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GARDEN STATERS LEAN TOWARD A NO ON KAVANAUGH TESTIMONY HAS LITTLE EFFECT, PARTY AND TRUMP APPEAR MORE IMPORTANT

Fairleigh Dickinson University, October 2, 2018 – The Senate hearings to fill the Supreme Court vacancy left by retiring Associate Justice Anthony Kennedy has captivated the attention of most Garden State residents, and opinion is divided over whether his replacement, Brett Kavanaugh, should be confirmed. These and other findings from the most recent statewide survey of adults, including likely voters in the November election, from the Fairleigh Dickinson University Poll shed light on how dramatic developments in Washington, D.C. are being received in the Garden State.

Right now, among New Jersey adults, 32 percent support his confirmation with 49 percent who say he should be denied a seat on the nation’s highest court. Opinions are similar among likely voters in the November election, with 38 percent favoring confirmation and over half (53%) who believe the Senate should move on to another candidate.

Attentiveness to the hearings is high. Among all adults polls, 47 percent say they are following the hearings very closely, with another third (35%) who are following it somewhat closely. However, among likely voters, even more are plugged in, with 62 percent who report very close attention and 32 percent following developments somewhat closely.

“Even though the testimony last week was followed by a majority of those with whom we spoke, Dr. Christine Blasey Ford’s and Judge Kavanaugh’s appearances did little to change minds. When we look at those who were interviewed before Ford and Kavanaugh appeared before the Senate and after Ford’s allegations came to light, and compare their responses to those who were interviewed after last week’s testimony, about the same numbers said they either support or reject the Kavanaugh nomination,” said Krista Jenkins, director of the poll and a professor of politics at Fairleigh Dickinson University.

Among all respondents interviewed before the testimony, a third (34%) favored confirmation and virtually the same offered their support after the testimony (31%). Rejection was also endorsed by about the same number before as after, with 44 percent favoring a no vote before they heard from Ford and Kavanaugh and 50 percent saying the same after the testimony. The statistically insignificant differences before and after the hearings are similar to what can be seen among likely voters. Before the testimony, 36 percent favored confirmation and after the hearing confirmation support remained virtually unchanged at 38 percent. A two percentage point difference separates the pre- and post-testimony attitudes among likely voters favoring rejection (51 versus 53%).

Kavanaugh’s unfavorable rating is higher than that for Ford. 43 percent of adults and 47 percent of likely voters regard the judge unfavorably, as compared with 18 percent of all adults and 23 percent of likely voters for Ford. Unfamiliarity with Ford is higher than for Kavanaugh, and both actors in this political drama rank about the same when it comes to being perceived favorably by all adults and likely voters in the November election. Around a third of respondents – including likely voters – have a favorable opinion of Brett Kavanaugh, with slightly more saying the same for Dr. Ford.

“In order to really understand what’s motivating attitudes toward the Kavanaugh confirmation, you need to look at the things through the lens of partisanship the attitudes toward the president,” said Jenkins.

Three-fourths of Democrats want to see Kavanaugh rejected (78%), as do 77 percent of Trump disapprovers. Conversely, almost the same numbers of Republicans (72%) and Trump supporters (81%) want the Senate to confirm Judge Kavanaugh.

“The Supreme Court, long considered insulated from partisan affairs, is no longer. People are looking at what’s going on and appear to be influenced by their partisan leanings, as well as their opinions of the president. Of course, there’s always more to attitudes than party and presidential approval. But, a partisan lens seems to be important for unpacking opinions about the institution that’s supposed to be the least political,” said Jenkins.

It’s also worth noting that gender differences are apparent in regard to support for Kavanaugh’s confirmation. About double the number of men (42%) than women (22%) support his confirmation, with a majority of women (55%) and fewer men (42%) favoring rejection. And, by about a two-to-one ratio, Kavanaugh is upside down with women in his favorability rating (21% favorable to 47% unfavorable). Among men, opinion is equally divided with 38 percent who hold favorable and unfavorable opinions toward the judge.

“Kavanaugh has a number of obstacles when it comes to women, from concerns that he may be supportive of overturning *Roe v. Wade* to allegations that he mistreated women. Since he’s not running for office, and has to win the support of a largely male Senate, disfavor among women may not matter. But, if he makes it to the court, it might be nice to have the support and trust of both men and women” said Jenkins.

Finally, race, education, and age provide interesting insights into the kinds of things that seem to distinguish Kavanaugh supporters versus detractors. People of color in the Garden State are largely opposed to Kavanaugh’s confirmation (57%) as compared with white respondents (44%). Millennials are among those least likely to favor his confirmation (20%), with significantly more (but still a minority) of the 35 and older crowd saying the same. And, a majority of those with college degrees (54%) favor his rejection, as compared with 39 percent of those without a college degree.

Methodology - The Fairleigh Dickinson University Poll was conducted by landline and cellular telephone September 26-30, 2018 using a random sample of adults in New Jersey aged 18 and older (N = 805). Results have a margin of sampling error of +/- 3.8 percentage points, including the design effect. Interviews were conducted in English. Among likely voters, or those whose responses to a variety of questions about their behavior and attentiveness concerning the November election suggest a likelihood of voting, 508 respondents were identified. The sampling error for this group is +/- 4.3, including the design effect.

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.

Interviews were conducted by Clear Insights Group of Lehi, Utah, 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.

The total combined sample is mathematically weighted to match known demographics of age, sex, and race. 273 interviews were conducted on landlines and 532 were conducted on cellular telephones.

The sample was purchased from Marketing Systems Group and the research was funded by Fairleigh Dickinson University.

The Fairleigh Dickinson University Poll received an “A” rating from statistician Nate Silver’s FiveThirtyEight blog. The ratings measure both accuracy and bias for all major polling services in the United States, providing an update to similar research the poll watchers conducted in 2014. The Fairleigh Dickinson University Poll’s “A” rating puts it in the top 14 of the more than 380 polling institutes reviewed and graded from A+ through F. The Fairleigh Dickinson University Poll was found to have a 94 percent accuracy rate for predicting election results, and is one of only two A-rated polling institutes with zero bias to their rankings.

Tables

		All respondents	Likely voters
How closely have you been following the confirmation hearings for the US Supreme Court for Brett Kavanaugh?	Very closely	47%	62%
	Somewhat closely	35%	32%
	Not at all closely	18%	6%
	Don’t know (vol)	1%	0
	Refused (vol)	0	0

		Party ID			Gender		Race/Ethnicity		Age			Education		Trump approval	
		Dem	Repub	Ind	Male	Female	White	Non-White	18-34	35-54	55+	HS or Less / Some College	College +	Approve	Disapprove
How closely have you been following the confirmation hearings for the US Supreme Court for Brett Kavanaugh?	1 Very closely	48%	53%	32%	53%	41%	52%	37%	35%	43%	60%	37%	52%	57%	45%
	2 Somewhat closely	36%	34%	40%	31%	38%	33%	38%	40%	36%	30%	37%	34%	30%	38%
	3 Not at all closely	16%	13%	27%	15%	20%	14%	25%	26%	20%	9%	25%	13%	12%	17%
	8 (DO NOT READ) Don't know	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%
	9 (DO NOT READ) Refused	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

		All respondents	Likely voters
In your opinion, should Brett Kavanaugh be confirmed or rejected [rotate] for a place on the US Supreme Court?	Confirmed	32%	38%
	Rejected	49%	53%
	Don’t know (vol)	18%	9%
	Refused (vol)	2%	1%

		All respondents		Likely voters	
		Before Ford testimony	After Ford testimony	Before Ford testimony	After Ford testimony
In your opinion, should Brett Kavanaugh be confirmed or rejected [rotate] for a place on the US Supreme Court?	Confirmed	34%	31%	36^	38%
	Rejected	44%	50%	51%	53%
	Don’t know (vol)	21%	17%	12%	8%
	Refused (vol)	1%	2%	2%	1%

		Party ID			Gender		Race/Ethnicity		Age			Education		Trump approval	
		Dem	Repub	Ind	Male	Female	White	Non-white	18-34	35-54	55+	HS or Less / Some College	College +	Approve	Disapprove
In your opinion, should Brett Kavanaugh be confirmed or rejected [rotate] for a place on the US Supreme Court?	1 Confirmed	7%	72%	32%	42%	22%	38%	18%	20%	31%	42%	34%	30%	81%	7%
	2 Rejected	78%	10%	40%	42%	55%	44%	57%	53%	47%	47%	39%	54%	3%	77%
	8 (DO NOT READ) Don't know	15%	17%	25%	14%	21%	16%	22%	25%	20%	9%	25%	14%	15%	15%
	9 (DO NOT READ) Refused	1%	1%	4%	2%	2%	1%	3%	2%	3%	1%	2%	2%	1%	1%

I'm going to read you a few names. Please tell me if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of each, or if you have not heard of them before tonight. [Rotate names]

		All respondents	Likely voters
Brett Kavanaugh	Favorable	30%	36%
	Unfavorable	43%	47%
	Never heard of	15%	8%
	Don't know (vol)	12%	8%
	Refused (vol)	1%	1%

		Party ID			Gender		Race/Ethnicity		Age			Education		Trump Approval	
		Dem	Repub	Ind	Male	Female	White	Non-white	18-34	35-54	55+	HS or Less / Some College	College +	Approve	Disapprove
Brett Kavanaugh	1 Favorable	7%	69%	23%	38%	21%	36%	16%	18%	28%	40%	29%	30%	75%	8%
	2 Unfavorable	71%	8%	27%	38%	47%	43%	44%	46%	45%	39%	34%	48%	4%	68%
	3 Never Heard	14%	11%	27%	12%	18%	11%	23%	25%	14%	8%	21%	12%	12%	14%
	8 (DO NOT READ) Don't know	8%	12%	21%	11%	13%	9%	16%	11%	12%	12%	15%	10%	9%	10%
	9 (DO NOT READ) Refused	0%	0%	2%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%

		All respondents	Likely voters
Christine Blasey Ford	Favorable	35%	40%
	Unfavorable	18%	23%
	Never heard of	32%	21%
	Don't know (vol)	15%	15%
	Refused (vol)	2%	2%

		Party ID			Gender		Race/Ethnicity		Age			Education		Trump approval	
		Dem	Repub	Ind	Male	Female	White	Non-white	18-34	35-54	55+	HS or Less / Some College	College +	Approve	Disapprove
Christine Blasey Ford	1 Favorable	53%	13%	21%	30%	38%	38%	29%	33%	32%	39%	24%	40%	11%	51%
	2 Unfavorable	6%	40%	8%	23%	12%	20%	12%	12%	19%	21%	16%	18%	41%	6%
	3 Never Heard	30%	29%	46%	30%	34%	28%	40%	42%	32%	23%	44%	25%	28%	32%
	8 (DO NOT READ) Don't know	10%	17%	20%	15%	15%	12%	18%	13%	14%	15%	15%	15%	18%	11%
	9 (DO NOT READ) Refused	1%	2%	5%	2%	1%	2%	1%	0%	3%	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%

Exact question wording and order

US1 through NJ4C withheld for subsequent release

I'm going to read you a few names. Please tell me if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of each, or if you have not heard of them before tonight.

[Rotate names]

NJ4D Brett Kavanaugh
 NJ4E Christine Blasey Ford

- 1 Favorable
- 2 Unfavorable
- 3 Never heard
- 8 DK (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

US3 How closely have you been following the confirmation hearings for the US Supreme Court for Brett Kavanaugh?

- 1 Very closely

- 2 Somewhat closely
- 3 Not at all closely
- 8 DK (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

US4 In your opinion, should Brett Kavanaugh be confirmed or rejected [ROTATE] for a place on the US Supreme Court?

- 1 Confirmed
- 2 Rejected
- 8 DK (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

Weighed sample characteristics
All respondents

Male	49%
Female	51%
Democrat (with leaners)	52%
Republican (with leaners)	33%
Independent	11%
18-34	28%
35-59	35%
60+	35%
White	64%
African-American	11%
Latino	15%
Asian	7%
Other/refused	3%