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BLAST FROM THE PAST: LEAD FOR BOOKER COMPARABLE TO BELL'S LAST OPPONENT IN 1978

November's Senate election pits the incumbent, Democrat Cory Booker, against an underdog, Republican Jeff Bell. While most are focused on the horserace numbers between the two, Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind expands the focus by asking likely voters not just about the current contest involving Bell, but also their preferences in a hypothetical rematch between Bell and his 1978 opponent, Democrat Bill Bradley.

Beginning with how Bell fares against his current opponent, the poll finds that Booker's lead remains formidable at 56 to 40 percent, with Booker outpacing Bell's favorables by an almost two-to-one margin (57% versus 29%, respectively). Despite Bell's history in New Jersey politics, voters remain unsure of their opinion of him (49%).

"Since the interviews were done more than two weeks out from the election, numbers are certainly likely to change. But a lead of this magnitude is good news for the incumbent Senator," said Krista Jenkins, director of the poll and professor of political science. "It's not a political environment that's particularly warm for incumbents, but it looks like Booker has little to be worried about as the campaign season draws to a close."

The same poll finds that Bell polls worse now than 35 years ago when he first ran for a New Jersey U.S. Senate seat and lost. In a hypothetical rematch between Bell and then-competitor Bradley today, PublicMind pegs him at 36 percent whereas in 1978 he wound up with 43 percent of the vote.

"Some things get better with age," said Jenkins, "but others things just never change. The consistency in findings, despite a decades long lag, speaks to the difficulty that Bell is having connecting with a new generation of voters."

Booker, however, is keeping pace with Bradley's 1978 numbers. Booker checks in with 56 percent support among likely voters while Bradley finished with 55 percent of the vote in 1978. Booker is also eclipsing the lead over Bell that Bradley ended up with in 1978 (16% versus 12%, respectively).

The same survey finds that Bell's social and economic conservatism place him out of step with many New Jersey likely voters. For example, Bell has campaigned on returning U.S. monetary policy to the gold standard, an issue that many are paying little, if any, attention to. Almost three quarters (71%) of respondents say they are paying little or no attention to the gold standard debate. Furthermore, more disagree (32%) than agree (23%) with returning the U.S. to the gold standard, something that the U.S. did

away with under the Nixon administration. Almost half (46%) are simply unsure how to evaluate the merits of monetary policy and the gold standard.

In past statements and in writing, Bell has also offered his thoughts on social issues ranging from climate change to same-sex marriage to no-fault divorce laws. Across all three issues, the majority of Garden State likely voters are on the opposite side of the issue as Bell. On the issue of same sex marriage, Bell has expressed his support for a constitutional amendment that defines marriage as between a man and a woman only. The majority of likely voters, however, believe same sex marriage should be permissible (52%). Bell has also opined on the effects of climate change, suggesting its manmade origin is unproven. However, more likely voters consider climate change manmade (41%) than believe it's simply the result of normal changes in the Earth's atmosphere (34%). And finally, PublicMind asked likely voters their thoughts on the ease with which couples can divorce. Bell has indicated a belief that no-fault divorce laws are problematical, preferring instead a system that requires someone to demonstrate accountability for a marital failure. Nearly three-quarters of likely voters (74%) say they favor the no-fault system, with significantly fewer (13%) who prefer someone to take the blame.

“New Jersey is a tough place for social conservatives like Bell,” said Jenkins. “Booker is certainly benefitting from being the incumbent with more money and name recognition. But it doesn't hurt that his opponent Bell holds beliefs that separate him from so many of those whose support he needs.”

As for how, if at all, President Obama is affecting voter choices in the Senate race, PublicMind put the Booker vs. Bell question to half of the respondents after they were asked their views on the president. The other half of respondents were asked for their Senate preferences before they were queried about Obama. When asked about Barack Obama's job performance before the U.S. Senate race, 59 percent support Booker and 37 percent say they support Bell, a spread of 22 points. When Senate preferences are measured before any mention of the president, the gap narrows to 15 points, with 56 percent supporting Booker to Bell's 41 percent support.

“With more Democrats than Republicans in the state, it's possible that reminding voters of the president inspires greater support for the Democratic Senate candidate, Cory Booker, whereas asking first about the Senate without any partisan prime provokes a less partisan response to the Senate question,” said Jenkins. “Regardless, it doesn't look like the president is doing much to move the needle one way or another once the margin of error is accounted for.”

Booker is also doing significantly better among women than men. Men are evenly divided in their Senate preference, with equal numbers supporting Booker and Bell (48% each). However, among women, Booker is the favorite by an approximate two to one margin. Almost two-thirds (65%) say they favor Booker, with a third (32%) who say they'll vote for Bell.

Finally, the same poll asked about the proposed amendment to the state’s constitution that would allow judges to deny bail to violent defendants who may pose a threat to public safety if released. Almost three quarters (71%) say they’ve heard little or nothing at all about the amendment. Despite this, over three-quarters of respondents (77%) say they intend to support the amendment when they cast their ballot in November.

The Fairleigh Dickinson University poll of 525 likely voters in New Jersey was conducted by telephone with both landline and cell phones from October 13 through October 19, 2014, and has a margin of error of +/-4.3 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 October 13 through October 19, 2014 using a randomly selected sample of 525 likely voters drawn from a list of registered voters who reside in New Jersey. Likely voters are determined through a screening process that accounts for a variety of factors considered to be predictive of one’s future voting behavior, such as past voting behavior, cognitive political engagement, stated intention to vote in the current election. One can be 95 percent confident that the error attributable to sampling has a range of +/- 4.3 percentage points. 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 landline 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.

The following tables are based on all registered voters in the sample.

Tables [May exceed 100 due to rounding]

<i>In the upcoming election for Senate, which candidate are you most likely to vote for? Jeff Bell, the Republican, or Cory Booker, the Democrat? [rotate]</i>											
		PID			Gender		Race		Age		
	ALL	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	White	Non-white	18-34	35-59	60+
Booker	56%	96	49	12	48	65	49	83	64	58	50
Bell	40%	3	40	82	48	32	46	17	30	37	47
Other (vol)	1%	1	2	1	1	0	1	0	0	2	0
Unsure(vol)	3%	1	9	5	3	3	4	0	6	3	3
Ref (vol)	1%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

In the upcoming election for Senate, which candidate are you most likely to vote for? Jeff Bell, the Republican, or Cory Booker, the Democrat? [rotate]

	Obama approval asked before Senate preferences [N = 278]	Obama approval asked after Senate preferences [N = 247]
Booker	59	56
Bell	37	41
Other (vol)	0	1
Unsure (vol)	4	2
Ref (vol)	0	0

Regardless of how you're going to vote, do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of [insert]

	Favorable	Unfavorable	Unsure
Jeff Bell	29%	22%	49%
Cory Booker	57%	34%	9%

And if the race for U.S. Senate were between Jeff Bell, the Republican, or Bill Bradley, the Democrat, for whom would you vote?[rotate]

	ALL	PID			Gender		Race		Age		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	White	Non-white	18-34	35-59	60+
Bradley	57%	95	50	16	51	63	51	78	57	59	54
Bell	36%	1	33	78	42	28	41	17	32	33	41
Other (vol)	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
Unsure (vol)	7%	5	17	7	6	9	8	5	12	8	6
Ref (vol)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Do you agree or disagree [rotate] with those who argue the U.S. should value money based on the price of gold, or are you unsure?

	ALL	PID			Senate	
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Booker	Bell
Agree	23%	12	21	34	12	37
Disagree	32%	38	42	22	39	22
DK (vol)	46%	49	35	45	48	42
RefU.S.ed (vol)	0	1	2	0	1	0

Some are proposing a U.S. return to the gold standard which means paper currency would be valued according to the price of gold. How much, if at all, are you following this debate?

	ALL	PID			Senate	
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Booker	Bell
A lot	10%	7	8	14	7	15
Some	19%	16	19	22	18	21
JU.S.t a little	22%	22	36	19	23	19
Not at all	49%	54	35	46	52	45
DK/Ref (vol)	0	2	2	0	1	1

Some say marriage is between a man and a woman, while others say members of the same sex should be allowed to marry. [Rotate] What about you?

	PID				Senate	
	ALL	Dem	Ind	Rep	Booker	Bell
Between man and woman	35%	16	30	58	15	60
Same sex marriage ok	52%	74	47	29	73	26
Both (vol)	9%	8	11	9	8	10
DK/Ref (vol)	4%	3	12	4	3	5

Some say climate change is manmade, while others say it is the result of normal changes in the atmosphere. [Rotate] What about you?

	PID				Senate	
	ALL	Dem	Ind	Rep	Booker	Bell
Manmade	41%	69	27	12	61	12
Normal change in atmosphere	34%	13	38	59	17	60
Both (vol)	20%	16	29	22	19	19
DK/Ref (vol)	6%	3	6	7	3	9

Some say divorce laws should require someone to be at fault for the breakup of a marriage, while others say couples should be free to break up without having to prove someone was at fault. [Rotate] What about you?

	PID				Senate	
	ALL	Dem	Ind	Rep	Booker	Bell
Require fault	13%	10	19	15	10	18
No fault	74%	80	71	69	79	68
Both (vol)	4%	4	2	3	5	2
DK/Ref (vol)	9%	6	8	13	6	12

On November's ballot voters will be asked to approve an amendment to the state constitution that would allow judges to deny bail to violent defendants who may pose a threat to public safety if released. How much have you heard or read about this proposed amendment? (READ LIST)

	PID				Gender		Race		Age		
	ALL	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	White	Non-white	18-34	35-59	60+
A lot	11%	9	19	10	13	9	11	11	6	11	13
Some	18%	19	17	18	20	16	21	11	11	14	27
JU.S.t a little	25%	27	26	24	26	25	24	25	23	26	25
Nothing at all	46%	45	38	47	41	50	43	53	60	49	35
DK/Ref (vol)	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1

If you had to vote today, would you vote yes or no on this amendment?[rotate]

	PID				Gender		Race		Age		
	ALL	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	White	Non-white	18-34	35-59	60+
Yes	77%	71	79	85	77	77	79	73	73	77	79
No	11%	14	8	7	13	9	10	14	10	12	10
DK/Ref (vol)	12%	16	13	9	10	14	11	13	17	11	11

<i>Do you approve or disapprove of the job that Barack Obama is doing as president? [rotate]</i>											
	PID			Gender		Race		Age			
	All	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	White	Non-white	18-34	35-59	60+
Approve	40%	78	19	2	33	49	33	68	44	42	38
Disapprove	51%	9	73	94	59	42	59	22	44	50	54
DK/Ref (vol)	9%	13	8	4	8	10	8	10	12	8	8

<i>In your opinion, do you believe the country is moving in the right direction or is it on the wrong track? [rotate]</i>											
	PID			Gender		Race		Age			
	All	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	White	Non-white	18-34	35-59	60+
Right direction	30%	57	15	3	27	34	24	53	38	31	26
Wrong track	61%	26	81	95	67	54	67	36	57	61	63
DK(vol)	8%	15	4	2	5	11	8	10	6	7	10
Ref (vol)	1%	2	0	0	1	2	1	2	0	1	2

Exact Question Wording and Order

Note: ½ of sample asked U.S.1 and U.S.2 here; remaining half asked later in the survey

U.S.1 Do you approve or disapprove [rotate] of the job that Barack Obama is doing as President?

- 1 Approve
- 2 Disapprove
- 8 DK/Ref (vol)

U.S.2. In your opinion, do you think things in the United States are moving in the right direction or are they on the wrong track?[rotate]

- 1 Right direction
- 2 Wrong track
- 8 DK/Unsure (vol)

SEN1 In the upcoming election for Senate, which candidate are you most likely to vote for? Jeff Bell, the Republican, or Cory Booker, the Democrat? [rotate]

- 1 Jeff Bell, the Republican
- 2 Cory Booker, the Democrat
- 3 Someone else [vol]
- 4 Unsure [vol; ask SEN1A]
- 9 Refused (vol)

SEN1A Which way do you lean? ROTATE NAMES

- 1 Jeff Bell, the Republican
- 2 Cory Booker, the Democrat
- 3 Someone else [vol]
- 8 DK (vol)

SEN2 *And if the race for U.S. Senate were between Jeff Bell, the Republican, or Bill Bradley, the Democrat, for whom would you vote? [rotate]*

- 1 Jeff Bell, the Republican
- 2 Bill Bradley, the Democrat
- 3 Someone else [vol]
- 4 Unsure [vol; ask SEN2A]
- 9 Refused (vol)

SEN2A *Which way do you lean? ROTATE NAMES*

- 1 Jeff Bell, the Republican
- 2 Bill Bradley, the Democrat
- 3 Someone else (vol)
- 8 DK (vol)

ID *Regardless of how you're going to vote, do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of [insert] ROTATE NAMES*

- IDA Jeff Bell, the Republican
- IDB Cory Booker, the Republican

IDA *Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of [INSERT]?*

- 1 Favorable
- 2 Unfavorable
- 8 Don't Know (vol) (skip to next name)

IDB *Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of [INSERT]?*

- 1 Favorable
- 2 Unfavorable
- 8 Don't Know (vol) (skip to next name)

Still thinking about the upcoming elections....

BAIL1 *On November's ballot voters will be asked to approve an amendment to the state constitution that would allow judges to deny bail to violent defendants who may pose a threat to public safety if released. How much have you heard or read about this proposed amendment? (READ LIST)*

- 1 A lot
- 2 Some
- 3 Just a little
- 4 Nothing at all
- 9 DK/Ref (vol)

BAIL2 *If you had to vote today, would you vote yes or no on this amendment?[rotate]*

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 8 DK/Refused (vol)

Changing topics...

GS1 Some are proposing a U.S. return to the gold standard which means paper currency would be valued according to the price of gold. How much, if at all, are you following this debate? Would you say you're paying...A lot, some, just a little, or no attention at all to this issue?

- 1 A lot
- 2 Some
- 3 Just a little
- 4 No attention at all
- 8 DK/Refused (vol)

GS2 Do you agree or disagree [rotate] with those who argue the U.S. should value money based on the price of gold, or are you unsure?

- 1 Agree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Unsure
- 8 DK/Refused (vol)

Now I'd like to ask you about some social issues...

ISSUES1 Some say marriage is between a man and a woman, while others say members of the same sex should be allowed to marry [ROTATE]. What about you? Do you believe...marriage is between a man and a woman OR do you believe same sex couples should be allowed to marry; same sex couples should be allowed to marry OR marriage is between a man and a woman.

- 1 Marriage between man and woman
- 2 Members of same sex should be allowed to marry
- 3 Both (vol)
- 8 DK/Refused (vol)

ISSUES2 Some say climate change is manmade, while others say it is the result of normal changes in the atmosphere [ROTATE]. What about you? Is climate change...man made OR the result of normal changes in the atmosphere; the result of normal changes in the atmosphere OR manmade.

- 1 Manmade
- 2 Normal changes in the atmosphere
- 3 Both (vol)
- 8 DK/unsure (vol)

ISSUES3 Some say divorce laws should require someone to be at fault for the breakup of a marriage, while others say couples should be free to break up without having to prove someone was at fault [ROTATE]. What about you? Do you believe...fault should be established in a divorce OR people should be free to break up without having to prove that someone was at fault... people should be free to break up without having to prove that someone was at fault OR fault should be established in a divorce

- 1 Should have to prove fault
- 2 Should be able to break up without proving fault
- 3 Both (vol)
- 8 DK/unsure (vol)

Sample Characteristics

		Likely voters N = 525; MoE = +/- 4.3
Gender	<i>Male</i>	52%
	<i>Female</i>	48%
Age	<i>18-34</i>	13%
	<i>35-59</i>	49%
	<i>60+</i>	38%
Race	<i>Refused</i>	1%
	<i>White</i>	75%
	<i>African American</i>	11%
	<i>Hispanic</i>	9%
	<i>Asian</i>	3%
	<i>Other/Refused</i>	3%
Party (with leaners)	<i>Dem</i>	48%
	<i>Ind/DK/Refused</i>	11%
	<i>Repub</i>	42%