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## **The Battleground: The Presidential Race in New Jersey & the Fight for U.S. Senate**

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This Marist Poll reports:

### **Presidential Race in New Jersey:**

- **Obama with Commanding Lead in New Jersey...Outpaces McCain by 17 Percentage Points:** Senator Barack Obama leads Senator John McCain by 17 percentage points among both New Jersey registered voters and likely voters. Obama sprints ahead of McCain -- 53% to 36% -- among registered voters. Among likely voters, including those who are undecided yet leaning toward a candidate, Obama outdistances McCain 56% to 39%. The contest in New Jersey had been in jeopardy for Obama just last month following the Republican National Convention. In a Marist Poll conducted in September, Obama had 48% to 45% for his Republican rival McCain among likely voters. That was within the poll's margin of error. Today, the political tide in New Jersey has turned in favor of the Democrat. Looking at how support breaks down along party lines, Obama has bolstered his support among his own party since that previous survey was conducted. 93% of likely Democratic voters say they back Obama compared with 83% who said they supported him in September. McCain holds strong among Republicans. 86% of likely Republican voters report today they are behind their party's nominee compared with 87% last month. The key to Obama's lead is his showing among Independents who are likely to vote on Election Day. Obama is ahead of McCain among these likely voters by 17 percentage points.

**Question Wording:** If November’s presidential election were held today, whom would you support if the candidates are:

	John McCain/ Sarah Palin the Republicans	Barack Obama/ Joe Biden the Democrats	Other	Undecided
<b>Registered Voters</b>				
October 2008	36%	53%	1%	10%
September 2008	40%	47%	1%	12%
<b>Likely Voters w/ Leaners</b>				
October 2008	39%	56%	1%	4%
Democrats	6%	93%	<1%	1%
Republicans	86%	9%	<1%	5%
Independents	37%	54%	2%	7%
September 2008	45%	48%	<1%	7%
Democrats	10%	83%	<1%	7%
Republicans	87%	9%	<1%	4%
Independents	41%	51%	1%	7%

- Strong Support for Candidates Across the Board:** Regardless of whom they support, most registered voters in New Jersey say they won’t budge when it comes to their choice of candidate. 82% of New Jersey registered voters report they strongly back their pick for president while just 6% say they might change their mind inside the voting booth. Similar proportions of McCain’s and Obama’s backers say they are firmly behind their candidate of choice. New Jersey voters have remained constant in their level of support. 80% of the state’s electorate reported they were strongly committed to a candidate in September.

**Question Wording:** Would you say that you strongly support [ticket], somewhat support them, or do you think you might vote differently on Election Day?

Registered voters	Strongly Support	Somewhat Support	Might Vote Differently	Unsure
October 2008	82%	12%	6%	<1%
McCain/Palin supporters	81%	13%	6%	<1%
Obama/Biden supporters	83%	11%	5%	1%
September 2008	80%	14%	5%	1%

- Issues Matter More than Values:** A plurality of New Jersey registered voters would prefer a candidate who shares their positions on the issues rather than one who shares their values. 41% say they would like the opposite. McCain's and Obama's supporters differ on this question. 47% of voters who favor McCain report they would choose a candidate with shared values while 43% would like someone who has similar positions to them on the issues. A majority of Obama's supporters -- 55% -- would choose a candidate who is compatible on the issues.

**Question Wording:** If you had to choose, would you prefer a candidate who shares your positions on the issues but does not share your values, or a candidate who shares your values but not your positions on the issues?

<b>Registered voters</b>	<b>Shared Issues</b>	<b>Shared Values</b>	<b>Unsure</b>
October 2008	49%	41%	10%
McCain/Palin supporters	43%	47%	10%
Obama/Biden supporters	55%	36%	9%

- McCain's Favorability Plunges...Obama Posts Positive Perception in the Garden State:** Both presidential candidates are viewed favorably by a majority of New Jersey registered voters. However, John McCain is holding onto that majority by a thread. 51% of voters say they have a positive perception of the self-described maverick compared with 44% who have an unfavorable opinion of him. In fact, McCain's negative rating has climbed 12 percentage points in the past month. In the Marist Poll's September survey, 32% of voters reported an unfavorable impression of McCain. Today, 44% view the Republican in a negative light. Obama, on the other hand, enjoys a lovefest in the Garden State. 65% of voters view the Democrat favorably while 30% see him unfavorably. 62% of registered voters last month thought well of him.

**Question Wording:** Overall, do you have a favorable or an unfavorable impression of [candidate]?

<b>Registered voters</b>	Favorable	Unfavorable	Unsure
John McCain			
October 2008	51%	44%	5%
September 2008	61%	32%	7%
Barack Obama			
October 2008	65%	30%	5%
September 2008	62%	32%	6%

- Perceptions of Palin Plummet...Biden Is Well Liked:** A majority of New Jersey voters have an unfavorable impression of Governor Sarah Palin. Just 41% say they have a favorable impression of the vice presidential candidate compared with 55% of the electorate who thought highly of her in the weeks following the Republican National Convention. Her Democratic counterpart, Senator Joe Biden, however, is viewed well by about six in ten New Jersey voters.

**Question Wording:** Overall, do you have a favorable or an unfavorable impression of [candidate]?

<b>Registered voters</b>	Favorable	Unfavorable	Unsure
Sarah Palin			
October 2008	41%	51%	8%
September 2008	55%	29%	16%
Joe Biden			
October 2008	61%	28%	11%
September 2008	58%	27%	15%

**Race for U.S. Senate in New Jersey:**

- Democratic Incumbent Leads But Fails to Receive Majority Support in Bid for U.S. Senate in New Jersey:** Democrat Frank Lautenberg has a 10 percentage point lead over his Republican opponent, Dick Zimmer, in the race for U.S. Senate in New Jersey among registered voters. However, he fails to gain a majority and has made few inroads since last month. Today, Lautenberg leads Zimmer, 47% to 37%, among these voters. He was

ahead, 47% to 36%, in Marist's September poll. When factoring in likely voters, including those undecided yet leaning toward a candidate, Lautenberg leads Zimmer 48% to 41%. In September, Lautenberg received the backing of 51% of New Jersey's likely voters compared with 40% who said they were behind Dick Zimmer.

**Question Wording:** If the election for U.S. senate in New Jersey were held today, whom would you support if the candidates are:

	Dick Zimmer the Republican	Frank Lautenberg the Democrat	Other	Undecided
<b>Registered Voters</b>				
October 2008	37%	47%	2%	14%
September 2008	36%	47%	1%	16%
<b>Likely Voters w/ Leaners</b>				
October 2008	41%	48%	1%	10%
Democrats	9%	82%	2%	7%
Republicans	90%	7%	<1%	3%
Independents	37%	43%	2%	18%
September 2008	40%	51%	1%	8%
Democrats	9%	84%	1%	6%
Republicans	80%	11%	<1%	9%
Independents	33%	60%	<1%	7%

- **New Jersey Voters -- Commitment Phobic?** Fewer than half of registered New Jersey voters -- 49% -- say they strongly support their choice of candidate for U.S. Senate. Frank Lautenberg receives the firm backing of half of his supporters while 49% of Dick Zimmer's supporters report they won't change their mind come Election Day.

**Question Wording:** Would you say that you strongly support (candidate), somewhat support him, or do you think you might vote differently on Election Day?

	Strongly Support	Somewhat Support	Might Vote Differently	Unsure
<b>Registered voters</b>				
October 2008	49%	37%	13%	1%
Zimmer supporters	49%	34%	16%	1%
Lautenberg supporters	50%	38%	11%	1%
September 2008	45%	37%	17%	1%
Zimmer supporters	45%	39%	15%	1%
Lautenberg supporters	45%	36%	18%	1%

**Nature of the Sample: 755 New Jersey Registered Voters**

This survey of 755 registered voters in New Jersey was conducted on October 20<sup>th</sup> and October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2008. Registered voters were interviewed by telephone in proportion to the voter registration in each county in New Jersey and adjusted for turnout in statewide elections. Results are statistically significant at  $\pm 3.5\%$ . There are 628 likely voters. The results for this sub-sample are statistically significant at  $\pm 4\%$ . The error margin increases for cross-tabulations.