



Stockton Poll: Booker's Lead over Bell Narrows to 48 Percent to 39 Percent

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Galloway Township, NJ – Incumbent U.S. Sen. Cory Booker leads Republican challenger Jeff Bell by 9 percentage points in New Jersey's U.S. Senate race, according to a poll of likely New Jersey voters released today by the Stockton Polling Institute.

Booker, a Democrat, leads by 48 percent to 39 percent for Bell, when voters who lean toward one candidate or the other are included. Twelve percent are unsure or not expressing a choice.

The poll results show a tightening of the race since a Stockton Poll released on Sept. 10 found Booker with a 13-point lead.

The statewide survey of 810 likely New Jersey voters was conducted by the Stockton Polling Institute of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy. Live interviewers on The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey campus called both landlines and cell phones from Oct. 5-8, 2014. The poll's margin of error is +/- 3.5 percentage points.

Bell continues to struggle to gain name recognition. Thirty-eight percent view him favorably, and 18 percent view Bell unfavorably. But 43 percent are unfamiliar with him (36 percent) or are unsure about their opinion of him (7 percent), down slightly from 47 percent unfamiliar or unsure a month ago, the poll results show.

"While Senator Booker's lead has narrowed, he remains ahead," said Daniel J. Douglas, director of the Hughes Center. "Mr. Bell remains unknown by a sizable portion of the electorate."

Only 13 percent are unfamiliar with Booker, the former mayor of Newark. He is viewed favorably by 58 percent, which is unchanged since the Sept. 10 poll. Those with unfavorable views of Booker increased from 23 percent in September to 28 percent in the new poll.

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Fifty percent rate Booker's job performance as good or excellent, virtually unchanged since September's poll. However, his negative job ratings (fair or poor) increased from 37 percent to 42 percent.

Booker is drawing strong support from black or African-American voters (80 percent to 4 percent for Bell), Hispanic voters (50 percent to 23 percent for Bell), and women voters (47 percent to 36 percent for Bell). Men are fairly evenly split, with 44 percent for Bell and 42 percent for Booker. Both candidates draw more than 80 percent of support from their party bases, but unaffiliated voters favor Booker 41 percent to 34 percent.

New Jersey voters have unfavorable views of President Barack Obama and the job he is doing. Forty-four percent views the president favorably, unchanged since Sept. 10. Fifty-three percent have unfavorable views of him. Only 38 percent say the president is doing a good or excellent job, while 61 percent say his job performance is fair or poor. The ratings are identical to the Sept. 10 poll findings.

New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie's ratings improved slightly over the past month. Forty-nine percent rate his job performance as positive, up from 47 percent. Slightly more than half (51 percent) say he is doing a fair or poor job, down from 53 percent on Sept. 10.

He is viewed favorably by 56 percent (up from 53 percent) and unfavorably by 41 percent, with 3 percent unsure.

Taxes and economic issues are clearly on the minds of New Jersey voters. Property taxes are identified as the state's most important issue, by 22 percent. Twenty percent identify jobs, and 13 percent identify the economy as most important. Twelve percent identify taxes in general as their top issue.

The new poll finds continued strong support for a proposed state Constitutional amendment that would allow judges to deny bail to defendants who are flight risks or who pose threats to the public. Seventy-nine percent support the proposal, with 14 percent opposed and 7 percent unsure.

More than half (55 percent) supports a second proposed Constitutional amendment that would increase the percentage of the Corporation Business Tax dedicated to environmental programs. The dedication would go from 4 percent to 6 percent on July 1, 2019. Thirty-six percent oppose the proposal, and 9 percent are unsure.

Methodology

The survey was conducted by the Stockton Polling Institute of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy (www.stockton.edu/hughescenter). Live interviewers on the Stockton campus called both landlines and cell phones from Oct. 5 – 8, 2014. The poll was conducted with 810 adults who are likely voters. The poll's margin of error is +/- 3.5 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence level. MOE is higher for subsets. Data are weighted based on United States Census Bureau demographics for the New Jersey population.



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