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QuickTakes!

Stockton Polling Institute Predicts Winners and is a Winner

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John Froomjian, a senior research associate at Stockton University has lots of opinions. Best of all, he gets paid to express them, but the opinions belong to others.

Soliciting opinions via opinion polls and then compiling and analyzing the results make up the “extremely gratifying” job of John Froomjian, who runs the Stockton Polling Institute, part of the Stockton University Hughes Center for Public Policy. Since 2012, he has immersed himself in thousands of opinions responding to hundreds of questions, a job that has provided academic researchers, administrators, business owners, and elected officials with information needed to carry out their work successfully.

The Stockton Polling Institute conducts independent public opinion polling on elections and issues of importance in southern New Jersey and across the state. It conducts about a dozen polls each year for the public, Stockton faculty, Stockton administrators and non-Stockton private clients.

A point of pride is that Stockton’s polls themselves are winners. Stockton’s final election polls always have predicted the correct winner. In addition, they predicted the winning spread within the margin error for president in 2016 and governor in 2017. Stay tuned for the upcoming elections in November 2018.

Stockton’s distinction among academic polling centers in New Jersey is two-fold:

1) it is one of the very few polling centers who poll at the legislative district level; and 2) it has its own calling center.



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“We have a staff of 90-120 interviewers, the vast majority of them being Stockton students, who make the calls from a dedicated call center right on the Stockton campus. This provides some student employment that also teaches qualitative research skills. The only downside is that it does limit the times when we can conduct polling to the academic year, when students are available to work,” said John.

As soon as the students return to school in a few weeks, the call center will be buzzing with calls about the open Congressional District Two race. The race may generate a higher response rate than usual, and “usual” these days generally means a low response rate.

“This is how it is with many polling operations today, response rates are extremely low, sometimes in the single digits Fortunately, research has shown that low response rates have not hurt accuracy when good methodology is employed. We definitely find that interesting poll topics produce greater participation,” said John, who noted that the past year featured “interesting” topics with healthy response rates. Topics included: marijuana legalization, Governor Murphy, President Trump, gun control, immigration, New Jersey’s economy, and federal income tax overhaul.

John became a member of the Stockton community after decades of working as a statehouse reporter for the *Press of Atlantic City*. His first role with the Stockton polls occurred before he became an official employee at the university. The *Press of Atlantic City* partnered with the Hughes Center for the purpose of instituting a polling project; John represented the *Press* in helping to create the very first Stockton polls more than a decade ago. He then joined the Hughes Center as a researcher in 2011 and has led the polling effort since 2012. John has taught writing at Stockton and in the spring of 2018, he taught a class in the principles of journalism. He has an enhanced connection to Stockton because in addition to being an instructor and administrator, he is a student – seeking his doctorate of education (Ed.D.) in Organizational Leadership.

To determine the general topics to be surveyed, John confers with Dr. Michael Klein, the director of the Hughes Center for Public Policy. “We first talk about the general topics we want to survey and then some specific areas of inquiry. I will draft potential question wording and send it to Mike for tweaking or suggestions for something entirely new. It is really a collaborative process. If we are working with faculty or a specific client, the client, of course, will be involved,” said John.

One of Stockton’s recent polls dealt with such current New Jersey topics as legalizing marijuana, free community college, and the millionaire’s tax – issues hotly debated among the governor and his staff and legislators as they negotiated a final FY 2019 state budget. Live interviewers on the Stockton campus called both landlines and cell phones from March 22-29, 2018. The poll was conducted with 728 adults who are residents of New Jersey. The poll’s margin of error is +/- 3.65 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence level. Margin

of Error is higher for subsets. Data are weighted based on United States Census Bureau demographics for the State of New Jersey population.

The detailed report on this specific poll (reproduced below) “is insightful and sometimes surprising,” said Dr. Klein. “But that can be said about all the results of our polls, because they serve as a window into the thinking of our fellow residents in New Jersey, who are quite diverse.”

“In these times of polarized politics – when we all *assume* what people are thinking – our polls help us to *know* what people are thinking. Our polls are thoughtfully crafted and conducted with academic integrity, thanks to John’s hard work and the work of our students. Ultimately, we hope they contribute positively to public debate and help to influence policy decisions by our elected officials,” Dr. Klein said.

Stockton Poll: NJ Split on Legalizing Marijuana; One in Four Would Try or Use It

Majority support ‘millionaire’s tax’ and free community college, but many still undecided about the new governor

July 16, 2018

Adults in New Jersey are split over whether marijuana should be made legal in the state for recreational use, but one in four say they would try it or use it if it were legal, according to Stockton University poll results released today.

According to the poll of 728 adult New Jersey residents, 49 percent support legalizing marijuana for recreational purposes in New Jersey, where marijuana use is allowed only for medical purposes. Forty-four percent oppose legislation, with 5 percent unsure. One percent volunteered that they would decriminalize marijuana. Gov. Phil Murphy supported legalizing marijuana for people ages 21 and older during his gubernatorial campaign as a social justice issue and as a way to raise an estimated \$300 million in sales tax revenues.

Seventy-five percent say they do not currently use marijuana and would not even if it were legal. But nearly one in four respondents say either that although they do not use marijuana they would try it if it were legal (15 percent) or that they currently use marijuana and would continue to use legal marijuana (9 percent).

“These poll results suggest there is not a consensus in New Jersey on whether marijuana should be made legal,” said Michael W. Klein, interim executive director of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton.

Younger adults and men are more likely to support legalization of marijuana than older respondents and women. Sixty-four percent of respondents younger than age 50 support legalization, compared to 41 percent age 50 and older. Among men, 56 percent support

legalizing marijuana, while only 44 percent of women do. There is no significant difference in responses based on education levels or household income.

The Stockton Polling Institute of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy interviewed 728 New Jersey adults from March 22-29, 2018. Interviewers working from the Stockton University campus called landline and cell telephones. The statewide poll's margin of error is +/- 3.65 percentage points.

Pro-legalization poll respondents were asked to identify the main reason for their support. Twenty-four percent say tax revenues are their main reason, while a combined 22 percent say marijuana is safer than alcohol or tobacco (11 percent) or other illegal drugs (11 percent). Fifteen percent identify medical or health benefits of marijuana as their main reason. Another 11 percent say legalizing marijuana would reduce law enforcement or prison costs.

More than half of opponents of legalization cite health problems or addiction as the reason they are against the proposal, with 24 percent saying it could lead to harder drugs. 20 percent saying marijuana is harmful to good health and 11 percent saying it is addictive. Ten percent cite difficulties in government regulating the drug.

The Stockton poll finds that less than three months into his first term, the new governor remains an unknown to a sizable part of the population. He is viewed favorably by 40 percent, compared to 27 percent who have unfavorable impressions of Murphy. But one in three respondents say they are not familiar with Murphy (10 percent) or are unsure what to think (23 percent). Among those who know who Murphy is, 39 percent give him a good or excellent job performance ratings while 45 percent rate it as fair or poor, with 19 percent unsure. The results break down along party lines, with a majority of Democrats giving the Democratic governor positive ratings.

Overall, 36 percent say New Jersey is going in the right direction, but 45 percent say it is on the wrong track and 19 percent are not sure. Those numbers are more positive than feelings about the nation as a whole. In Stockton poll results released Tuesday, only 27 percent say the country is going in the right direction and 63 percent feel it is on the wrong track, with 10 percent unsure.

Majorities in the poll strongly support other policy initiatives advocated by the governor, according to the poll results released today. Sixty-eight percent support raising state taxes on households with annual incomes of more than \$1 million, while 29 percent oppose a so-called "millionaire's tax" with 3 percent unsure. And 73 percent support state government providing tuition-free community college in New Jersey, with 24 percent opposed and 3 percent unsure.

Stockton Poll results released Tuesday found 75 percent supporting stricter gun control laws and a federal law banning semi-automatic rifles, positions supported by Governor Murphy.

For complete full poll results click [Poll Results](#).

For YouTube video of Michael Klein discussing the results click [Stockton Poll Video](#).

About the Hughes Center

The William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy (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 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 at <https://www.facebook.com/StocktonHughesCenter> and can be followed on [Twitter@hughescenter](#).