



For immediate release... **Thursday, September 20, 2012** 5 pp.

Contact: Dan Cassino 973.896.7072
Krista Jenkins 908.328.8967; 973.443.8390

Menendez's Commanding Lead Hides Some Discontent

Nationwide, there are an unusually high number of competitive races for the Senate this year, but the New Jersey race between incumbent Democrat Robert Menendez and his Republican opponent, State Senator Joe Kyrillos, is not among them. According to the latest results from Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind Poll, Menendez leads by 16 points, 49 percent to 33 percent among registered voters. Among the subgroup of registered voters who are considered most likely to actually cast a ballot in the election, Menendez's lead is only slightly smaller, at 50 percent to 36 percent. Still, there are some troubling signs in the race, such as Menendez isn't doing as well as he should with select core Democratic constituencies, including liberal and Hispanic voters.

Much of Menendez's strength is due to the unusually high level of support he commands from his fellow Democrats. Eighty-eight percent of Democrats (a category that includes independents who "lean" Democratic) say that they will support Menendez in the election – a level of loyalty that's almost as high as that commanded by President Obama in New Jersey (93% of New Jersey Democrats say they will support the president in the upcoming election). Still, there are some signs of discontent: 11 percent of liberal voters say that they aren't sure who they're going to vote for in the senate, and another 7 percent say that they'll vote for Kyrillos.

"Menendez has had a number of spats with the administration, and there still seems to be some resentment among the liberal base," said Dan Cassino, a professor of political science at Fairleigh Dickinson and an analyst for the poll. "Still, it isn't as though liberal Democrats are going to stay home when they could be voting for Obama. They may not like it, but in a Presidential election year, Menendez can afford to take them for granted."

The commanding lead that Menendez holds obscures ethnic dynamics that may spell problems for New Jersey Democrats in the future. In his 2006 race, there was concern that African-American voters, a key Democratic constituency in New Jersey, would not support the Hispanic Menendez, but this doesn't seem to be the case this year, as 87 percent of African-Americans in the state say they'll cast their ballot for the incumbent Senator.

However, only 46 percent of Hispanic voters say that they expect to vote for Menendez, a number well below the 62 percent of Hispanic voters who say they'll vote for President Obama in the same election.

“Democrats have recognized for a long time that they need to build support among Hispanics in New Jersey if they want to keep winning,” said Cassino. “His relatively low level of support among Hispanics should be something of a warning sign for the Democrats.”

These vote choices are also fairly crystallized. Eighty-two percent of voters say that they are “very certain” about their choice in the Senate race, and only 6 percent say that they might change their minds.

“This is a pattern we’ve been seeing across the country,” said Cassino. “We’re in such a partisan political environment that there just aren’t many people who haven’t made up their minds. In New Jersey, as long as the Democrats stay loyal, their candidate is going to win.”

The dynamics of this race stand in sharp contrast with Menendez’s first Senate election six years ago. In that race, against Tom Kean, Jr, analyses showed that Menendez’s margin of victory was almost entirely due to perceived links between Kean and the Bush administration among New Jersey voters.

“Menendez has had the good fortune to run twice in very helpful environments,” said Cassino. “Last time, he was running against an unpopular administration as much as anything, and this time, he’s holding onto the coat-tails of a President who’s doing very well in New Jersey. He may not be the strongest candidate, but he has great timing.”

The Fairleigh Dickinson University poll of 901 registered voters, 706 of whom were deemed likely voters, was conducted by telephone using both landlines and cell phones from September 6 through September 12, 2012, and has a margin of error of +/-3.8 percentage points for likely voters and +/- 3.3 percentage points for registered voters.

*Methodology, questions, and tables on the web at: <http://publicmind.fdu.edu>
Radio actualities at 201.692.2846 For more information, please call 201.692.7032*

Methodology

The most recent survey by Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind was conducted by telephone from September 6 through September 12, 2012 using a randomly selected sample of 901 residents statewide. Within this sample 706 respondents were identified as "likely voters" by scoring responses to questions that are relevant to assessing one's likelihood of voting.

One can be 95 percent confident that the error attributable to sampling has a range of plus or minus 3.8 percentage points among likely voters, and 3.3 percentage points among registered voters. The margin of error for subgroups is larger and varies by the size of that subgroup. Survey results are also subject to non-sampling error. This kind of error, which cannot be measured, arises from a number of factors including, but not limited to, non-response (eligible individuals refusing to be interviewed), question wording, the order in which questions are asked, and variations among interviewers.

PublicMind interviews are conducted by Opinion America of Cedar Knolls, NJ, with professionally trained interviewers using a CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) system. Random selection is achieved by computerized random-digit dialing. This technique gives every person with a land-line phone number (including those with unlisted numbers) an equal chance of being selected.

Landline households are supplemented with a separate, randomly selected sample of cell-phone respondents interviewed in the same time frame. The total combined sample is mathematically weighted to match known demographics of age, race and gender.

November election for Senate

In November, there will also be an election for US Senate. I know it's early, but if the election were today would you vote for...or...?

	Total	Party			Gender		Presidential Approval	
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Men	Women	Approve	Disapprove
Bob Menendez, the Democrat	50%	88	34	7	48	51	80	11
Supporters	46%	82	33	6	45	48	75	10
Leaners	3%	6	1	1	3	4	5	1
Joe Kyrillos, the Republican	36%	2	27	85	41	31	5	78
Supporters	34%	2	26	80	39	29	5	74
Leaners	2%	-	1	5	2	2	-	4
Someone else	-	-	3	-	-	1	-	1
Unsure	13%	9	34	7	9	16	14	9

	Ideology			Race				Age			
	Lib	Mod	Con	White	Non-White	Black	Hispanic	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Menendez	81	55	17	44	68	87	46	55	44	51	51
Supporters	75	51	16	40	66	82	46	51	42	47	48
Leaners	6	3	1	4	3	5	-	4	2	4	4
Kyrillos	7	30	70	43	15	2	31	23	40	38	37
Supporters	6	28	67	41	13	2	28	22	38	36	34
Leaners	-	2	3	2	2	-	3	1	2	2	3
Someone else	-	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-
Unsure	11	14	11	12	16	9	23	21	14	10	11

Election Cont.

How certain are you about your choice, or might you change your mind before Election Day?

	All	Party			Gender		Presidential Approval	
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Men	Women	Approve	Disapprove
Very certain	82%	82	64	86	80	84	83	84
Somewhat certain	11%	10	24	10	13	9	11	11
Might change my mind	6%	6	11	4	6	6	5	5
Unsure	1%	1	2	-	1	1	1	-

	Ideology			Race				Age			
	Lib	Mod	Con	White	Non-white	Black	Hispanic	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Very certain	81	80	85	80	85	92	76	66	83	81	88
Somewhat certain	13	13	9	13	7	5	10	25	11	11	7
Might change	4	6	7	7	4	1	9	9	5	8	4
Unsure	2	1	-	-	3	1	4	-	1	1	1

Exact Question Wording and Order

SEN1 In November, there will also be an election for US Senate. I know it's early, but if the election were today would you vote for... or....? ROTATE NAMES

- 1 Robert Menendez, the Democrat [Ask SEN1a]
- 2 Joe Kyrillos, the Republican [Ask SEN1a]
- 3 Someone else [vol] [Ask SEN1a]
- 4 Unsure [vol; ask SEN1b]
- 8 Not registered [vol; skip to US1]
- 9 Refused [vol; skip to US1]

SEN1a How certain are you about your choice, or might you change your mind before Election Day?

- 1 Very certain
- 2 Somewhat certain
- 3 Might change my mind
- 9 Don't know (vol)

SEN1b Which way do you lean? ROTATE NAMES

- 1 Robert Menendez, the Democrat
- 2 Joe Kyrillos, the Republican
- 3 someone else (VOL) (Specify)
- 8 DK

Sample characteristics – Likely voters**Gender**

Male	50
Female	50

Age

18-34	12
35-49	27
50-64	35
65+	25
Refused	1

Race/Ethnicity

White	74
Black/African-American	11
Latino or Hispanic	8
Asian	4
Other/refused	4

Public employee household

Yes	25
No	74
Unsure/refused	1

Party identification

Democrat/Lean Democrat	47
Independent/DK/refused	14
Republican/Lean Republican	37