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## **Poll finds Christie leads, Corzine within reach in southern New Jersey**

By THOMAS BARLAS Staff Writer, 609-272-7201 | Posted: Saturday, September 19, 2009 |

*With related story on candidates' remarks to firefighters convention in Wildwood*

Results of a poll commissioned by The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey suggest the region's residents favor Republican challenger Chris Christie over incumbent Democrat Jon S. Corzine in the race for governor.

The poll by Zogby International indicates Christie leading Corzine by 37 percent to 30 percent - although, when considering the poll's 4 percent margin of error, the contest could be a dead heat.

The poll also indicated that many voters have yet to make up their minds.

"With so many voters still undecided, we are looking at elections that are still, in many cases, unsettled," said Sharon Schulman, executive director of Stockton's Hughes Center of Public Policy, which commissioned the Zogby poll.

Released Friday, the Zogby poll results among southern New Jersey voters mirror the results of three recent statewide polls.

Polls by Fairleigh Dickinson University, Quinnipiac University and Monmouth University-Gannett New Jersey all gave Christie the lead over Corzine by a range of 10 percent to five percent. The polls also portray a tighter race than a month ago, when pollsters found Christie leading Corzine by about 14 percent.

Zogby conducted a telephone survey on Monday and Tuesday of 600 likely voters who live in the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 9th legislative districts in southern New Jersey.

The Zogby poll shows Corzine does best in the 1st and 4th legislative districts, while Christie's greatest support is in the 9th Legislative District.

Corzine and Christie both spoke at the annual firefighters convention in Wildwood on Friday, and

both were asked about the Zogby poll results.

"The poll means nothing to me if it has a seven-point margin of error," Christie said. "There have been 39 public polls from Feb. 4 to today. So far, it's Christie 39, Corzine 0. I intend to keep that streak going. I intend to win the election."

Corzine said he had not seen the poll and could not comment on it.

"We know the race is tightening," he said. "The only poll that counts is on Nov. 3."

Along with the governor, all 80 members of the Assembly are up for election this year. The Zogby poll provides a sort of snapshot of how southern New Jersey voters currently view those races.

The poll indicates that Republican hopes of recapturing Assembly seats in the 1st Legislative District, which includes Cape May and Cumberland counties and parts of Atlantic County, are still dim. Republicans, who controlled the seats for years, had targeted the district as a possible win for their party. Democrats Matt Milam and Nelson Albano maintain a comfortable lead.

The poll suggests at least one Assembly seat is up for grabs in the 3rd Legislative District, which includes Salem County and part of Cumberland and Gloucester counties, and in the 9th Legislative District, which includes parts of Ocean, Atlantic and Burlington counties.

In the traditionally Republican 9th Legislative District, Democrats appear within striking distance of newly appointed Republican Assemblywoman DiAnne C. Gove. Gove is filling the remainder of a term left vacant when Daniel M. Van Pelt resigned July 31 after being arrested on corruption charges. Gove said when appointed to fill Van Pelt's seat that the charges could play into the race.

The apparently heated races in the 3rd and 9th legislative districts both involve candidates picked to fill unexpired terms.

The situation in the 3rd Legislative District is different from that in the 9th Legislative District in that the vacancy did not occur as the result of a corruption investigation.

In the 3rd Legislative District, Democrat Celeste M. Riley is filling the seat left vacant when her predecessor, Douglas Fisher, was named the state's agriculture secretary. Still, the poll indicates Riley is in a dead heat with Republicans Lee Lucas and Bob Villare.

In the 2nd Legislative District, which includes most of Atlantic County, the poll results give incumbent Republicans Vince Polistina and John Amodeo a comfortable lead over Democratic challengers Reginald Floyd and Jimmy Martinez.

*Staff writer Michael Miller and The Associated Press contributed to this report.*

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