

Stockton Poll: Assembly Incumbents Hold onto Narrow Leads in 2nd Legislative District

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Galloway, NJ - Incumbents continue to hold slight leads in the 2nd Legislative District Assembly election, according to a Stockton Poll released today.

The dynamics of the Assembly race have not changed over the past three weeks. Incumbent Democrat Vincent Mazzeo leads the four candidates with 26 percent, while incumbent Republican Chris Brown polls at 24 percent. Neither percentage differs from a Stockton Poll of the 2nd District released Oct. 16.

Democratic challenger Colin Bell, an Atlantic County freeholder, receives 22 percent, and GOP challenger Will Pauls, also an Atlantic County freeholder, receives 19 percent. Both numbers are only a percentage point or two above their Oct. 16 results. In the latest poll, 9 percent are undecided or not indicating a choice.

"The race remains very close. Success depends on the campaigns getting their supporters out to vote on election day," said Daniel J. Douglas, director of the Hughes Center.

The poll was conducted with 606 likely 2nd District voters by the Stockton Polling Institute of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton University. Live interviewers on the Stockton campus called both landlines and cell phones from Oct. 22-28, 2015. The poll's margin of error is +/- 4.0 percentage points.

One of the few changes registered since the first District 2 Stockton Poll shows a reversal in job approval ratings for the two incumbents from slightly positive into negative territory. Forty percent rated Mazzeo's performance as excellent or good, and 39 percent as fair or poor. Now, 39 percent give him positive ratings and 45 percent are negative. Brown went from 42 percent excellent or good and 37 percent fair or poor to 40 percent positive and 43 percent negative.

There is no question that the 2nd District's casino economy is the key issue on voters' minds. Nearly half (48 percent) identify jobs (18 percent), casino issues (18 percent) or the economy (13 percent)

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-continued from page 2-

as the most important issues in this campaign. Fourth is taxes at 12 percent, and property taxes in particular at 10 percent.

A majority of voters (60 percent) do think the candidates are talking about issues that are important to them, up from 55 percent Oct. 16. Currently 32 percent think they are not talking about important issues, and 8 percent are unsure.

With the state Assembly being the top election on the Nov. 3 ballot, experts are predicting extremely low turnout. The poll shows a widespread lack of knowledge about the candidates. Nearly half of respondents are unfamiliar with the challengers: 47 percent for Pauls, 46 percent for Bell. The results are virtually unchanged from the Oct. 16 poll. The incumbents are better known, but about a quarter of those polled are not familiar with Brown (25 percent, down from 29 percent Oct. 16) and Mazzeo (23 percent, down slightly from 25 percent).

Methodology

The survey was conducted by the Stockton Polling Institute of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy (www.stockton.edu/hughescenter). Live interviewers on the Stockton campus called both landlines and cell phones from Oct. 22-28, 2015. The poll was conducted with 606 adults who are likely voters in New Jersey's 2nd Legislative District. The poll's margin of error is +/- 4.0 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence level. MOE is higher for subsets. Data are weighted based on United States Census Bureau demographics for the 2nd District population.

About the Hughes Center

The William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy (www.stockton.edu/hughescenter) at Stockton University serves as a catalyst for research, analysis and innovative policy solutions on the economic, social and cultural issues facing New Jersey, and promotes the civic life of New Jersey through engagement, education and research. 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. The Hughes Center can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/StocktonHughesCenter> and can be followed on Twitter @hughescenter.