



Hughes Center Poll: Republicans challenge for a 3rd District Assembly seat Senate President Sweeney Leads Mulligan by double digits

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Contact: Daniel J. Douglas, Director, William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy
Daniel.Douglas@stockton.edu, (609) 626-3504, (C) 609-204-1314
Tim Kelly, Office of Public Relations
Tim.Kelly@stockton.edu, (609) 652-4950

Galloway, NJ— Republican challengers in the 3rd Legislative District are competing to take a state Assembly seat currently held by a Democratic incumbent, according to a Richard Stockton College/Zogby Poll commissioned by the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy

Incumbent Democratic Sen. Stephen M. Sweeney, the state Senate president, maintains a 12-percentage-point lead over Republican challenger Michael Mulligan. Sweeney is supported by 46 percent in the poll of likely voters, while Mulligan is at 34 percent. While Mulligan has made up ground since an earlier Stockton-Zogby poll taken in September, he would need to convert the vast majority of the nearly 15 percent of voters who remain undecided to overtake Sweeney.

But the race is closer on the Assembly level, where slightly less than four percentage points separate incumbent Democratic Assemblywoman Celeste Riley from her Republican challengers, Assemblyman Domenick DeCicco and Bob Villare. Riley is supported by 38 percent, while DeCicco and Villare both poll at slightly above 34 percent, according to the poll.

DeCicco is the Republican incumbent Assemblyman in neighboring District 4, but was moved into District 3 as part of the statewide legislative redistricting process.

The difference in the numbers falls just within the survey's margin of error of 4.1 percentage points. Nearly 19 percent of voters said they were not sure who they would support.

Assemblyman John Burzichelli, a Democratic incumbent, polls the highest among the four Assembly candidates at 42 percent.

"We have a race for the Assembly in the 3rd District," said Daniel J. Douglas, director of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy. "With so many voters still undecided, the Democrats have to be concerned that the election is this tight."

Riley, a former Bridgeton City Council member, was appointed to fill an unexpired Assembly term in March 2009 and first won election to the lower house two years ago. Her support level declined by six percentage points since she polled at 44 percent in the Stockton-Zogby poll in September, while DeCicco and Villare gained five and seven points respectively.

Of all six legislative candidates, Sweeney is the only one viewed somewhat favorably or very favorably by a majority of voters – and the Senate president's favorable rating is at 50.4 percent.

However, Republican Gov. Chris Christie is seen very favorably or somewhat favorably by 62 percent. Nearly 37 percent have an unfavorable view of Christie. The governor and Senate president collaborated on legislation that reformed state health and pension benefits, making state workers pay more into the system.

Nearly 53 percent of likely voters have a favorable view of Democratic President Barack Obama, with 47 percent feeling unfavorably about the president.

When asked if the state is going in the right direction, 50 percent said they thought it is and 43 percent said the state is on the wrong track.

3rd LD Senate Race				3rd LD Assembly Race			
Candidate	May	Sept	Nov	Candidate	May	Sept	Nov
	%	%	%		%	%	%
Stephen Sweeney	45.8	47.8	46.4	John Burzichelli	41.4	43.1	42.3
Michael Mulligan	26.3	29.1	34.2	Celeste Riley	33.1	43.9	37.9
Someone else	3.1	2.2	4.8	Domenick DeCicco	28.2	29	34.2
Not sure	24.7	20.8	14.6	Bob Villare	27.7	27.8	34.4
				Someone else	1.6	1.2	3.2
				Not sure	27.8	22.7	18.5

About the Hughes Center

The William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey serves as a catalyst for research, analysis and innovative policy solutions on the political, economic, social and cultural issues facing New Jersey.

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