

Incumbents Lead in 2nd Legislative District: Christie, Whelan, Amodeo and Brown Are Ahead

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Galloway Township, NJ- State Sen. Jim Whelan has a 21-point lead over Atlantic County Sheriff Frank Balles, his Republican challenger, according to a Stockton Polling Institute poll released today.

Whelan leads with 55 percent to 34 percent for Balles, with 11 percent undecided or refusing to say. That margin represents an increase of 9 percentage points in the spread since a Stockton Poll released Sept. 11 showed Whelan ahead 51 percent to 39 percent.

The district's state Assembly race remains tight, with Republican incumbent John Amodeo leading with 23 percent and only two or three percentage points separating the other three major candidates. However, 15 percent remain undecided, making the picture very unclear two weeks before the Nov. 5 election.

If the election for state Senate were held today, would you vote for:	September 11th	October 22nd
Democrat Jim Whelan	51%	55%
Republican Frank Balles	39%	34%
Not Sure/Don't Know	10%	11%

Gov. Chris Christie continues to dominate in the 2nd District covering most of Atlantic County, expanding his lead over Democratic state Sen. Barbara Buono to 30 percentage points. Christie leads 59 percent to 29 percent for Buono, with 11 percent as undecided/other. The margin was 56 percent for Christie and 34 percent for Buono in the Sept. 11 Stockton Poll.

"Voters seem ready to split their ticket in the second legislative district," said Daniel J. Douglas, director of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy.

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The latest poll was conducted with 626 likely voters in the 2nd Legislative District from Oct. 17-20. Live interviewers calling from the Stockton College campus called both landlines and cell phones. The poll's margin of error is +/- 3.9 percentage points. The Stockton Polling Institute is part of the Hughes Center at Stockton College.

If the election for New Jersey governor were held today, would you vote for:		
	September 11th	October 22nd
Democrat Barbara Buono	34%	29%
Republican Chris Christie	56%	59%
Not Sure/Don't Know	11%	11%

Thirty-six percent have a favorable opinion of Balles, while 22 percent have unfavorable views, with 40 percent saying they are unfamiliar with the candidate. By contrast, only 14 percent are not familiar with incumbent Whelan, a former mayor of Atlantic City, and 61 percent have favorable opinions of him. The incumbent is leading across racial, ethnic, age and gender lines, and is winning support from 24 percent of Republicans. He leads Balles among independents 49-29 percent.

Amodeo leads the field with 23 percent, and Brown has 22 percent. Democrat Vincent Mazzeo, the mayor of Northfield, has 21 percent, and Longport Mayor Nick Russo has 19 percent.

If the election for state Assembly were held today, which two candidates would you vote for?		
	September 11th	October 22nd
Democrat Vincent Mazzeo	19%	21%
Democrat Nick Russo	19%	19%
Republican John Amodeo	25%	23%
Republican Chris Brown	23%	22%
Not Sure/Don't Know	11%	15%

In other results, 40 percent respondents say an endorsement from Gov. Chris Christie would have no impact on who they vote for in the state Senate or state Assembly races. A Christie endorsement would make 29 percent more likely to vote for that candidate while 27 percent would be less likely to do so.

Fifty-two percent believe New Jersey is headed in the right direction while 33 percent believe it is on the wrong track, with 15 percent unsure.

Regarding property taxes, 85 percent say they have increased "a little" or "a lot" during the past three years. Ten percent feel that property taxes have either stayed the same or decreased over the past three years.

A large majority of 76 percent supports a ballot question to increase the state's minimum wage from \$7.25 an hour to \$8.25 an hour as well as provide annual cost-of-living increases; 16% oppose the proposal.

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When asked to name their top three priorities from a list of nine state budget areas, 22 percent identified property taxes, followed by jobs at 20 percent. Health care and K-12 education came in at 15 percent, while higher education was at 10 percent. The environment, state workers' pensions and transportation were also mentioned individually by less than 10 percent of respondents.

Methodology

Interviews were conducted at the Stockton Polling Institute by live interviewers calling from the Stockton College campus. The poll was conducted with 626 likely voters from Oct. 17-20, 2013. Respondents qualified as likely voters if they said they are registered to vote in New Jersey, voted in the November 2012 general election, and are likely or almost certain to vote on Nov. 5. Interviewers called both land lines and cell phones. All prospective respondent households in the source telephone list have the same chance of joining the sample because of random selection. The survey has a margin of error of +/- 3.9 percent at 95% confidence level. Data is weighted based on United States Census Bureau demographics for the 2nd Legislative District population.

About the Hughes Center

The William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy (www.stockton.edu/hughescenter) at The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey serves as a catalyst for research, analysis and innovative policy solutions on the economic, social and cultural issues facing New Jersey. 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 College. The Hughes Center can be found at www.facebook.com/Hughes.Center.Stockton.College and can be followed on Twitter @hughescenter.



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