Stockton Poll Shows Murphy Leads Guadagno by Large Margin in N.J. Governor's Race

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Galloway, NJ - Democrat Phil Murphy leads Republican Kim Guadagno by nearly 18 points in New Jersey's race for governor, according to a Stockton University Poll released today.

Murphy receives 51 percent to 33 percent for Guadagno, including voters leaning toward one candidate or the other, in the poll of 585 likely voters in New Jersey. About 7 percent prefer an independent or third party candidate, and 8 percent are undecided or refuse to identify their choice.

Guadagno, the lieutenant governor, has better name recognition than Murphy, but nearly one-third of voters (31 percent) are not familiar with her. However, she is viewed unfavorably by 37 percent compared to 31 percent favorable ratings. Murphy is unfamiliar to 38 percent. But among those who recognize the candidate, 36 percent have favorable opinions to 26 percent unfavorable.

The Stockton Polling Institute of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy interviewed 585 New Jersey adults who are likely voters Oct, 4-12, 2017. Interviewers working from the Stockton University campus called landline and cell telephones. The statewide poll's margin of error is +/- 4.1 percentage points.

When asked who would be better at creating jobs, controlling property taxes, managing the state budget, and helping Atlantic City succeed, respondents picked Murphy except on property taxes. Still, a quarter or more aren't sure who they trust to do a better job on any of the issues.

Which candidate would be better at:	Murphy	Guadagno	Not sure
Creating jobs in New Jersey	39%	25%	28%
Controlling property taxes	31%	33%	25%
Managing the state budget	40%	31%	24%
Helping Atlantic City succeed	33%	20%	35%

The issue Guadagno has focused her campaign on – property taxes – is cited by 28 percent as the top issue in the state elections. Taxes in general are cited by 17 percent, and education is third at 10 percent.

However, Guadagno is campaigning in a state where two Republican leaders – President Donald Trump and New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie – are very unpopular. Only 25 percent say Trump is doing a good or excellent job as president, with 72 percent rating him as fair or poor. The governor's numbers are lower: only 14 percent rate him positively, and 85 percent give him negative ratings. An endorsement by either Trump or Christie would make 52 percent of voters less likely to support that candidate. Neither has made public endorsements in the race.

"Property taxes are always a major issue in New Jersey, and Kim Guadagno is hammering that point," said Sharon Schulman, executive director of the Hughes Center. "But it's difficult to overcome voters' strong negative feelings about the Republican governor and president."

Without Christie's name being mentioned, respondents were asked if Guadagno's eight years as lieutenant governor makes them more likely or less likely to vote for her. Thirty-one percent said they are more likely to vote for her, 31 percent said less likely and 35 percent said it makes no difference.

The fact that Murphy has Wall Street experience makes 15 percent more likely to vote for him but 29 percent less likely, with 55 percent saying it makes no difference, the poll shows.

John Froonjian, who manages the Stockton Polling Institute, said pundits may be tempted to read New Jersey's election results as an early evaluation of President Trump. However, only 27 percent say their feelings about Trump will affect their vote for governor, while 71 percent say it will have no effect.

On a national issue, a majority of 51 percent believes the rich would benefit the most from a Trump proposal in Washington to reform the U.S. tax code. Thirty percent don't know enough about the plan to have an opinion.

Seventy-nine percent support or lean in favor of a proposed Constitutional amendment to dedicate settlements of state pollution cases to environmental cleanup and protection, with 13 percent opposing or leaning against the proposal. A ballot proposal to borrow $125 million for public library construction or renovations is close, with 46 percent supporting it, 45 percent opposing and 7 percent undecided.

To see the full results click here.

Methodology

The poll was conducted by the Stockton Polling Institute of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy. Live interviewers on the Stockton University campus called both landlines and cell phones from Oct. 4-12, 2017. The poll was conducted with 585 registered N.J. voters who voted in the presidential election and were screened as likely voters in the November election. The poll's margin of error is +/- 4.1 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence level. MOE is higher for subsets. Data are weighted based on United States Census Bureau demographics for the State of New Jersey population.

About the Hughes Center

The William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy (www.stockton.edu/hughescenter) at Stockton University serves as a catalyst for research, analysis and innovative policy solutions on the economic, social and cultural issues facing New Jersey, and promotes the civic life of New Jersey through engagement, education and research. The center is named for William J. Hughes, whose distinguished career includes service in the U.S. House of Representatives, Ambassador to Panama and as a Distinguished Visiting Professor at Stockton. The Hughes Center can be found at https://www.facebook.com/StocktonHughesCenter and can be followed on Twitter @hughescenter.