighboring Middlesex (39% to 36%).

"This race is living up to expectations as one of the closest congressional races in the country," said Patrick Murray, director of the Monmouth University Polling Institute. "This election may come down to who does a better job turning out their base as much as it will turn on any single issue."

The number one concern for 7th district voters is the economy, which is named by 51% as one of the top issues that will decide their vote for Congress. Issues further down the list include Iraq (21%), state taxes (20%), federal taxes (17%), health care (11%), national security (9%), education (9%), cost of living (9%), and gas prices (8%). The Wall Street bailout is specifically mentioned by just 4% of voters.

Leonard Lance has an advantage on the economy – 34% say the Republican would better handle this issue compared to 28% who give the edge to Stender. Lance also holds a small issue advantage on national security (32% to 24%), Iraq (30% to 25%), energy issues (31% to 23%), and veterans' issues (29% to 23%). Linda Stender can claim the issue advantage on just health care (31% to 27%) and the environment (33% to 24%). The two are basically tied on social security – 30% for Lance to 28% for Stender.

The Democrat holds a very slight edge on the broader issue of who can best help New Jersey families make ends meet – 33% say she can do this, compared to 30% who say Lance will help families. On the other hand, the Republican gets the edge on keeping taxes and spending under control by a 32% to 22% margin.

The Republican has just a slight advantage on being seen as having high ethical standards and integrity – 40% say this describes Lance and 34% say this describes Stender. Moreover, neither state legislator seems to be tagged as more a part of the problem in Trenton – 35% say this describes Stender and 33% say this describes Lance.

The poll found that one negative is sticking to Lance – 46% see him as the candidate who will continue the policies of George Bush, while 9% say this is true of Stender. President Bush's job performance rating among District 7 voters stands at just 20% approve to 72% disapprove. This is worse than Governor Jon Corzine's 30% to 59% negative job approval in the district.

In the presidential race, Barack Obama currently holds a negligible 47% to 46% lead over John McCain among likely voters in the 7th. In 2004, George Bush beat John Kerry by 53% to 47% in the district. However, the poll found somewhat stronger coattails on the Republican side – 72% of McCain's supporters say they will vote for Lance and 15% prefer Stender, while 64% of Obama voters support Stender and 15% prefer Lance.

Both congressional candidates garner similar personal ratings from voters in the district. Lance is viewed favorably by 25% and unfavorably by 16%, while Stender is viewed favorably by 24% and unfavorably by 20%. However, most voters say they don't know enough about either candidate to form an opinion – 59% for Lance and 56% for Stender.

With such high unknowns for the candidates, party labels may end up being the decisive cue many voters use in making their choice. If this is the case, Stender may have an opportunity. Among all registered voters, 37% would like to see the Democrats in control of Congress compared to 29% who prefer Republican control and 27% who say it doesn't make a difference which party is in control. Among voters in the 7th district who are still undecided about the race, Democratic control of Congress is preferred 29% to 17%.

“This is shaping up as an election that will be decided on the margins. The top voter concern, the economy, has been benefiting Democrats nationwide, but Lance holds a slight edge on this issue. Governor Corzine and Trenton politics are viewed negatively, but Stender doesn't seem to suffer too much by association. The ultimate deciding factor may be how closely voters see Lance tied to Bush and their preference for which party should control Congress,” said Murray.

The *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll* was conducted by telephone with 503 registered voters in New Jersey's 7th Congressional district from September 30 through October 2, 2008. This sample has a margin of error of ± 4.4 percent. This report also includes analysis on a smaller group of 410 “likely voters” with a ± 4.8 percent margin of error. The poll was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute and originally published by the Gannett New Jersey newspaper group (Asbury Park Press, Courier-Post, Courier News, Daily Journal, Daily Record, and Home News Tribune).

DATA TABLES

The questions referred to in this release are as follows:

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

1. If the election for President was held today, would you vote for John McCain the Republican, Barack Obama the Democrat, or some other candidate? [IF UNDECIDED: At this moment do you lean more towards McCain or more towards Obama?] [*NAMES WERE ROTATED*]

<i>(with leaners)</i>	Reg. Voters	Likely Voters	PARTY ID			COUNTY			
			Dem	Ind	Rep	Hunterdon	Middlesex	Somerset	Union
McCain	43%	46%	10%	40%	80%	43%	41%	42%	45%
Obama	45%	47%	85%	44%	8%	42%	47%	46%	44%
Other candidate	1%	1%	0%	3%	1%	0%	0%	2%	2%
(VOL) Undecided	11%	7%	5%	13%	11%	15%	12%	10%	9%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	503	410	180	165	148	92	97	135	179

2. If the election for U.S. Congress in your district was held today, would you vote for Leonard Lance the Republican, Linda Stender the Democrat, Michael Hsing the independent, or some other candidate? [NAMES WERE ROTATED]

(with leaners)	Reg. Voters	Likely Voters	PARTY ID			COUNTY			
			Dem	Ind	Rep	Hunterdon	Middlesex	Somerset	Union
Lance	41%	43%	11%	34%	76%	55%	36%	36%	41%
Stender	37%	39%	74%	31%	6%	31%	39%	33%	41%
Hsing	2%	2%	1%	3%	2%	2%	2%	4%	0%
Other candidate	2%	2%	1%	5%	1%	1%	4%	3%	1%
(VOL) Undecided	18%	14%	12%	27%	15%	11%	20%	24%	16%
Unwtd N	503	410	180	165	148	92	97	135	179

Composite Table: Strength of Vote Choice

2. If the election for U.S. Congress in your district was held today, would you vote for Leonard Lance the Republican, Linda Stender the Democrat, Michael Hsing the independent, or some other candidate? [NAMES WERE ROTATED]
3. At this moment do you lean more towards Lance or more towards Stender?
4. Are you very sure about voting for [Name]; or might you change your mind before Election Day?

	Reg. Voters	Likely Voters	PARTY ID			COUNTY			
			Dem	Ind	Rep	Hunterdon	Middlesex	Somerset	Union
Sure Lance	23%	25%	2%	15%	52%	36%	17%	18%	24%
Weak Lance	11%	12%	7%	10%	17%	11%	16%	11%	9%
Lean Lance	7%	6%	3%	9%	8%	7%	3%	7%	8%
Undecided- Other	23%	18%	14%	35%	17%	14%	26%	32%	18%
Lean Stender	5%	5%	2%	11%	0%	1%	3%	9%	3%
Weak Stender	9%	10%	15%	7%	4%	6%	10%	10%	8%
Sure Stender	23%	24%	58%	13%	2%	24%	26%	14%	30%
Unwtd N	503	410	180	165	148	92	97	135	179

[QUESTIONS 5, AND 6 WERE ROTATED]

5. Is your general impression of Leonard Lance favorable or unfavorable, or don't you really have an opinion?

	Reg. Voters	Likely Voters	PARTY ID			COUNTY			
			Dem	Ind	Rep	Hunterdon	Middlesex	Somerset	Union
Favorable	25%	27%	15%	19%	40%	41%	16%	23%	24%
Unfavorable	16%	18%	26%	18%	6%	18%	15%	21%	12%
No opinion	59%	55%	59%	63%	55%	41%	68%	55%	65%
Unwtd N	503	410	180	165	148	92	97	135	179

6. Is your general impression of Linda Stender favorable or unfavorable, or don't you really have an opinion?

	Reg. Voters	Likely Voters	PARTY ID			COUNTY			
			Dem	Ind	Rep	Hunterdon	Middlesex	Somerset	Union
Favorable	24%	27%	50%	18%	6%	29%	23%	14%	30%
Unfavorable	20%	22%	5%	17%	38%	14%	17%	24%	21%
No opinion	56%	51%	44%	66%	56%	57%	59%	62%	48%
Unwtd N	503	410	180	165	148	92	97	135	179

7. What are the two or three most important issues in determining how you will vote for Congress? [Note: Results do not add to 100% because multiple responses were accepted]

	Reg. Voters	Likely Voters	PARTY ID			COUNTY			
			Dem	Ind	Rep	Hunterdon	Middlesex	Somerset	Union
Economy / creating jobs	51%	50%	58%	54%	39%	52%	52%	46%	53%
War in Iraq	21%	22%	23%	27%	12%	26%	18%	21%	21%
State (Property) Taxes	20%	22%	14%	23%	22%	14%	13%	23%	23%
Federal / Income Tax	17%	17%	11%	17%	21%	11%	16%	18%	18%
Health care, prescription drug costs	11%	11%	18%	9%	7%	8%	16%	10%	10%
Terrorism / Homeland security	9%	9%	2%	9%	16%	4%	9%	13%	7%
Cost of living	9%	9%	9%	10%	9%	11%	7%	10%	8%
Education / schools	9%	10%	12%	7%	6%	6%	14%	4%	11%
Gas prices / energy	8%	6%	11%	5%	6%	12%	8%	5%	7%
Abortion / Gay marriage / stem cells / morality / social issues	7%	8%	6%	5%	9%	4%	3%	6%	11%
Budget deficit	7%	8%	6%	6%	7%	7%	4%	7%	8%
Ethics / corruption / cleaning up government	6%	8%	1%	5%	13%	8%	3%	5%	9%
Social security	5%	6%	11%	1%	4%	6%	4%	4%	7%
Other foreign policy	4%	3%	6%	2%	4%	2%	2%	6%	5%
Wall Street / mortgage bailout	4%	3%	6%	2%	3%	4%	3%	5%	3%
Environment / global warming	4%	4%	4%	6%	3%	7%	2%	4%	5%
Party control of Congress /George Bush	4%	4%	3%	2%	6%	4%	2%	6%	3%
Immigration	2%	2%	2%	2%	3%	1%	3%	1%	4%
Relations with Israel	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	0%	2%	1%
Veterans issues	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other	7%	8%	4%	8%	8%	10%	7%	10%	4%
Don't Know	13%	11%	15%	10%	13%	13%	15%	13%	12%
Unwtd N	503	410	180	165	148	92	97	135	179

8. Regardless of which congressional candidate you support, please tell me tell me if you think Leonard Lance or Linda Stender would better handle each of the following issues. [ITEMS WERE ROTATED] [NOTE: READ PERCENTAGES ACROSS ROWS FOR THIS TABLE]

	Lance	Stender	(VOL) Both	(VOL) Neither	(VOL) Don't know	N
The economy	34%	28%	2%	5%	31%	503
National security	32%	24%	2%	6%	36%	503
The situation in Iraq	30%	25%	2%	6%	37%	503
Energy issues	31%	23%	3%	5%	38%	503
Health care	27%	31%	2%	4%	36%	503
The environment	24%	33%	2%	5%	36%	503
Social security	30%	28%	2%	5%	36%	503
Veteran's issues	29%	23%	2%	4%	42%	503

9. Which candidate [READ ITEM] – Lance, Stender, both, or neither one? [ITEMS WERE ROTATED] [NOTE: READ PERCENTAGES ACROSS ROWS FOR THIS TABLE]

	Lance	Stender	Both	Neither	(VOL) Don't know	N
Will help New Jersey families make ends meet	23%	26%	7%	23%	22%	503
Has high ethical standards and integrity	20%	14%	20%	19%	27%	503
Is part of the problem in Trenton	12%	14%	21%	20%	32%	503
Is likely to continue the policies of George Bush	42%	5%	4%	29%	20%	503
Will keep taxes and spending under control	29%	19%	3%	29%	20%	503

10. Would you rather see the Democrats or Republicans in control of Congress next year, or doesn't it make a difference?

	Reg. Voters	Likely Voters	PARTY ID			CONGRESS VOTE			COUNTY			
			Dem	Ind	Rep	Lance	Stender	Undecided	Hunterdon	Middlesex	Somerset	Union
Democrats	37%	38%	83%	24%	6%	7%	81%	29%	30%	41%	31%	42%
Republicans	29%	32%	2%	20%	67%	61%	5%	17%	32%	19%	32%	32%
No difference	27%	25%	13%	49%	20%	28%	12%	35%	29%	32%	33%	19%
(VOL) Depends	3%	3%	1%	4%	4%	3%	1%	8%	4%	3%	3%	4%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	3%	1%	4%	3%	1%	1%	10%	4%	5%	2%	3%
Unwtd N	503	410	180	165	148	164	182	110	92	97	135	179

[QUESTIONS 11, AND 12 WERE ROTATED]

11. Do you approve or disapprove of the job George Bush is doing as president?

	Reg. Voters	Likely Voters	PARTY ID			CONGRESS VOTE			COUNTY			
			Dem	Ind	Rep	Lance	Stender	Undecided	Hunterdon	Middlesex	Somerset	Union
Approve	20%	21%	1%	12%	48%	47%	2%	13%	25%	16%	18%	23%
Disapprove	72%	70%	95%	80%	41%	42%	93%	78%	63%	76%	75%	70%
(VOL) No opinion	8%	8%	4%	8%	11%	11%	5%	10%	12%	8%	7%	8%
Unwtd N	503	410	180	165	148	164	182	110	92	97	135	179

12. Do you approve or disapprove of the job Jon Corzine is doing as governor?

	Reg. Voters	Likely Voters	PARTY ID			CONGRESS VOTE			COUNTY			
			Dem	Ind	Rep	Lance	Stender	Undecided	Hunterdon	Middlesex	Somerset	Union
Approve	30%	30%	44%	30%	16%	15%	49%	21%	21%	26%	32%	33%
Disapprove	59%	59%	39%	62%	75%	76%	36%	65%	65%	56%	61%	56%
(VOL) No opinion	12%	11%	17%	8%	9%	9%	15%	14%	14%	18%	7%	11%
Unwtd N	503	410	180	165	148	164	182	110	92	97	135	179

The Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll was conducted and analyzed by the Monmouth University Polling Institute research staff. The telephone interviews were collected by Braun Research on September 30 through October 2, 2008 with a random sample of 503 registered voters in New Jersey's 7th congressional district. For results based on this voter 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. Sampling error increases as the sample size decreases, so statements based on various population subgroups, such as separate figures reported by gender or party identification, are subject to more error than are statements based on the total sample. 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			
Registered Voter Sample (weighted)			
33% Dem	49% Male	21% 18-34	79% White
33% Ind	51% Female	45% 35-54	6% Black
34% Rep		34% 55+	7% Hispanic
			8% Asian/Other
Likely Voter Sample (weighted)			
33% Dem	51% Male	20% 18-34	79% White
34% Ind	49% Female	47% 35-54	6% Black
33% Rep		34% 55+	8% Hispanic
			7% Asian/Other

###