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Obama, Menendez, and Booker looking good, but room for Kyrillos to define himself

The nation is now fewer than a hundred days from the presidential election and Democratic candidates Barack Obama and Robert Menendez will look to the fall election season with sizable New Jersey leads over their Republican opponents. Barack Obama leads Mitt Romney by thirteen percentage points (49 to 36%), and incumbent Senator Robert Menendez is favored over State Senator Joe Kyrillos by twelve points (45 to 33%), according to the latest statewide poll by Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind.

"Say what you want about New Jersey, but our residents can't be pigeonholed politically," said Krista Jenkins, Executive Director of PublicMind and professor of political science. "We have a Republican governor with strong approval, and yet registered voters are leaning heavily toward Democratic candidates for the White House and U.S. Senate."

The lead that President Obama has over presumptive nominee Mitt Romney is notable in light of other numbers that point to discontent over his leadership. Only a third of registered voters (33%) believe the country is moving in the right direction, and less than a majority (49%) approve of the way he is handling his job as president.

"The fact that registered voters seem to prefer Democrats for the White House and U.S. Senate yet support Republican Chris Christie could be explained by differences in parties at the state and national level," according to Jenkins. "Republicans at the national level have taken on more divisive social issues, something that seems to not sit well with New Jerseyans, hence the support for Christie at home and Democrats Obama and Menendez in Washington."

Despite the lead that Menendez holds over Kyrillos, there's some good news for the senator from Monmouth County. More than half of all registered voters (57%) remain uncertain about who he is, and among them the majority are either positively predisposed toward the senator or have no opinion. The trend is in the right direction for Kyrillos, since the same question asked in May resulted in 68 percent of registered voters indicating their unfamiliarity with Senator Kyrillos.

"As voter attention begins to turn more closely to the election, Senator Kyrillos doesn't appear to have a lot of baggage weighing him down," said Jenkins. "This could work to his advantage given the double digit lead that Senator Menendez has going into the general election."

This is especially true given the sizable percentage across both major parties and independents who remain unfamiliar with Mr. Kyrillos. Slightly fewer than a majority (46%) of Republicans, and almost two-thirds of Democrats and independents (63 and 59%, respectively) say they haven't heard of the senator. Moreover, among both Democrats and independents, relatively few have an unfavorable opinion of him, and of those who have heard of him, most remain unsure or have no opinion about Senator Kyrillos. Conversely, Senator Menendez receives a higher percentage of unfavorable ratings among those whom he'd obviously like to woo in the general election, independents and Democrats.

Another notable finding from the survey is attitudes on the Mayor of Newark, Cory Booker. Back in May when we last asked about Mayor Booker, his favorability was at 47 percent, an eight percentage point increase that followed on the heels of him rescuing a constituent from a burning building. Since then, his defense of private equity capital was newsworthy in the context of the presidential election. Despite some controversy around these remarks, registered voters remain favorable toward Mayor Booker, with a solid 48 percent indicating they are “very” or “somewhat” favorable toward Mr. Booker.

“New Jerseyans seem positively predisposed toward Mayor Booker these days,” said Jenkins. “This certainly helps Mayor Booker should his ambitions extend beyond the reaches of Newark.”

The Fairleigh Dickinson University statewide poll of 945 registered and unregistered voters was conducted by telephone with both landline and cell phones from July 23 through July 29, 2012, and has a margin of error of +/-3.3 percentage points.

*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 July 23 through July 29, 2012, using a randomly selected sample of 945 residents statewide. Both registered and unregistered voters were interviewed for this survey. One can be 95 percent confident that the error attributable to sampling has a range of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points among registered voters, and 3.3 percentage points among the entire sample. 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.

Tables: Registered voters

Right direction/Wrong track Obama Administration

In your opinion, do you believe that the country is moving in the right direction or do you believe it is on the wrong track?

	All	Party			Gender	
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Men	Women
Right direction	33%	53	28	7	33	32
Wrong track	54%	32	56	86	57	52
Unsure/refused	14%	16	17	7	10	16

Right/wrong direction trend

	2012			2011					
	May	Mar	Jan	Oct	Sep	May	Apr	Feb	Jan
Right direction	33%	37	28	22	18	34	32	39	35
Wrong track	56%	53	61	67	71	51	57	49	52
Unsure/refused	10%	9	10	10	11	15	11	12	13

	2010						
	Nov	Oct	Aug	May	Mar 30	Mar 3	Jan
Right direction	31	30	33	34	42	38	35

Wrong track	58	60	54	52	51	52	53
Unsure/mixed	11	10	13	13	8	10	12

	2009							2008
	Oct 30	Oct 9	Sep	Jul	Apr	Mar	Jan	Oct
Right direction	41	41	44	49	51	51	34	13
Wrong track	50	49	46	41	37	37	52	78
Unsure/refused	8	9	10	11	11	12	13	9

Approve/Disapprove Obama as President

In general, do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as President?

	All	Party			Gender	
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Men	Women
Approve	49%	79	40	10	48	49
Disapprove	41%	11	43	84	43	38
Unsure/refused	10%	10	17	6	8	13

Obama approval, previous measures

	2012			2011						2010					
	May	Mar	Jan	Oct	Sep	May	Apr	Feb	Jan	Nov	Oct	Aug	May	Mar	Jan
Approve	50	51	46	44	44	55	47	54	47	51	47	49	49	53	48
Disapprove	42	42	45	47	47	36	42	36	41	40	43	40	40	38	41
Unsure	7	7	9	9	9	9	11	10	12	9	10	11	11	9	11

2009

	Oct	Se	Jun	Ap	Mar	Jan*
Approve	52	56	61	66	66	72
Disapprove	37	36	29	22	21	10
Unsure	10	8	10	12	13	18

*January 2009 question asked how Obama was handling his transition to the presidency

November election for President

In November, there will be an election for President of the United States. I know it's early, but let me ask...In a race for president between...and...Who would you vote for?

	All	Party			Gender		Presidential Approval		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Men	Women	Approve	Unsure	Disapprove
Barack Obama, the Democrat	49%	83	36	9	46	51	87	37	6
Mitt Romney, the Republican	36%	7	33	82	40	33	6	15	79
Unsure/someone else	15%	10	31	9	14	16	7	48	15

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...?

	All	Party			Gender		Presidential Approval		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Men	Women	Approve	Unsure	Disapprove
Robert Menendez, the Democrat	45%	78	28	9	46	44	73	34	14
Joe Kyrillos, the Republican	33%	8	27	76	36	30	9	15	67
Unsure/someone else	22%	14	45	15	18	26	18	51	19

Name Recognition

Now I'm going to ask about some people. If you haven't heard of one of them, just say so. Have you heard of ...[Rotate list]? Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of...[Match rotation]? Would you say that be very or somewhat?

[ROTATE NAMES]	Haven't heard of	Very Favorable	Somewhat Favorable	Somewhat Unfavorable	Very Unfavorable	No opinion/unsure
Joe Kyrillos	57%	4	12	3	2	22
Robert Menendez	20%	13	23	13	10	22
Cory Booker	31%	26	22	4	2	14

	Haven't heard of	Very favorable	Somewhat favorable	Unsure/no opinion	Somewhat Unfavorable	Very unfavorable
Robert Menendez	20%	13%	23	22	13	10
<i>Republicans only</i>	16	4	10	26	22	22
<i>Independents only</i>	22	4	28	22	15	10
<i>Democrats only</i>	21	23	32	17	5	2

	Haven't heard of	Very favorable	Somewhat favorable	Unsure/no opinion	Somewhat Unfavorable	Very unfavorable
Joe Kyrillos	57%	4%	12%	22%	3%	2%
<i>Republicans only</i>	46	7	19	25	1	2
<i>Independents only</i>	59	3	15	22	0	1
<i>Democrats only</i>	63	2	6	20	6	3

Exact Question Wording and Order

US1. *In your opinion, do you believe the country is moving in the right direction or is it on the wrong track?*

- 1 Right direction
- 2 Wrong track
- 8 DK/Unsure [Vol]
- 9 Refused. [Vol]

US2. *In general, do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as President?*

- 1 Approve
- 2 Disapprove
- 8 DK/Unsure/mixed [Vol]
- 9 Refused [Vol]

US3. *In November, there will be an election for President of the United States. I know it's early, but let me ask.... In a race for president between ... and Who would you vote for?*

ROTATE ORDER WITHIN QUESTION

- 1 Barack Obama, the Democrat
- 2 Mitt Romney, the Republican
- 8 DK [vol. ASK US3a]

US3a *Which way do you lean?*

ROTATE NAMES

- 1 Barack Obama, the Democrat
- 2 Mitt Romney, the Republican
- 8 DK; someone else (VOL)

US4 *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
- 2 Joe Kyrillos, the Republican
- 8 DK [ASK US4a"]

US4a *Which way do you lean?*

ROTATE NAMES

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

NJ2. *Now I'm going ask about some people. If you haven't heard of one of them, just say so. Have you heard of ... [ROTATE LIST]? Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of... [MATCH ROTATION]? Would that be very or somewhat?*

NJ2b Joe Kyrillos

NJ2c Robert Menendez

NJ2e Cory Booker

Sample Characteristics (%)**Gender**

	Registered voters	Full sample
Male	48	49
Female	52	51

Age

	Registered voters	Full sample
18-29	13	16
30-44	23	23
45-59	32	31
60+	30	28
Refused	2	2

Race/Ethnicity

	Registered voters	Full sample
White	69	67
Black/African-American	11	11
Latino or Hispanic	11	11
Asian	5	7
Other/refused	5	5

Public employee household

	Registered voters	Full sample
Yes	20	19
No	78	79
Unsure/refused	2	2

Party identification

	Registered voters	Full sample
Democrat/Lean Democrat	47	46
Independent/DK/refused	21	23
Republican/Lean Republican	33	32