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**POLL**

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## **VOLATILITY IN THE RACE FOR GOVERNOR**

*Most voters not set in their choice, want to hear more on the issues*

Voter enthusiasm for the current gubernatorial race is decidedly underwhelming. The New Jersey electorate is not convinced that either of the two major candidates for governor will make a difference on key issues facing the state. Given this sentiment, fewer than half of the state’s voters are firmly in the camp of either contender at this stage of the campaign.

Currently, Jon Corzine leads Doug Forrester among registered voters by a margin of 43 to 34 percent, with an unusually large number saying they are still undecided (15%) or may vote for an independent candidate (7%). Among likely voters – a difficult group to pin down at this point in the campaign – the Democrat’s lead is 46 to 38 percent.

The initial *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll* found that support for both candidates is weak. With only six weeks to go before the election, fewer than half of registered voters are firmly committed to either candidate – 25 percent for Corzine and 21 percent for Forrester. Even among the most likely group of voters at this time, only 56 percent are confident they will not change their mind before election day. Moreover, a sizable number of partisans are thinking about a candidate other than their standard-bearer – 19 percent of Republicans and 17 percent of Democrats indicate that they plan to vote for someone other than their own party’s nominee.

“Even by New Jersey standards, the number of voters who do not choose one of the two major party candidates at this point in the race is unusual,” remarked Patrick Murray, director of

the Monmouth University Polling Institute. “As a point of comparison, polls in the country’s other two high profile races for New York City mayor and Virginia governor show fewer than 1-in-10 voters there are undecided. New Jersey voters feel their state needs to correct its course, but don’t see much that differentiates the two candidates on key issues.”

### *The issues*

Most voters feel that New Jersey is headed down the wrong path. Only 28 percent say the Garden State is going in the right direction compared to 58 percent who say the state is off on the wrong track. And before these voters make up their minds as to who can lead them out of this situation, they want to hear more about the candidates’ plans on a whole host of issues, with property taxes topping the list.

Just under half (45%) of the state’s voters feel the two candidates have done a decent job addressing the issues of the day. Another 30 percent say they have done a bad job and 25 percent haven’t heard enough from the campaigns to make a judgment on this.

Reforming the state’s property tax system is clearly the number one issue that voters want to hear more about. Fully 26 percent say that this issue has not been adequately addressed yet. This is followed by education and schools (12%), other taxes (8%), cost of living (6%), health care (6%), and corruption (5%) as issues the voters want to hear more about.

“When voters are asked which of the two candidates will improve the state, ‘none of the above’ becomes a viable option,” commented Murray. “Right now, Garden State voters are not convinced that either candidate has what it takes to make a dent in the many problems facing the state.”

The poll found ample evidence of low expectations for positive change in the next administration. Even though New Jersey has what is probably the most powerful governorship in the country, there is little belief among the electorate that either party’s nominee will have a significant impact on some of the state’s most pressing issues.

The survey asked voters which candidate would be able to make improvements in six different areas. Half the electorate cannot see either the Democrat or Republican nominee making progress on any of these concerns. This includes making New Jersey more affordable to live in, bringing down property taxes, and cleaning up corruption – where fully 1-in-3 voters say

flat out that neither candidate is likely to make a difference and another 17-19 percent don't know if either would be effective.

About 1-in-4 voters do not believe either Forrester or Corzine will improve our public schools or bring more jobs and businesses in the state. An additional 1-in-4 say they don't know whether either candidate can meet these challenges.

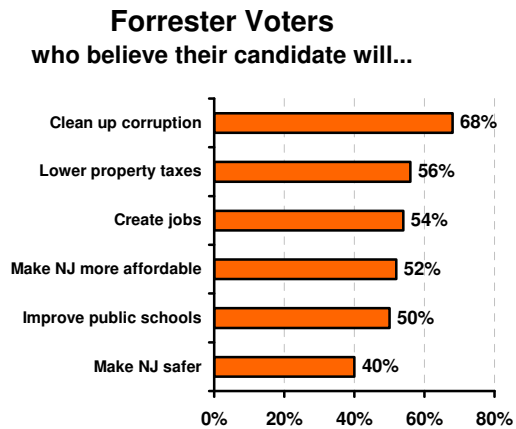
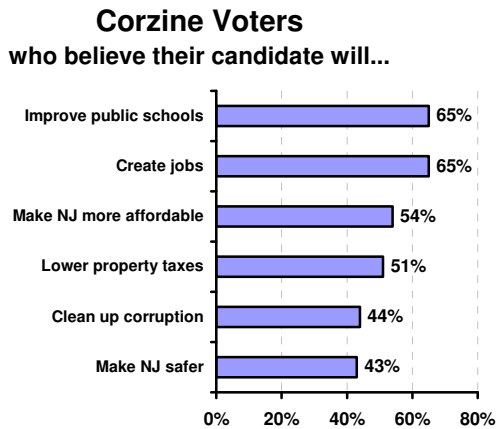
When asked who will make the state safer from a terrorist attack, 4-in-10 voters say that neither candidate can accomplish this and another 24 percent don't know if either would be able to do it.

Among those voters who register a choice on which candidate will achieve significant progress on any of these six issues, the margin of preference is slim. Doug Forrester has an advantage over Jon Corzine on cleaning up corruption (29%-20%), whereas the Democrat leads the Republican when it comes to improving public schools (31%-20%) and bringing more jobs and businesses in to the state (33%-21%). Voters are split on the remaining three issues – making the state more affordable (25% Corzine to 21% Forrester), bringing down property taxes (24% Corzine to 24% Forrester), and making the state safer from terrorism (20% Corzine to 16% Forrester).

#### *Candidates' own supporters are lukewarm*

Even for those voters who have selected a candidate at this stage in the race, expectations are low for either contender achieving many major accomplishments as governor. Most, but not all, Forrester voters believe their candidate will be able to clean up corruption (68%) and Corzine backers are confident he will improve New Jersey's public schools (65%) and bring jobs into the state (65%). However, this also means that fully 1-in-3 supporters of the two candidates are not convinced that their chosen nominee will make progress in these key areas.

On the electorate's top issue of property taxes, little more than half of declared voters – 56 percent of Forrester supporters and 51 percent of Corzine backers – are confident that their man will be able to bring this tax down if elected governor. Likewise, only a bare majority of declared supporters feel their candidate will make New Jersey a more affordable place to live – 54 percent for Corzine and 52 percent for Forrester.



Half of Forrester supporters believe their candidate will improve public schools (50%). An even smaller number of Corzine backers trust him to make significant inroads on corruption (44%). Neither candidate gets a vote of confidence from his voters on making New Jersey safer from a terrorist attack – 43 percent for Corzine and 40 percent for Forrester.

*Read my lips*

Doug Forrester’s “no new tax” pledge and Jon Corzine’s refusal to make such a promise have had a small impact on the state’s electorate. About 1-in-5 registered voters (21%) say that the Republican’s statement makes them more likely to vote for him compared to 9 percent who say it makes them less likely. On the other hand, 10 percent of voters say they are more likely to support the Democrat because he chose not to make this pledge compared to 21 percent who are less likely. However, two-thirds of voters say that neither the pledge nor the absence of it makes any difference in their ultimate vote choice.

The *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll* was conducted by telephone with 649 New Jersey registered voters from September 21 to 26, 2005. This sample has a margin of error of  $\pm 3.8$  percent. Results in this release are also based on a subgroup of 463 likely voters, with a  $\pm 4.6$  percent margin of error.

**TABLES – MUP01-1 / September 28, 2005**

The questions referred to in this release are as follows:

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

Q4. As you know, there will be an election for governor of New Jersey this November. How much interest do you have in the upcoming election – a lot, some, a little, or none at all?

	<u><b>A Lot</b></u>	<u><b>Some</b></u>	<u><b>A Little/ None</b></u>	<u><b>(n)</b></u>
<b>September 2005 Registered Voters</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>(649)</b>
<u>Party ID</u>				
--Democrat	54	29	17	(202)
--Independent	54	28	17	(201)
--Republican	54	28	18	(184)
<u>Race</u>				
--White	54	28	18	(526)
--Black/Hispanic	53	24	23	(94)
<u>Gender</u>				
--Male	56	25	19	(306)
--Female	53	30	18	(343)
<u>Age</u>				
--18-29	39	38	24	(55)
--30-49	50	20	15	(249)
--50-69	65	22	16	(222)
--70+	62	22	16	(111)

Q5. Not everyone is able to vote in each election. I’d like you to rate your chances of voting in the upcoming election on a scale of 10 to 1. If 10 represents a person who DEFINITELY will vote regardless of illness or other circumstances and 1 represents a person who definitely will NOT vote, where would you place yourself?

	<b>Not Vote</b> <u><b>1-3</b></u>	<u><b>4-7</b></u>	<u><b>8-9</b></u>	<u><b>10</b></u>	<u><b>(n)</b></u>
<b>September 2005 Registered Voters</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>(649)</b>
<u>Party ID</u>					
--Democrat	1	16	20	63	(202)
--Independent	1	12	23	63	(201)
--Republican	1	10	19	70	(184)

Q6. If the election for Governor was held today, would you vote for [ROTATE] Doug Forrester the Republican, Jon Corzine the Democrat, or some other candidate? [INCLUDES LEANERS]

	<u>Forrester</u>	<u>Corzine</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>September 2005 Registered Voters</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>(649)</b>
<b>Likely Voters</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>(463)</b>
<u>Party ID</u>					
--Democrat	10	75	7	8	(202)
--Independent	33	42	7	18	(201)
--Republican	72	14	5	9	(184)
<u>Race</u>					
--White	42	38	6	13	(526)
--Black/Hispanic	11	59	13	17	(94)
<u>Gender</u>					
--Male	39	41	9	11	(306)
--Female	30	46	5	19	(343)
<u>Age</u>					
--18-29	28	48	10	15	(55)
--30-49	31	46	8	15	(249)
--50-69	41	40	7	13	(222)
--70+	39	41	2	18	(111)

**Composite Table: Strength of Vote Choice**

Q6. If the election for Governor was held today, would you vote for Doug Forrester the Republican, Jon Corzine the Democrat, or some other candidate?

Q7. At this moment do you lean more towards Forrester or more towards Corzine?

Q8. Are you very sure about voting for (Forrester/Corzine), or might you change your mind before the election?

	<u>Sure About Forrester</u>	<u>Chooses Forrester, but may change</u>	<u>Undecided, but Leans Forrester</u>	<u>Does Not Lean/ Other</u>	<u>Undecided, but Leans Corzine</u>	<u>Chooses Corzine, but may change</u>	<u>Sure about Corzine</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>September 2005 Registered Voters</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>(649)</b>
<b>Likely Voters</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>(463)</b>
<u>Party ID</u>								
--Democrat	3	5	2	15	7	17	51	(202)
--Independent	16	14	3	25	5	16	20	(201)
--Republican	55	13	4	14	3	6	5	(184)

Q9. Have the candidates so far done a good job or bad job of addressing the issues that are important to you?

	<u>Good Job</u>	<u>Bad Job</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>September 2005 Registered Voters</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>(649)</b>
<u>Party ID</u>				
--Democrat	48	27	25	(202)
--Independent	43	33	23	(201)
--Republican	47	29	24	(184)
<u>Vote Intention</u>				
--Forrester	43	29	29	(219)
--Corzine	59	21	20	(232)
--Undecided	28	36	36	(157)
<u>Race</u>				
--White	43	30	27	(526)
--Black/Hispanic	51	34	14	(94)
<u>Gender</u>				
--Male	44	31	25	(306)
--Female	45	30	26	(343)
<u>Age</u>				
--18-29	56	24	20	(55)
--30-49	45	31	24	(249)
--50-69	40	35	26	(222)
--70+	42	28	30	(111)

Q10. What ONE issue do you feel is not being adequately addressed – the issue that you would like to hear the candidates talk more about?

	<u>Registered Voters</u>	<u>Vote Intention</u>		
		<u>Forrester</u>	<u>Corzine</u>	<u>Undecided</u>
<b>September 2005</b>				
Property tax	<b>26%</b>	38%	16%	26%
Other taxes	<b>8</b>	6	7	10
Education / Schools	<b>12</b>	6	18	11
Health care, drug costs	<b>6</b>	4	10	5
Cost of Living / Affordability	<b>6</b>	4	6	9
Jobs	<b>3</b>	3	3	1
Corruption / Government ethics	<b>5</b>	8	4	4
Gov't spending / Accountability	<b>3</b>	5	2	2
Development / Congestion	<b>3</b>	4	3	1
Auto Insurance	<b>3</b>	2	3	4
Environment	<b>2</b>	1	3	3
Senior Issues	<b>2</b>	1	3	5
Other	<b>6</b>	5	7	5
Nothing/DK	<b>14</b>	11	17	14
(n)	<b>(649)</b>	(219)	(232)	(157)

Q11. Who, if elected governor, will [READ ITEM] – Corzine, Forrester, or neither one?

September 2005	<u>Forrester</u>	<u>Corzine</u>	<u>Neither</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>A. Make NJ safer from a terrorist attack than it is today</b>					
<b>Registered Voters</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>(649)</b>
<u>Vote Intention</u>					
--Forrester	40	4	37	19	(219)
--Corzine	3	43	37	17	(232)
--Undecided	9	6	40	45	(157)
<b>B. Make NJ more affordable to live in than is today</b>					
<b>Registered Voters</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>(649)</b>
<u>Vote Intention</u>					
--Forrester	52	4	36	8	(219)
--Corzine	6	54	29	11	(232)
--Undecided	7	12	41	39	(157)
<b>C. Improve our public schools</b>					
<b>Registered Voters</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>(649)</b>
<u>Vote Intention</u>					
--Forrester	50	8	26	16	(219)
--Corzine	5	65	16	14	(232)
--Undecided	7	12	31	50	(157)
<b>D. Clean up corruption in state government</b>					
<b>Registered Voters</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>(649)</b>
<u>Vote Intention</u>					
--Forrester	68	2	21	9	(219)
--Corzine	9	44	34	13	(232)
--Undecided	14	8	37	41	(157)
<b>E. Bring more jobs and businesses into the state</b>					
<b>Registered Voters</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>(649)</b>
<u>Vote Intention</u>					
--Forrester	54	11	19	15	(219)
--Corzine	5	65	15	15	(232)
--Undecided	6	18	26	49	(157)
<b>F. Bring down property taxes in the state</b>					
<b>Registered Voters</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>(649)</b>
<u>Vote Intention</u>					
--Forrester	56	2	33	10	(219)
--Corzine	7	51	32	10	(232)
--Undecided	12	14	33	42	(157)



Doug Forrester has taken a “no new tax” pledge while Jon Corzine has chosen not to take this pledge.

Q12. Does the fact that Forrester took this pledge make you more likely or less likely to vote for him, or does this make no difference? [*QUESTION ASKED OF HALF THE SAMPLE*]

	<u>More Likely</u>	<u>Less Likely</u>	<u>No Difference</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>September 2005 Registered Voters</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>(318)</b>

Q13. Does the fact that Corzine did NOT take this pledge make you more likely or less likely to vote for him, or does this make no difference? [*QUESTION ASKED OF HALF THE SAMPLE*]

	<u>More Likely</u>	<u>Less Likely</u>	<u>No Difference</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>September 2005 Registered Voters</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>(331)</b>

Q14. Did you read or hear anything about Tuesday’s debate between Doug Forrester and Jon Corzine? [IF “YES” ASK: Were you able to watch or listen to it yourself?]

	<u>Watched</u>	<u>Read/Heard</u>	<u>Neither</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>September 2005 Registered Voters</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>(649)</b>
<u>Party ID</u>				
--Democrat	7	20	73	(202)
--Independent	13	26	61	(201)
--Republican	6	14	81	(184)

Q15. Who do you think did a better job explaining his vision for New Jersey – Forrester, Corzine, or did neither one do a good job at this?

	<u>Forrester</u>	<u>Corzine</u>	<u>Neither</u>	<u>Both Equally</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>September 2005 Debate Followers Only</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>(188)</b>

Q16. Would you say things in New Jersey are going in the right direction, or have they gotten off on the wrong track?

	<u>Right Direction</u>	<u>Wrong Track</u>	<u>Depends/DK</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>September 2005 Registered Voters</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>(649)</b>
<u>Party ID</u>				
--Democrat	37	48	14	(202)
--Independent	27	60	13	(201)
--Republican	19	67	14	(184)

Results for this *Monmouth University/Gannett NJ Poll* are based on telephone interviews conducted September 21-26, 2005 with a statewide random sample of 649 registered voters. For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling has a maximum margin of plus or minus 3.8 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.

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