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NEW JERSEY SOLID FOR BARACK

Frank Lautenberg riding Obama coattails

Barack Obama has increased his sizable lead over John McCain to 21 points in New Jersey according to the latest *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll*. The Democrat leads by 55% to 34% among all likely voters, up from the 17 point advantage he held two weeks ago. The last time a presidential candidate took the Garden State by more than 20 points was in 1984, when Ronald Reagan bested Walter Mondale 60% to 39%.

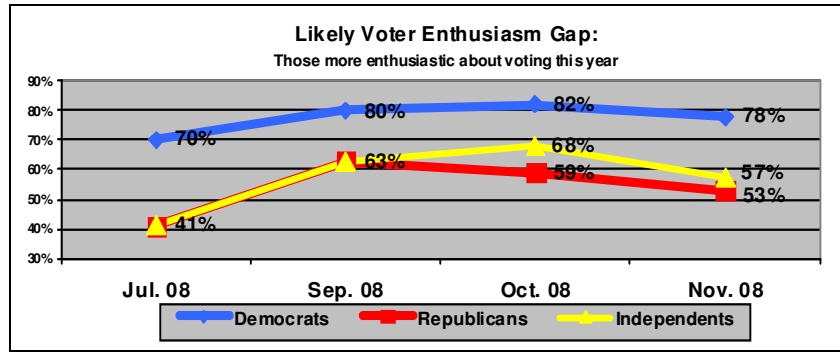
The poll also found that U.S. Senator Frank Lautenberg is ahead of his Republican challenger Dick Zimmer by 50% to 31%, although support for the incumbent Democratic senator is slightly softer than it is at the top of the ticket for Obama.

Most New Jersey voters (58%) say they are very confident that their vote will be counted accurately on election day. Another 31% are somewhat confident and 10% are not too or not at all confident about their vote being recorded accurately. These findings are practically identical to a national poll conducted by Pew in mid-October. In New Jersey, black voters (43%) are more likely than white voters (30%) to say they are only *somewhat* confident their vote will be counted accurately, but are not any more likely to say that they have no confidence in the process.

In the presidential contest...

Barack Obama continues to hold a strong advantage among voters under the age of 35 (now 68%-20%) and has widened his lead among white voters (now 47%-42%). The Democratic nominee has also solidified his support among independent voters, now leading John McCain by 51% to 30% with this group.

Currently, 65% of likely voters say they are more enthusiastic than usual about voting this year compared to only 18% who say they are less enthusiastic. Going into the final days of this campaign, there continues to be a large partisan gap in voter enthusiasm – 78% of Democratic voters say they are more enthusiastic than usual, compared to just 53% of Republicans and 57% of independents who feel the same.



“The enthusiasm gap between Democratic and Republican voters has been one of the more interesting aspects of this campaign season,” said Patrick Murray, director of the Monmouth University Polling Institute. “Generally, when candidates are far ahead in the polls, there is concern that some of their voters will decide to stay home because their support is not needed. There is no sense of that this year. Obama supporters want to be part of this moment.”

Turning to the issue of the front-runner’s racial background, just 13% of New Jersey voters say the fact that Barack Obama is black would have an impact on the decisions he would make as president. This is basically unchanged from the 15% who felt this way in July. Among the small number of voters who see Obama’s race as an issue for his presidency, about half say the effect would be negative.

On the Republican side, 72 year old John McCain would be the oldest first-term president were he to win on Tuesday. Currently, 25% of Garden State voters think he is too old to be effective as president, up slightly from 18% who said the same in July.

Of course, the election is also about issues, and Obama is seen as better able to deal with the top concern for most voters – the economy. More than half (56%) prefer Obama to handle the economy compared to 31% who choose McCain. The Democrat has steadily increased his advantage on this issue over the past two months.

McCain also suffers from being seen as more negative than Obama. Nearly half (47%) of Garden State voters characterize the presidential race as negative (up from 42% two weeks ago), and many more blame McCain (49%) rather than Obama (14%) for the negative tone.

In the senate contest...

U.S. Senator Frank Lautenberg's 19 point lead over Dick Zimmer (50% to 31%) marks a slight increase from the 16 point advantage the incumbent held two weeks ago. Among voters who say their mind is made up, the Democrat has firm support from 41% of voters compared to 25% firm support for the Republican challenger.

With just days to go before the election, few Garden State voters – just 9% – are paying very close attention to the senate race, a number which has been basically constant for the entire campaign season. By comparison, an overwhelming 72% have followed the presidential race very closely.

Voter favorability ratings have dropped for both candidates in the past two weeks – not because opinion has turned negative, but because some voters have simply withdrawn their opinion. Lautenberg's favorable to unfavorable ratings now stands at 36%-20% (from 48%-26% two weeks ago) and Zimmer's is 18%-8% (from 31%-16% two weeks ago). However, the percentage who have no opinion of both candidates has increased. Currently 44% offer no opinion of Frank Lautenberg (up from 26%) and 74% offer no opinion of Dick Zimmer (up from 53%).

Offering a possible explanation for the increase in no opinion about the two candidates, Murray said, "It may be that some voters simply realized that the election is next week and they still haven't heard much, if anything, from their senate candidates. Even with that, Lautenberg has a commanding lead. To borrow from an old saying about Frank Sinatra, it's Obama's world this year and Frank Lautenberg is lucky to live in it."

The low-profile senate race is seen as being generally positive – 42% say the tone has been positive to 16% who say it is negative. Another 36% say it has been neither positive nor negative or offer no opinion on the tone of the campaign. "In a state that is generally besieged with negative political advertising, perhaps no campaign is a good campaign," said Murray.

The poll also found that the 84 year old Lautenberg's age is a non-issue for voters. Just 20% of likely voters feel he is too old to be an effective senator. In prior polls, this number has hovered around one-third of likely voters.

The *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll* was conducted by telephone with 801 New Jersey likely voters on October 29-31, 2008. This sample has a margin of error of ± 3.5 percent. 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]

(with leaners)	Likely Voters	PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+
McCain	34%	7%	30%	87%	40%	28%	20%	37%	40%
Obama	55%	89%	51%	7%	50%	60%	68%	52%	50%
Other	1%	0%	4%	1%	3%	1%	2%	2%	1%
(VOL) Won't vote	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
(VOL) Undecided	10%	4%	15%	5%	8%	11%	10%	9%	9%
Unwtd N	801	297	280	204	379	422	136	340	303

TREND	November 2008	October 2008	September 2008	July 2008
McCain	34%	38%	41%	36%
Obama	55%	55%	49%	50%
Other	1%	1%	0%	2%
(VOL) Won't vote	0%	0%	0%	0%
(VOL) Undecided	10%	6%	10%	12%
Unwtd N	801	723	589	698

Composite Table: Strength of Vote Choice

1. If the election for President was held today, would you vote for [ROTATE] John McCain the Republican, Barack Obama the Democrat, or some other candidate?
2. At this moment do you lean more towards McCain or more towards Obama?
3. Are you very sure about voting for [Name]; or might you change your mind before Election Day?

TREND	November 2008	October 2008	September 2008	July 2008
Sure McCain	29%	32%	33%	28%
Weak McCain	1%	1%	3%	4%
Lean McCain	3%	5%	5%	5%
Undecided- Other	11%	7%	10%	13%
Lean Obama	3%	4%	5%	5%
Weak Obama	1%	2%	6%	7%
Sure Obama	51%	49%	38%	38%
Unwtd N	801	723	589	698

4. If the election for Senator was held today, would you vote for Dick Zimmer the Republican, Frank Lautenberg the Democrat, or some other candidate? [IF UNDECIDED: At this moment do you lean more towards Zimmer or more towards Lautenberg?] [NAMES WERE ROTATED]

(with leaners)	Likely Voters	PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+
Zimmer	31%	7%	31%	76%	38%	25%	19%	35%	35%
Lautenberg	50%	85%	38%	13%	46%	54%	56%	47%	53%
Other candidate	4%	3%	6%	3%	4%	4%	7%	3%	2%
(VOL) Will note vote	1%	0%	3%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
(VOL) Undecided	14%	5%	23%	8%	11%	16%	18%	14%	9%
Unwtd N	801	297	280	204	379	422	136	340	303

TREND	November 2008	October 2008	September 2008	July 2008
Zimmer	31%	36%	36%	37%
Lautenberg	50%	52%	46%	45%
Other candidate	4%	2%	5%	6%
(VOL) Will note vote	1%	3%	1%	1%
(VOL) Undecided	14%	8%	14%	11%
Unwtd N	801	723	589	698

Composite Table: Strength of Vote Choice

4. If the election for Senator was held today, would you vote for [ROTATE] Dick Zimmer the Republican, Frank Lautenberg the Democrat, or some other candidate?
5. At this moment do you lean more towards Zimmer or more towards Lautenberg?
6. Are you very sure about voting for [Name]; or might you change your mind before Election Day?

TREND	November 2008	October 2008	September 2008	July 2008
Sure Zimmer	25%	26%	25%	24%
Weak Zimmer	4%	5%	6%	7%
Lean Zimmer	3%	6%	5%	6%
Undecided-Other	18%	10%	18%	17%
Lean Lautenberg	5%	5%	4%	4%
Weak Lautenberg	5%	8%	9%	11%
Sure Lautenberg	41%	41%	33%	31%
Unwtd N	801	709	585	692

7. Regardless of which presidential candidate you support, please tell me if you think Barack Obama or John McCain would better handle the issue of the economy?

November 2008	Likely Voters	PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+
Obama better	56%	88%	53%	8%	52%	59%	67%	55%	49%
McCain better	31%	6%	27%	82%	36%	27%	22%	34%	35%
(VOL) Both equally	2%	2%	4%	2%	2%	3%	1%	2%	3%
(VOL) Neither	5%	2%	9%	2%	6%	4%	5%	4%	6%
(VOL) Don't Know	6%	2%	7%	6%	5%	7%	5%	4%	7%
Unwtd N	801	297	280	204	379	422	136	340	303

TREND	November 2008	October 2008	September 2008
Obama better	56%	55%	50%
McCain better	31%	35%	39%
(VOL) Both equally	2%	2%	3%
(VOL) Neither	5%	3%	3%
(VOL) Don't Know	6%	4%	5%
Unwtd N	801	723	589

8. So far, would you characterize the presidential race as being generally positive or negative?

TREND	November 2008	October 2008	September 2008
Positive	32%	38%	50%
Negative	47%	42%	38%
(VOL) Both	15%	14%	8%
(VOL) Neither	2%	3%	2%
(VOL) Don't know	4%	4%	3%
Unwtd N	801	723	589

[The following question was asked only of those who said "Negative" or "Both" to Q8; moe= ± 4.3%]

9. Who has been more negative – Obama or McCain, or both equally?

TREND	November 2008	October 2008	September 2008
Obama	14%	13%	18%
McCain	49%	50%	38%
Both equally	35%	35%	41%
(VOL) Don't know	2%	2%	3%
Unwtd N	525	427	283

10. Do you agree or disagree that John McCain is too old to be an effective president?

TREND	November 2008	July 2008
Agree	25%	18%
Disagree	71%	74%
(VOL) Don't know	4%	7%
Unwtd N	801	343

11. Do you think the fact that Barack Obama is black would have an impact on the decisions he would make as president, or not?

TREND	November 2008	July 2008
Yes	13%	15%
No	83%	79%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	6%
Unwtd N	801	698

[The following question was asked only of those who said "Yes" to Q11; moe= ± 9.4%]

12. On the whole, would this impact tend to be more positive or more negative for the country?

TREND	November 2008	July 2008
Positive	31%	43%
Negative	51%	37%
(VOL) Both	5%	3%
(VOL) Neither	5%	7%
(VOL) Don't know	9%	11%
Unwtd N	108	97

13. How closely have you been following the campaign for president so far – very closely, somewhat closely, or not very closely?

TREND	November 2008	October 2008	September 2008	July 2008
Very closely	72%	77%	71%	62%
Somewhat closely	26%	22%	27%	34%
Not very closely	2%	0%	1%	4%
Unwtd N	801	723	589	698

14. Compared to past elections, are you more enthusiastic than usual about voting, or less enthusiastic?

TREND	November 2008	October 2008	September 2008	July 2008
More enthusiastic	65%	71%	70%	53%
Less enthusiastic	18%	15%	13%	25%
(VOL) Same	16%	13%	16%	20%
(VOL) Don't know	1%	1%	0%	1%
Unwtd N	801	723	589	698

15. How confident are you that your vote will be accurately counted in the upcoming election – very confident, somewhat confident, not too confident, or not at all confident?

November 2008	Likely Voters	VOTE INTENTION			RACE		AGE		
		McCain	Obama	Undecided	White	Black	18-34	35-54	55+
Very confident	58%	62%	56%	64%	60%	44%	50%	57%	66%
Somewhat confident	31%	28%	36%	18%	30%	43%	38%	34%	23%
Not too confident	7%	5%	6%	13%	6%	9%	8%	6%	6%
Not at all confident	3%	3%	1%	4%	2%	2%	2%	3%	3%
(VOL) Don't Know	2%	2%	1%	1%	2%	2%	3%	1%	2%
Unwtd N	801	277	392	69	648	68	136	340	303

[QUESTIONS 16 AND 17 WERE ROTATED]

16. Is your general impression of Frank Lautenberg favorable or unfavorable, or don't you really have an opinion?

TREND	November 2008	October 2008	September 2008	July 2008
Favorable	36%	48%	43%	37%
Unfavorable	20%	26%	30%	29%
No opinion	44%	26%	26%	33%
Unwtd N	801	723	589	698

17. Is your general impression of Dick Zimmer favorable or unfavorable, or don't you really have an opinion?

TREND	November 2008	October 2008	September 2008	July 2008
Favorable	18%	31%	30%	20%
Unfavorable	8%	16%	18%	12%
No opinion	74%	53%	53%	68%
Unwtd N	801	723	589	698

18. Do you agree or disagree that Frank Lautenberg is too old to be an effective senator?

TREND	November 2008	October 2008	September 2008	July 2008
Agree	20%	33%	31%	33%
Disagree	67%	59%	59%	54%
(VOL) Don't know	13%	8%	10%	13%
Unwtd N	801	589	589	355

19. So far, would you characterize the senate race as being generally positive or negative?

TREND	November 2008	September 2008
Positive	42%	49%
Negative	16%	17%
(VOL) Both	5%	3%
(VOL) Neither	9%	7%
(VOL) Don't know	27%	24%
Unwtd N	801	589

[The following question was asked only of those who said "Negative" or "Both" to Q19; moe= ± 7.5%]

20. Who has been more negative – Lautenberg or Zimmer, or both equally?

TREND	November 2008	September 2008
Lautenberg	15%	14%
Zimmer	16%	18%
Both equally	59%	65%
(VOL) Don't know	10%	2%
Unwtd N	172	121

21. How closely have you been following the campaign for U.S. Senate so far – very closely, somewhat closely, or not very closely?

TREND	November 2008	October 2008	September 2008	July 2008
Very closely	9%	14%	6%	13%
Somewhat closely	37%	40%	36%	39%
Not very closely	54%	47%	59%	48%
Unwtd N	801	723	589	698

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 October 29-31, 2008 with a statewide random sample of 801 likely voters. 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 3.5 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			
Likely Voter Sample (weighted)			
41% Dem	47% Male	25% 18-34	70% White
34% Ind	53% Female	44% 35-54	14% Black
25% Rep		31% 55+	11% Hispanic
			5% Asian/Other

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