

Murphy retains double-digit lead in N.J. governor's race according to Stockton poll

For Immediate Release

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Galloway, NJ - While the New Jersey gubernatorial race has tightened slightly, Democrat Phil Murphy still leads Republican Kim Guadagno by 14 percentage points, according to a Stockton University poll released today.

Less than two weeks before the Nov. 7 election, Murphy leads by a 51-37 percent margin, with 8 percent undecided or not identifying a choice and 4 percent saying they will vote for someone else. In a Stockton poll released Oct. 13, Murphy led 51-33 percent, an 18-point margin.

“Kim Guadagno’s numbers are going in the right direction. But at this point it appears she would have to claim virtually all of the undecided vote and some of Murphy’s votes to make the race competitive,” said Sharon Schulman, Executive Director of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy.

About a quarter of respondents are not familiar with either major gubernatorial candidate. But name recognition grew since the Oct. 13 poll, and Murphy’s numbers have benefited. The Democrat went from a 36-26 percent favorable-to-unfavorable split to 43-30 percent positive rating in the new poll. Guadagno’s ratings were more negative in the earlier poll, at 37 percent unfavorable to 31 percent favorable. Her negatives have grown to 43 percent in the new poll, with 32 percent giving positive ratings.

The Stockton Polling Institute of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy interviewed 525 New Jersey adults who are likely voters Oct. 18-24, 2017. Interviewers working from the Stockton University campus called landline and cell telephones. The statewide poll’s margin of error is +/- 4.3 percentage points.

Respondents give Murphy, a former Wall Street banker and ambassador, the edge when asked who would be better at creating jobs in New Jersey, at managing the state budget and at helping Atlantic City succeed. However, Guadagno is seen as

more likely to control property taxes than Murphy, at 39-33 percent. Guadagno had only a 2-point edge on property taxes, a major issue in her campaign, in the first Stockton poll. And as in the first poll, property taxes is identified as the election's top issue, by 29 percent, followed by taxes in general at 17 percent.

Which candidate would be better at:	Guadagno	Murphy	Not sure
Creating jobs in New Jersey	29%	43%	21%
Controlling property taxes	39%	33%	19%
Managing the state budget	34%	44%	18%
Helping Atlantic City succeed	22%	36%	30%

These results are from the Stockton University Poll released today.

Only 2 percent identified immigration issues as a top priority in the poll. The poll began after Guadagno began attacking Murphy for saying he might make New Jersey a sanctuary state if the federal government revoked protection for “dreamers” brought to the United States as children. However, the sanctuary state issue sparks strong feelings among both parties’ bases.

When asked how Murphy’s stance on sanctuary status might affect their vote, 64 percent of Democrats say it makes them more likely to vote for him, compared to only 6 percent of Republicans. Fifty-four percent of Republicans say it makes them less likely to vote for Murphy, compared to 8 percent of Democrats. Overall, 40 percent say the issue makes them more supportive of Murphy, with 33 percent saying they are less likely to support him and 24 percent saying it makes no difference.

Guadagno’s association with unpopular Gov. Chris Christie continues to pose a challenge, with 52 percent saying a Christie endorsement of any candidate would make them less likely to vote for that candidate. The less likely percentage for a President Trump endorsement is 57 percent.

In the previous Oct. 13 poll, 31 percent said Guadagno’s experience as “New Jersey’s lieutenant governor” made them less likely to vote for her. In the new poll, the wording was changed to “Gov. Chris Christie’s lieutenant governor.” The percentage saying that that experience makes them less likely to support Guadagno jumped to 47 percent.

The poll finds overwhelming support for a proposed Constitutional amendment to dedicate funds from settlements of state pollution cases to environmental restoration or protection, with 87 percent favoring to 9 percent opposed. Also, a ballot question asking whether to borrow \$125 million for public library construction and renovation is supported 56 percent to 39 percent.

Hughes Center researcher John Froomjian, who manages the Stockton Polling Institute, said that past Stockton polls have overestimated support for ballot questions. This may be because significant numbers of voters stop voting as they go further down the ballot, or they may miss the questions. The population who actually votes may be different than the sample measured in the poll, Froomjian said.

To see the full results click [here](#).

Methodology

The poll was conducted by the Stockton Polling Institute of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy. Live interviewers on the Stockton University campus called both landlines and cell phones from Oct. 18-24, 2017. The poll was conducted with 525 adults who are likely voters in New Jersey. The poll's margin of error is +/- 4.3 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 State of New Jersey population.

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.

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