

Released:
Monday, October 6, 2014

Contact:
PATRICK MURRAY
732-263-5858 (office)
732-979-6769 (cell)
pdmurray@monmouth.edu

NJ SENATE: BOOKER LEADS BELL BY 15

Challenger gets little traction with gold standard gambit

New Jersey Senator Cory Booker holds a 15 point lead in his re-election bid according to the *Monmouth University Poll*. The poll of likely voters found that few know GOP challenger Jeff Bell or see any benefits in his main campaign plank of returning U.S. currency to a gold standard.

Among Garden State voters likely to cast a ballot in next month's election, incumbent Democrat Cory Booker garners 53% support and Republican nominee Jeff Bell holds 38%. Another 2% say they will vote for a third party candidate and 7% are undecided.

Booker holds an 89% to 5% lead among self-identified Democrats while Bell has an 86% to 9% lead among self-identified Republicans. Among likely voters who see themselves as politically independent, Booker has a commanding 50% to 35% edge.

The poll found significant gender and age gaps in vote intention, although Booker maintains an advantage among all groups. He has a 23 point lead over Bell among women – 56% to 33% – but just a 5 point lead among men – 49% to 44%. Booker also has a 32 point lead among voters under the age of 50 – 65% to 33% – but a smaller 8 point lead among those age 50 and over – 48% to 40%. Booker (46%) and Bell (45%) split the white non-Hispanic vote while Booker holds a sizable 74% to 18% lead among voters of other racial/ethnic backgrounds.

“Booker is on track to receive a full term in the U.S. Senate,” said Patrick Murray, director of the Monmouth University Polling Institute. “Bell does somewhat better among those who are old enough to have voted the last time he appeared on a New Jersey ballot. However, few of them appear to remember him all that well.”

Jeff Bell was the GOP nominee for U.S. Senate in 1978 and last ran for office in New Jersey in 1982. He gets a 22% favorable to 10% unfavorable rating from likely voters, while fully two-thirds (68%) have no opinion of him. Cory Booker gets a 49% favorable to 21% unfavorable rating with 31% registering no opinion.

Booker has served just under a year in office after being elected to fill the remainder of the late Frank Lautenberg's term. A majority of voters (52%) say they are not sure about whether Booker's issue positions line up with the views of most of his constituents, while 34% say his views are in line with most New Jerseyans and just 14% say they are out of step. Fewer voters know where Bell stands, with 74% saying they have no idea about how his positions line up with state residents' views. The remainder are evenly split – 13% say Bell's views are in line with most New Jerseyans and 13% say they are out of step with the state.

Voters were asked to assess which candidate they think would do a better job representing their own views on five different issues. Booker has a distinct advantage over Bell on health care (43% to 25%), abortion (38% to 19%), and immigration (38% to 27%). Voters are more divided on economic issues. On taxes, 35% say Booker would do a better job representing their views while 31% give the edge to Bell. The split is similar for handling the national debt – 34% prefer Booker and 30% prefer Bell.

Jeff Bell's main platform plank centers on the debt issue. His solution – to return the country's currency valuation to a gold standard – doesn't appear to be getting much traction though. Just 17% of likely voters say they are very familiar with what the gold standard actually means and another 28% are somewhat familiar. Another 13% say they have heard of the term but are not too familiar with its meaning and 42% are not at all familiar.

Respondents were told that the gold standard means no money could be printed or minted unless there was gold to back it up, which would enable people, for example, to trade in a hundred dollars worth of paper money for a specific number of grams of gold. [*Note: description came from a 1981 Roper Poll.*] Given this definition, 34% of Garden State voters favor using the gold standard to set the value of U.S. currency and 26% are opposed to it. A plurality of 41% offer no opinion. Among Bell supporters, 48% favor a return to the gold standard and 14% are opposed. Among Booker supporters, just 23% favor a return to the gold standard and 36% are opposed. Among undecided voters or those who may change their minds before election day, 34% favor the gold standard and 22% are opposed.

Bell argues that bringing back the gold standard would help middle class families. That assertion appears to fall flat among likely voters in New Jersey. When asked how using a gold standard would affect the middle class, just 14% say the cost of living would become more affordable compared to 37% who say it would become less affordable. Another 27% say that the middle class cost of living would not be affected by the gold standard and 22% have no opinion. Even those voters who are familiar with the gold standard are more likely to say it would have a negative (40%) rather than positive (16%) impact on the cost of living.

“I had to go back to the days when Bell worked in the Reagan administration to find any polls that asked about the gold standard as a topic of public opinion,” said Murray. “The bottom line is that the gold standard has little currency as a campaign issue today.”

The *Monmouth University Poll* also found that only 18% of likely voters have a favorable opinion of the U.S. Senate as a whole while 56% hold an unfavorable view. Another 26% have no opinion. Positive views of the Senate come from 27% of Democrats, 16% of Republicans and 11% of independents. Negative views come from 43% of Democrats, 62% of Republicans and 66% of independents. The small group of voters with a favorable view of the Senate say they will vote for Booker over Bell by a 65% to 28% margin. Those with an unfavorable view of the Senate split their vote, 46% for Booker and 45% for Bell.

“Booker appears to have overcome widespread disdain for the institution he represents. With public sentiment about the Senate so low, however, you’ve got to wonder why anyone wants to go to Washington,” said Murray. The poll also found that New Jersey voters’ opinion of Pres. Barack Obama as a person tend to be more favorable (47%) than unfavorable (42%).

The *Monmouth University Poll* was conducted by telephone from October 2 to 5, 2014 with 477 New Jersey voters likely to vote in the November general election. This sample has a margin of error of ± 4.5 percent. The poll was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute.

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 U.S. Senate was today, would you vote for Jeff Bell, the Republican, Cory Booker, the Democrat or some other candidate? [NAMES WERE ROTATED] [IF UNDECIDED: If you had to vote for one of the following at this moment, do you lean more toward Jeff Bell or more toward Cory Booker?]

	LIKELY VOTERS	PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE		REGION	
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	18-49	50+	White	Black, Hispanic & Other
Jeff Bell	38%	5%	35%	86%	44%	33%	33%	40%	45%	18%
Cory Booker	53%	89%	50%	9%	49%	56%	65%	48%	46%	74%
Other candidate	2%	1%	5%	1%	2%	2%	1%	3%	3%	1%
Undecided	7%	5%	10%	4%	4%	9%	1%	8%	6%	6%

[QUESTIONS 2 AND 3 WERE ROTATED]

2. Is your general opinion of Jeff Bell favorable, unfavorable, or do you have no opinion of him?

	LIKELY VOTERS	PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE		RACE		VOTE INTENT		Undecided/ May change mind
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	18-49	50+	White	Black, Hispanic & Other	Booker	Bell	
Favorable	22%	5%	17%	51%	30%	15%	19%	23%	24%	12%	4%	57%	16%
Unfavorable	10%	20%	7%	2%	11%	8%	10%	10%	10%	10%	19%	1%	4%
No opinion	68%	75%	76%	48%	59%	77%	71%	67%	66%	78%	77%	42%	80%

3. Is your general opinion of Cory Booker favorable, unfavorable, or do you have no opinion of him?

	LIKELY VOTERS	PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE		RACE		VOTE INTENT		Undecided/ May change mind
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	18-49	50+	White	Black, Hispanic & Other	Booker	Bell	
Favorable	49%	65%	55%	22%	52%	45%	57%	46%	46%	56%	80%	17%	38%
Unfavorable	21%	6%	19%	41%	23%	18%	17%	22%	25%	6%	3%	46%	15%
No opinion	31%	28%	26%	37%	24%	37%	26%	33%	29%	38%	17%	37%	46%

4. Is your general opinion of Barack Obama favorable, unfavorable, or do you have no opinion of him?

	LIKELY VOTERS	PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE		RACE		VOTE INTENT		Undecided/ May change mind
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	18-49	50+	White	Black, Hispanic & Other	Booker	Bell	
Favorable	47%	78%	43%	14%	44%	50%	54%	45%	37%	78%	76%	12%	42%
Unfavorable	42%	12%	43%	80%	49%	36%	36%	45%	53%	10%	15%	80%	41%
No opinion	11%	10%	14%	6%	7%	14%	10%	11%	10%	12%	9%	8%	17%

5. Is your general opinion of the United States Senate favorable, unfavorable, or do you have no opinion of it?

	LIKELY VOTERS	PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE		RACE		VOTE INTENT		Undecided/ May change mind
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	18-49	50+	White	Black, Hispanic & Other	Booker	Bell	
Favorable	18%	27%	11%	16%	18%	18%	22%	17%	16%	25%	22%	13%	17%
Unfavorable	56%	43%	66%	62%	60%	53%	49%	59%	65%	28%	49%	67%	52%
No opinion	26%	30%	23%	21%	22%	29%	30%	24%	19%	46%	29%	20%	31%

[QUESTIONS 6 AND 7 WERE ROTATED]

6. Are Jeff Bell's views on the issues generally in line or out of step with most New Jerseyans, or are you not sure?

	LIKELY VOTERS	PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE		RACE		VOTE INTENT		Undecided/ May change mind
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	18-49	50+	White	Black, Hispanic & Other	Booker	Bell	
In line	13%	3%	12%	27%	15%	11%	11%	14%	14%	7%	3%	29%	9%
Out of step	13%	21%	11%	6%	15%	11%	14%	12%	13%	15%	22%	7%	3%
Not sure	74%	75%	77%	67%	70%	77%	75%	74%	73%	78%	74%	64%	88%

7. Are Cory Booker's views on the issues generally in line or out of step with most New Jerseyans, or are you not sure?

	LIKELY VOTERS	PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE		RACE		VOTE INTENT		Undecided/ May change mind
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	18-49	50+	White	Black, Hispanic & Other	Booker	Bell	
In line	34%	47%	33%	18%	38%	30%	38%	32%	34%	33%	52%	19%	19%
Out of step	14%	3%	12%	31%	15%	13%	9%	16%	15%	7%	3%	34%	7%
Not sure	52%	50%	55%	51%	47%	58%	53%	52%	50%	60%	46%	48%	74%

8. Regardless of who you may support for U.S. Senate, would Jeff Bell or Cory Booker do a better job representing your views on the following issues? [ITEMS WERE ROTATED]

Taxes

	LIKELY VOTERS	PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE		RACE		VOTE INTENT		Undecided/ May change mind
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	18-49	50+	White	Black, Hispanic & Other	Booker	Bell	
Bell better	31%	8%	32%	61%	41%	23%	32%	31%	35%	19%	7%	71%	28%
Booker better	35%	62%	31%	6%	34%	36%	37%	34%	32%	44%	68%	3%	18%
(VOL) Both equally	3%	2%	4%	2%	1%	5%	5%	2%	2%	6%	4%	3%	3%
(VOL) Neither	6%	6%	5%	8%	5%	7%	4%	7%	5%	7%	4%	4%	7%
(VOL) Don't know	25%	22%	28%	23%	20%	30%	22%	26%	25%	23%	17%	18%	44%

The national debt

	LIKELY VOTERS	PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE		RACE		VOTE INTENT		Undecided/ May change mind
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	18-49	50+	White	Black, Hispanic & Other	Booker	Bell	
Bell better	30%	8%	27%	63%	39%	23%	30%	30%	35%	15%	7%	70%	24%
Booker better	34%	62%	29%	5%	32%	35%	40%	31%	29%	49%	64%	3%	20%
(VOL) Both equally	2%	1%	5%	1%	2%	3%	3%	2%	2%	4%	2%	2%	3%
(VOL) Neither	8%	7%	9%	10%	9%	8%	6%	9%	8%	10%	5%	8%	13%
(VOL) Don't know	25%	22%	30%	21%	19%	31%	21%	27%	26%	22%	21%	16%	41%

Abortion

	LIKELY VOTERS	PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE		RACE		VOTE INTENT		Undecided/ May change mind
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	18-49	50+	White	Black, Hispanic & Other	Booker	Bell	
Bell better	19%	4%	14%	45%	23%	15%	19%	19%	22%	10%	3%	47%	9%
Booker better	38%	64%	37%	8%	42%	35%	46%	36%	37%	43%	68%	8%	27%
(VOL) Both equally	2%	1%	4%	1%	1%	3%	3%	2%	2%	1%	1%	3%	3%
(VOL) Neither	8%	5%	5%	14%	8%	8%	7%	8%	7%	10%	4%	12%	9%
(VOL) Don't know	32%	26%	39%	32%	26%	38%	25%	35%	32%	35%	23%	29%	52%

Health care

	LIKELY VOTERS	PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE		RACE		VOTE INTENT		Undecided/ May change mind
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	18-49	50+	White	Black, Hispanic & Other	Booker	Bell	
Bell better	25%	2%	22%	60%	33%	19%	25%	25%	30%	9%	3%	67%	15%
Booker better	43%	77%	41%	5%	43%	44%	52%	40%	40%	55%	78%	6%	28%
(VOL) Both equally	3%	2%	3%	3%	2%	4%	3%	3%	3%	4%	2%	5%	4%
(VOL) Neither	8%	5%	9%	10%	6%	9%	4%	9%	6%	12%	6%	8%	12%
(VOL) Don't know	21%	15%	25%	22%	16%	25%	15%	23%	21%	19%	11%	15%	41%

Immigration

	LIKELY VOTERS	PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE		RACE		VOTE INTENT		Undecided/ May change mind
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	18-49	50+	White	Black, Hispanic & Other	Booker	Bell	
Bell better	27%	6%	28%	55%	32%	23%	30%	26%	31%	14%	4%	64%	22%
Booker better	38%	68%	35%	6%	38%	39%	44%	37%	35%	52%	72%	4%	23%
(VOL) Both equally	2%	2%	2%	1%	1%	2%	3%	1%	2%	2%	1%	2%	3%
(VOL) Neither	7%	6%	6%	10%	8%	7%	3%	9%	6%	10%	4%	10%	11%
(VOL) Don't know	25%	18%	29%	27%	21%	29%	19%	28%	27%	21%	19%	20%	42%

9. Have you heard of the term “the gold standard” before or not? *IF YES*: How familiar are you with what the gold standard means – very familiar, somewhat familiar, not too familiar, or not at all familiar?

	LIKELY VOTERS	PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE		RACE		VOTE INTENT		Undecided/ May change mind
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	18-49	50+	White	Black, Hispanic & Other	Booker	Bell	
Very familiar	17%	14%	18%	19%	23%	11%	15%	18%	20%	7%	17%	21%	9%
Somewhat familiar	28%	25%	30%	30%	34%	23%	25%	29%	31%	20%	27%	32%	23%
Not too familiar	13%	10%	14%	15%	12%	13%	10%	14%	15%	5%	10%	12%	16%
Not at all familiar/Not heard	42%	50%	38%	36%	30%	53%	50%	39%	34%	68%	45%	34%	53%

10. The gold standard means that no money could be printed or minted unless there was gold to back it up. For example, you would be able to trade in a hundred dollars worth of paper money for a specific number of grams of gold. Do you favor or oppose using a gold standard to set the value of United States currency, or do you have no opinion on this?

	LIKELY VOTERS	PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE		RACE		VOTE INTENT		Undecided/ May change mind
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	18-49	50+	White	Black, Hispanic & Other	Booker	Bell	
Favor	34%	22%	38%	44%	37%	31%	31%	35%	35%	27%	23%	48%	34%
Oppose	26%	32%	25%	19%	32%	19%	27%	25%	26%	24%	36%	14%	22%
No opinion	41%	46%	37%	37%	31%	49%	41%	40%	39%	48%	42%	38%	44%

11. If we used a gold standard to set the value for U.S. currency, do you think the middle-class cost of living would become more affordable, become less affordable, or would not be affected?

	LIKELY VOTERS	PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE		RACE		VOTE INTENT		Undecided/ May change mind
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	18-49	50+	White	Black, Hispanic & Other	Booker	Bell	
More affordable	14%	9%	12%	24%	14%	15%	13%	15%	15%	12%	11%	25%	12%
Less affordable	37%	43%	43%	23%	41%	33%	42%	35%	37%	33%	45%	23%	36%
Not affected	27%	25%	27%	29%	26%	28%	29%	26%	25%	32%	23%	31%	29%
(VOL) Don't know	22%	23%	18%	24%	19%	25%	16%	24%	22%	22%	21%	22%	22%

The *Monmouth University Poll* was sponsored and conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute from October 2 to 5, 2014 with a statewide random sample of 477 likely voters drawn from a list of registered voters who voted in at least two of the last four general elections and indicate they are likely to vote in the upcoming election. This includes 406 contacted by a live interviewer on a landline telephone and 71 contacted by a live interviewer on a cell phone. Monmouth is responsible for all aspects of the survey design, data weighting and analysis. Final sample is weighted for region, age, gender, and party registration based on state registration list information on the pool of voters who have participated in two of the last four elections. Data collection support provided by Braun Research (field) and L2 (voter list). 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 4.5 percentage points. 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)				
Registration	Self-Report	7% 18-34	75% White	
44% Dem	36% Dem	47% Male	22% 35-49	14% Black
33% Rep	35% Ind	53% Female	37% 50-64	8% Hispanic
23% Unaffiliated	29% Rep		34% 65+	3% Asian/Other

	LIKELY VOTERS	PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE		RACE		VOTE INTENT		Undecided/ May change mind
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	18-49	50+	White	Black, Hispanic & Other	Booker	Bell	
Unweighted N	477	178	161	132	226	251	100	375	377	91	211	147	172
moe	4.5%	7.4	7.7%	8.5%	6.5%	6.2%	9.8%	5.1%	5.1%	10.3%	6.8%	8.1%	7.5%

###