

# Stockton poll has Runyan leading Adler in 3rd District congressional race

By David Levinsky Staff writer | Posted: Friday, October 5, 2012 6:00 am

The first independent poll of the 3rd Congressional District race is out, and it shows Republican incumbent Jon Runyan with a double-digit lead over Democratic challenger Shelley Adler.

The poll, conducted by the new Stockton Polling Institute at the William Hughes Center for Public Policy at the Richard Stockton College of New Jersey in Galloway, has Runyan leading Adler 49 percent to 39 percent among likely voters, with 12 percent still undecided.

"With 12 percent of voters undecided, candidate Adler still has an opportunity to close the lead on Runyan, though Runyan is clearly in a better position," said Daniel Douglas, director of the Hughes Center.

The poll was based on telephone surveys of 614 likely voters who were contacted between Sept. 28 and Tuesday. It has a margin of error of 4 percent.

The race between Runyan, a House freshman and former Philadelphia Eagles lineman, and Adler, an attorney and former Cherry Hill councilwoman, is considered the most competitive of all the congressional races in New Jersey.

Both are being supported by their respective national parties, and their campaigns have been airing television commercials in the district for more than a month.

Among those surveyed, 51 percent viewed Runyan very or somewhat favorably, 26 percent viewed him somewhat or very unfavorably, and 21 percent were either unsure or unfamiliar with him.

Adler, who is the widow of the late Rep. John Adler, was viewed very or somewhat favorably by 36 percent of those polled, while 26 percent viewed her somewhat or very unfavorably. The remaining 38 percent were either unsure or unfamiliar with her.

According to the poll, 87 percent of those surveyed disapproved of the overall job performance of Congress, but 43 percent considered Runyan's job performance "good" or "excellent," compared with 37 percent who rated his first-term performance as "fair" or "poor."

The 3rd District is made up of almost all of Burlington County and most of northern Ocean County. Although the number of registered Democrats and Republicans in the district is nearly identical, most political watchers believe it favors Runyan, mainly because it now excludes Adler's hometown of Cherry Hill, Camden County.

Stockton's poll found that likely voters in the district favor Democratic President Barack Obama over Republican challenger Mitt Romney by a 49 to 41 percent margin. It also gave Democratic U.S. Sen. Robert Menendez a 46 to 38 percent lead over Republican state Sen. Joe Kyrillos, and found that 50 percent of district voters believe Republican Chris Christie has been good or excellent during his first term as governor.

Stockton did not release details about the sex or voter affiliation of those surveyed.

Runyan campaign spokesman Chris Russell said he suspected the poll sampling was skewed a bit in favor of Democrats. An internal poll released by the Republican campaign last month gave Runyan a 17-point edge.

"Not having had an opportunity to review it myself, it appears that Stockton's sample skews a bit more Democratic than what is actually the case. Therefore, we feel very confident in the 17-point margin from our internal poll of a couple weeks back. Gov. Romney's debate performance (on Wednesday) has us feeling even better about the race up and down the ticket," Russell said.

"All that said, even if you took this poll at face value, it shows Shelley Adler's unfavorable numbers on the rise as more and more people become familiar with her record of raising property taxes four times, including a 65 percent increase in just one year, and then claiming to not remember she did it," he said. "While it (also) demonstrates that Jon enjoys strong personal popularity, and is clearly winning a significant amount of support from Democrats for his efforts to work across party lines to create jobs and grow the economy."

Adler spokesman Michael Muller said that the poll shows the challenger within striking distance of the incumbent and that support for her campaign is growing.

"With less than five weeks left until Election Day, the Stockton poll confirmed that Shelley Adler has a real opportunity to unseat Congressman Runyan," Muller said. "As voters are getting to learn more about Shelley Adler and the truth about Congressman Runyan's record to dismantle Medicare, encourage companies to ship American jobs overseas and provide massive taxpayer giveaways to millionaires and Big Oil, this race will continue to tighten."

Muller claimed the poll also shows the district isn't necessarily the GOP stronghold some believe it to be, with both Obama and Menendez leading.

"Despite Congressman Runyan's celebrity, he is beatable in an anti-incumbent year, with Congress having a record-high 87 percent disapproval rating," he said. "Shelley Adler is well positioned and poised to unseat Congressman Runyan, because middle-class families, small businesses, women and seniors are tired of the partisan bickering in this Congress and want a new direction. Shelley Adler will provide a new direction, and this poll sends a clear message that in the final months, this is clearly going to be one of the most competitive contests in the nation."

The two candidates are scheduled to face off in two debates next Thursday. The first will be taped in Philadelphia on the set of the Comcast Cable Network show "Larry Kane: Voice of Reason," with the veteran news anchor acting as moderator. The second will be hosted by the Burlington County Chamber of Commerce at the Hotel ML on Route 73 in Mount Laurel. Tickets are \$30 for members and \$40 for nonmembers and walk-ins.