

Stockton Poll Has Race a Dead Heat in N.J. 2nd Congressional District

For immediate release

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Galloway, N.J. - The hard-fought House race in South Jersey's 2nd Congressional District is a dead heat in the week heading into Election Day, according to a Stockton University Poll released today.

Democratic challenger Amy Kennedy held a one-percentage-point lead, 46%-45%, over incumbent Rep. Jeff Van Drew, a former Democrat who switched to the Republican side last December.

The margin of error in the poll of 676 likely voters, conducted Oct. 22-27, is 3.7 percentage points. Six percent were undecided or refused to pick a candidate, and 3% said they are voting for another candidate, according to the poll conducted by the Polling Institute at the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton University.

The poll showed little crossover support between the major parties, with about 5% of Republicans supporting Kennedy and 4% of Democrats supporting Van Drew. Independent voters favored Van Drew, 48%-42%.

"The 2nd District is living up to its billing as a competitive swing district," said John Froomjian, Hughes Center executive director.

"Turnout in the final days of mail voting and how the few undecided voters break will decide the race," Froomjian said. "Every vote counts, especially in this election."

The majority of poll respondents (57%) had already voted. Reflecting trends found in an Oct. 16 Stockton poll and throughout the country, the largest share of the early vote came from Democrats. Froomjian noted that many Republicans respondents had not yet voted less than two weeks from the election.

Van Drew, a former state legislator first elected to Congress in 2018, was a little better known than political newcomer Kennedy, but also had slightly higher negative ratings.

- 24% were not familiar with Kennedy, while 16% were unfamiliar with Van Drew
- Van Drew was seen favorably by 42% to 37% unfavorable
- Kennedy's rating was 39% favorable to 30% unfavorable
- Only 42% gave Van Drew a positive job performance rating in Congress, while 50% gave him negative ratings.

A majority of respondents (55%) said Van Drew's party switch to Republican affected their opinion of him. Of the affected voters, 69% (including 93% of Democrats and 71% of independents) said the switch had a negative effect on their opinion.

One glimmer of hope for Kennedy is that Democrat Joe Biden led Republican President Donald Trump in the district by three points, 48%-45%, and Democratic U.S. Sen. Cory Booker led GOP challenger Rik Mehta by seven points, 47%-40%, according to the poll.

Voters in the 2nd District feel more positive about Trump than do voters in the rest of New Jersey, where there are strong negative feelings about the president. Even so, the traditionally right-of-center district was split on Trump's job performance ratings, with 44% giving him positive marks and 44% rating him negatively. And Trump's favorability ratings were underwater, with 45% holding favorable views of him and 51% having negative views. Those numbers were reversed for Biden, with 51% positive and 46% negative.

Generally, aside from party affiliation, support for both Van Drew and Trump was largely driven by white respondents, men, and those with less than a four-year college degree. Kennedy and Biden are supported at higher rates by Black respondents, women, and those with a four-year college degree or more.

"The differences among respondents across gender and education were not quite as stark as race, but still evident," said Alyssa Maurice, Hughes Center research associate.

In other 2nd District poll results:

- Only 37% gave Trump positive ratings for his handling of the coronavirus pandemic, and 49% said it was poor.
- 53% gave Gov. Phil Murphy positive ratings for his handling of the pandemic, a number consistent with the findings of the Oct. 16 statewide poll.
- And 51% said the measures taken by the state to slow the spread of the coronavirus were the right course of action but 34% say the measures went too far and 13% say they did not go far enough.

Full poll results are on the Hughes Center website at stockton.edu/hughes-center/polling.

Methodology

The poll of New Jersey adults screened as likely voters was conducted by the Stockton Polling Institute of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy Oct. 22-27. Live interviewers who are mostly Stockton University students called cell phones and landlines from the Stockton University campus. Opinion Services supplemented the field work by completing 250 telephone interviews. Overall, 93 percent of interviews were conducted on cell phones and 7 percent on landline phones. A total of 676 registered voters were interviewed who were screened as likely voters on criteria including self-professed intention to vote on a scale of 1 to 10, having voted in New Jersey's 2018 election, and how closely voters are following the election. Both cell and landline samples included a mix of voter list and random digit dialing (RDD) sample. Data are weighted based on U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey data for voting-

age population in New Jersey's Congressional District 2 on variables of age, 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) 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](#), and can be followed on Facebook [@StocktonHughesCenter](#), Twitter [@hughescenter](#) and Instagram [@stockton_hughes_center](#).

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