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## NEWS

# Hughes Center Poll Finds GOP Enthusiasm High for Midterm Elections

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New Jersey’s voters, especially Republicans, are enthusiastic about voting in next week’s midterm elections in which the economy and inflation are seen as top issues, according to a Stockton University Poll released today.

When asked which party they prefer in the congressional election, 47% said they would vote for a generic Democrat while 37% in the statewide poll of registered voters picked a generic Republican candidate. However, more voters said they supported the Republican positions on hot-button issues such as the economy, immigration and crime than were aligned with Democrats.

The economy was the clear choice as the election’s top issue, named by 25% of the poll’s 707 respondents. Another 11% identified inflation or cost of living as the main issue. Twelve percent identified abortion, and all other issues polled in the low single digits. More than half (57%) were very enthusiastic about voting in the midterms, and 21% were somewhat enthusiastic. But more Republicans said they were eager to vote; 70% were very enthusiastic compared to 54% of Democrats and 55% of independents.

Voters in blue-state New Jersey were evenly split in their feelings about President Biden, with 46% having favorable views and 47% having unfavorable views. A majority of 56% – including 24% of Democrats – did not want Biden to run for re-election in 2024. However, 67% of voters – including 26% of Republicans – did not want former President Donald Trump to run again in two years.

The poll was conducted by the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton University and has a margin of error of +/- 3.7 percentage points.

While more voters supported GOP positions on the economy, Democrats outpolled Republicans on the issues of abortion and health care by large margins.

Issue	Democratic support	Republican support	Neither party
The economy	35%	43%	18%
Crime	31%	41%	20%
Immigration	36%	42%	18%
Abortion	49%	23%	22%
Health care	50%	26%	16%

“There is some good news for Republicans in this poll,” said John Froomjian, director of the Hughes Center. “Support for President Biden is weak, Republican enthusiasm is strong and the top issues in the election are working for the Republicans.

“One question is whether the Supreme Court’s overturning of Roe v. Wade will motivate Democratic turnout, especially among women,” he said.

**Abortion**

Half of voters said a candidate's views on abortion would impact their vote greatly and 25% said it would impact their vote somewhat. But 63% of women (compared to 39% of men) said abortion would greatly affect their vote and 17% said it would affect it somewhat. Women were more aligned with the Democratic position on abortion (56%) than with Republicans (21%).

There was a gender gap on the generic congressional ballot question, with 55% of women saying they will vote Democratic compared to 40% of men. Also, 31% of women would vote for the Republican compared to 40% of men.

### **January 6 Committee hearings**

Fewer than one in three voters (30%) have paid close attention to the January 6 Committee hearings. One-third (32%) said they have followed them somewhat closely while 36% said not very closely or not at all. Of those who did watch them at all, most (79%) said they did not change their opinion of what happened that day. Only 16% said they did change their opinion.

Asked to characterize what happened on January 6, nearly half (49%) said they consider the event an insurrection to overthrow the government. One in four said it was a riot but not a threat to democracy, and 14% (but 31% of Republicans) said it was a legal and justified protest.

Nearly half of voters (49%) think Trump is very responsible for what happened that day, and 17% said he is somewhat responsible. Nearly one-third (30%) said he is not at all responsible for what took place. Among people who think Trump bears at least some responsibility, 70% said the U.S. Justice Department should bring criminal charges against him, while 17% said he should not be charged and 12% were not sure.

Only 26% of Republicans think Trump bears at least some responsibility for what happened, and of them nearly one in five (19%) think he should be charged for his role. Most independents (63%) think he is at least somewhat responsible and of those respondents, a majority (60%) think he should be charged.

### **Student debt forgiveness**

Voters are somewhat split over whether to support forgiving up to \$20,000 in student loan debt for individuals earning less than \$125,000 and households earning less than \$250,000. Half support the plan to cancel debt while 41% oppose it and 9% are not sure. Not surprisingly, voters younger than 30 agreed with it the most (71%) and support was lowest among senior citizens (40%).

One in five (20%) said they currently have student loan debt while 28% have paid their student debt off, and just over half (52%) have never had student loan debt. Nearly half of those who never had student loan debt still support the cancellation (48%-39%).

But of those who did have debt at one point and paid it off, most (54%) oppose it while 40% support it. Of those with student loan debt currently, 68% support and 29% oppose.

## **Methodology**

The poll of New Jersey adult registered voters was conducted by the Stockton Polling Institute of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy from October 6-18, 2022. Stockton University students texted cell phones with invitations to take the survey online. Opinion Services supplemented the dialing portion of the fieldwork, which consisted of cell and landline telephone calls. Overall, 89% of interviews were conducted on cell phones and 11% on landline phones. A total of 707 New Jersey adult residents were interviewed. Both cell and landline samples consisted of random digit dialing (RDD) sample from MSG. Data are weighted based on U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey data for New Jersey on variables of age, race, ethnicity, education level, sex, and region. The poll's margin of error is +/- 3.7 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence level. MOE is higher for subsets.

## **About the Hughes Center**

The William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy ([www.stockton.edu/hughescenter](http://www.stockton.edu/hughescenter)) at Stockton University serves as a catalyst for research, analysis and innovative policy solutions on the economic, social and cultural issues facing New Jersey, and promotes the civic life of New Jersey through engagement, education and research. The center is named for the late William J. Hughes, whose distinguished career includes service in the U.S. House of Representatives, Ambassador to Panama and as a Distinguished Visiting Professor at Stockton. The Hughes Center can be found on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCUZ2StL36unDd0jyfOaFkNg>), and can be followed on Facebook @StocktonHughesCenter (<https://www.facebook.com/StocktonHughesCenter>), Twitter @hughescenter (<https://twitter.com/HughesCenter>) and Instagram @stockton\_hughes\_center ([https://www.instagram.com/stockton\\_hughes\\_center/](https://www.instagram.com/stockton_hughes_center/)).

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