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Stockton Poll of South Jersey Voters has Corzine and Christie Too Close to Call

Legislative Races Firming Up Throughout Southern NJ

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Galloway, NJ- According to a Richard Stockton College of NJ poll, the "Daggett" effect" has caused the major party candidates to be in a dead heat.

In a head-to-head question, Republican challenger Chris Christie's lead over Governor Jon Corzine is only 2.7% -- well within the margin of error of polling and down from approximately a lead of 7% in September's Stockton poll. Chris Daggett reaps 18.4% of the vote – still substantially less than the major party candidates but double the number from the previous poll.

The William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton commissioned Zogby International to conduct a telephone survey of 800 likely voters in Southern New Jersey in Legislative Districts 1-4, and 9 during the period of October 19 through 21.

In the race for governor 33.9% would vote for Chris Christie, 31.2% for Jon Corzine, 18.4% for Chris Daggett, and 14.6% of the voters are still unsure who they would vote for.

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"The question statewide is from whom Daggett is pulling votes?" said Hughes Center Executive Director Sharon Schulman. "In the southern portion of the state that was polled, it appears Christie's Republican base may be eroding as his support among GOPers dropped from 73% in September to 60% in October. Daggett is also pulling Republican votes away from Christie as we find that his support among them has jumped from 7% to 19%," Schulman said.

Corzine has solidified his base, actually increasing support among Democrats from 52% in September to 59% in October, but he did lose some votes to Daggett (7% in September to 13% currently). Most of the shift came over from the undecided voters, which dropped from 22% last month to 13% this month.

Independents appear to be breaking for Daggett as his support doubled from 13% in September to 27% in October. He is now nearly even with Christie among this group (29% Christie, 27% Daggett). Corzine's support among the independents has remained about the same (23% in September to 21% in October). The shift can be attributed to the undecided voters who nearly halved from last time (30% to 19%).

When looking at the smaller samples from the individual legislative districts we see that Corzine lost his lead over Christie in the 1st. He was leading 36% to 28% in September; Christie is now up 41% to 28%. The shift appears to come from Daggett supporters who increased from 9% to 15% and undecided voters who fell from 26% to 14%.

In the 2nd Legislative District, Corzine snatched the lead from Christie, 34% to 29%. Last poll he was down 35% to 29%. Daggett's support doubled in this district from 7% to 17%, and undecided voters decreased from 24% to 16%.

In the 3rd Legislative Distict, things have really tightened up as Christie's previous sizeable lead of 38% to 25% has evaporated. Corzine now garners 33% of the vote to Christie's 31%, and Daggett jumped from 11% to 21%. Undecided voters dropped from 20% to 13%.

Corzine has also pulled ahead in the 4th District (36% to 31%). The two were about even in September with 37% going to Christie and 36% to Corzine. That shift can be directly attributed to the dramatic increase in support for Daggett from 4% to 17%, since the number of undecided voters changed only slightly (19% to 16%).

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Christie maintains a solid lead over Corzine in the 9th Legislative District (37% to 25%), but Daggett's gaining support has cut into that margin. Christie was leading Corzine 46% to 22% in September, but Daggett's nearly doubled his support from 12% to 23%. The number of undecided voters remained about the same (15% to 14%).

Ask likely voters in much of Southern NJ what the most important issue is in the November gubernatorial race, and more than 70% will tell you it is taxes. Jobs and the economy came in a distant second place at 39%. In September, 23.4% of those polled listed public and government corruption among their top concerns. This current poll has seen that drop to 12.4%.

"When the first poll was run, people in NJ were stunned by recent corruption charges for 44 people. Some of that has worn off now," stated Schulman.

The poll also asked respondents questions on what may influence their choice. One question measured the impact of the choice of lieutenant governor. 66% of likely voters said the lieutenant governor pick had little or no impact. Respondents were also asked how big impact negative campaign ads had on their choices and 65% again said they had little impact.

The poll looked at the races for General Assembly in these districts also. The margin of error is greater, however, because of the smaller subgroup size. Most notable in these results is that people are firming up who they are voting for compared to the September poll.

> 1st District: McCann (R) 49%, Donohue (R) 43.5%, Albano (D) 44.1%, Milam (D) 30.1%, Not Sure 10%, Someone Else 2.8%.
> 2nd District: Amodeo (R) 43.6%, Polistina (R) 40.7%, Floyd (D) 29.9%, Martinez (D) 28.2%, Not Sure 19.7%, Someone Else 6%.
> 3rd District: Burzichelli (D) 47.1%, Riley (D) 39.2%, Villare (R) 25.7%, Lucas (R) 24.4%, Not Sure 24%, Someone Else 3.8%.
> 4th District: Moriarity (D) 47.3%, Collins (D) 41%, DiCicco (R) 29.4%, Lawrence (R) 28.3%. Not Sure 21.5%, Someone Else 3.8%.
> 9th District: Rumpf (R) 45.3%, Gove (R) 43%, Visotcky (D) 23.7%, Rue (D) 22.3%, Not Sure 29.6%, Someone Else 2.7%
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> The Hughes Center will be conducting a state-wide poll next week.

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Methodology

The sample is 801 interviews with approximately 20 questions asked from 10/19/09 to 10/21/09. Samples are randomly drawn from purchased lists of registered voters. Zogby International surveys employ sampling strategies in which selection probabilities are proportional to population size within area codes and exchanges. Cooperation rates are calculated using one of AAPOR's approved methodologies and are comparable to other professional public-opinion surveys conducted using similar sampling strategies. Weighting by *district, age, race and gender* is used to adjust for non-response. Margin of error is +/- 3.5 percentage points. Margins of error are higher in sub-groups.

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