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Sen. Menendez Enters New Election Cycle

With one more national election behind him, U.S. Sen. Bob Menendez now faces one ahead — his own. And according to the most recent statewide poll by Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind™, 31% of his New Jersey constituency have a favorable opinion of him and 25% have an unfavorable opinion. Another 44% either are unsure (29%) or haven't heard of him at all (15%).

"Those are fairly anemic numbers for an energetic guy who has already served five years," said Peter Woolley, a political scientist and director of the poll.

Menendez, a Democrat, was appointed to the seat in January 2006 by then-Gov. Jon Corzine and was elected in Nov. 2006. His seat is up for election in 2012.

Among Democrats, 17% say they don't recognize Menendez's name, 26% say they are unsure or have no opinion of him, 10% have an unfavorable opinion, but 47% say their opinion is favorable. By contrast, New Jersey's senior senator, Democrat Frank Lautenberg, rates 42% favorable to 31% unfavorable among all voters, and among Democrats, 58% have a favorable view of the octogenarian, while 12% have an unfavorable view.

"When Menendez was elected in 2006, his campaign tapped into the unpopularity of the president and voters' dissatisfaction with the direction of the country," said Woolley. "Next time it will be Menendez's Republican opponent who will try to exploit presidential unpopularity and concern over the direction of the country," said Woolley.

In November 2006, just before Menendez's defeat of Republican Tom Kean Jr., the Fairleigh Dickinson University poll showed that New Jersey voters by a margin of two-to-one [disapproved of President George W. Bush](#) (63%-32%) and just [22% said](#) the country was headed in the right direction.

For now, President Barack Obama is ahead in the Garden State: With the heat of the midterm elections behind voters, 51% approve of the president and 40% disapprove, up from 47%-43% in October's run-up to the mid-term elections.

However, 58% say the country is on the wrong track, compared to just 31% who say it is headed in the right direction. Men and women agree the country is on the wrong track, and Democrats split on the question 47%-42%.

"When voters are dissatisfied with the direction of the country, it is incumbents who get the blame," said Woolley. "I know at least two Democrats who are hoping that dissatisfaction will abate a little before the next national election in 2012."

The Fairleigh Dickinson University poll of 804 registered voters statewide was conducted by telephone from Nov. 15, 2010, through Nov. 21, 2010, and has a margin of error of +/-3.5 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, Questions, and Tables

The most recent survey by Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind was conducted by telephone from Nov. 15, 2010, through Nov 21, 2010, using a randomly selected sample of 804 registered voters statewide. The margin of error for a sample of 804 randomly selected respondents is +/- 3.5 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 land-line phone number (including those with unlisted numbers) an equal chance of being selected. The sample is mathematically weighted to approximate known demographics of age, race and gender.

Question: In your opinion, do you believe that the country is moving in the right direction or do you believe it has gotten off on the wrong track?						
	All	Men	Women	Dem	Ind	Rep.
Right direction	31%	30	32	47	26	12
Wrong track	58%	59	57	42	57	83
Unsure/ref.	11%	11	11	11	17	5

Right/wrong direction trend

	2010						2009						2008 Oct	
	Oct	Aug	May	Mar	Mar	Jan	Oct	Oct	Sep	July	Apr	Mar		Jan
Right	30%	33	34	42	38	35	41	41	44	49	51	51	34	13
Wrong	60%	54	52	51	52	53	50	49	46	41	37	37	52	78
Unsure/ref.	10%	13	13	8	10	12	8	9	10	11	11	12	13	9

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

	All	Men	Women	Dem	Ind	Rep.	white	Non-white
Approve	51%	46	55	82	54	10	40	79
Disapprove	40%	46	35	11	29	84	51	12
Unsure/ref.	9%	9	10	7	16	6	9	9

Obama approval, previous measures

	2010						2009						
	Oct	Aug	May	Mar	Mar	Jan	Oct	Oct	Sep	Jun	Apr	Mar	Jan*
Approve	47%	49	49	54	53	48	52	52	56	61	66	66	72
Disapprove	43%	40	40	37	38	41	37	35	36	29	22	21	10
Unsure/Ref.	10%	11	11	9	9	11	10	12	8	10	12	13	18

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

	Haven't heard of	Very favorable	Somewhat favorable	Unsure/no opinion	Somewhat Unfavorable	Very unfavorable
Frank Lautenberg	6%	15%	27%	21%	14%	17%
<i>Republicans only</i>	4	6	16	17	24	34
<i>Independents only</i>	5	9	37	20	16	14
<i>Democrats only</i>	7	24	34	22	7	5
<i>March 2010</i>	9%	14%	28%	20%	14%	15%
<i>Jan 2010</i>	8%	12%	23%	19%	20%	15%
<i>Jan 2009</i>	8%	13%	30%	19%	14%	16%
Bob Menendez	15%	11%	20%	29%	12%	13%
<i>Republicans only</i>	12	1	10	30	19	28
<i>Independents only</i>	12	5	19	36	16	11
<i>Democrats only</i>	17	19	28	26	6	4
<i>March 2010</i>	17%	8%	21%	28%	13%	12%
<i>Jan 2010</i>	17%	7%	21%	27%	15%	13%
<i>Jan 2009</i>	17%	9%	20%	30%	13%	11%

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Question Wording and Order

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

Right direction
Wrong track
DK/Unsure [DON'T READ]
Ref. [DON'T READ]

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

Approve
Disapprove
DK/Unsure [DON'T READ]
Ref. [DON'T READ]

NJ1. [Reported 11.23.10]

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?

[ROTATE NAMES]

Chris Christie [Reported 11.23.10]
Robert Menendez
Barbara Keshishian [Reported 11.23.10]
Frank Lautenberg

Haven't heard of ... [SKIP TO NEXT NAME]
Very Favorable
Somewhat favorable (and favorable DK)
DK/Unsure [VOL]
Somewhat unfavorable (and unfavorable DK)
Very unfavorable