

Stockton Poll: LoBiondo Leads by 26-Point Margin in 2nd Congressional District

Trump Leads Clinton 45 Percent to 42 Percent

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Galloway, N.J. - U.S. Rep. Frank LoBiondo, a Republican incumbent, is dominating in the 2nd Congressional District, leading his Democratic challenger by nearly 26 percentage points, according to a Stockton Poll released today.

LoBiondo, who was first elected to the House in 1994, leads with 59 percent to 33.5 percent for Democrat David Cole, a software engineer. Three percent say they will vote for someone else, and 4 percent are undecided. LoBiondo won his House race in the 2012 presidential election year with 58 percent, state election records show.

Also in the 2nd Congressional District, Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump narrowly leads Democrat Hillary Clinton 45 percent to 42 percent in a four-way matchup. Four percent support Libertarian Gary Johnson and 1 percent support Jill Stein of the Green Party, with 3 percent not picking any of the four and 3 percent undecided.

The sprawling 2nd Congressional District covers all of Atlantic, Cape May, Cumberland and Salem counties and parts of Burlington, Camden, Gloucester and Ocean counties. LoBiondo, a former state assemblyman from Cumberland County, leads in every county except Cole's home county of Gloucester.

The poll was conducted with 625 likely 2nd Congressional 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. 19-23, 2016. The poll's margin of error is +/- 3.9 percentage points.

Cole is struggling to become known. According to the poll, 60 percent are not familiar with the Democrat. Meanwhile, 67 percent have a favorable opinion of LoBiondo, with 21 percent viewing him unfavorably and only 12 percent unfamiliar with him. **-more-**

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“A Democratic challenger who doesn’t have strong name recognition or the ability to raise a great deal of money is at a real disadvantage,” said Sharon Schulman, executive director of the Hughes Center.

Fifty-three percent of likely voters rate LoBiondo’s job performance as excellent or good, with 39 percent as fair or poor and 8 percent unsure. That rating is far superior to voters’ views of the Congress as a whole, which receives only 13 percent positive ratings and 86 percent fair or poor.

Gov. Chris Christie’s job approval rating in the South Jersey congressional district is only 17 percent good or excellent, with 86 percent at fair or poor.

Neither presidential candidate is viewed positively. Fifty-eight percent view Clinton unfavorably, and 56 percent have negative views of Trump.

Voters were asked whether it is more important for members of Congress to reach compromise on issues or to stand firm on principles. By a large margin, voters feel it is more important to reach compromise (64 percent) than to stand firm on principles (31 percent) with 6 percent unsure.

More than half (52 percent) feel that neither party is doing more to solve the nation’s problems, while 10 percent feel both parties are working equally hard. Despite the Republican trend in the presidential and House races, 23 percent think the Democrats are doing more to solve problems compared to 13 percent saying Republicans are.

Regarding statewide ballot questions, respondents overwhelmingly reject a proposed Constitutional amendment to expand casino gaming to locations 72 miles away from Atlantic City by a margin of 91 percent to 9 percent. The district is home to the Atlantic City casino industry. Half say the fact that new casinos would be located in North Jersey makes them more likely to oppose the amendment.

A majority of 56 percent support a second proposed Constitutional amendment to dedicate increased state gasoline taxes to road projects, with 40 percent opposing it and 4 percent unsure.

Sixteen percent identify the economy as the No. 1 issue in the election, and another 8 percent identified jobs. Nine percent say terrorism or security is the main issue, and 7 percent identified immigration.

Finally, early soundings on next year’s gubernatorial election find the field of possible Republican candidates largely unknown in South Jersey except for Sen. Thomas Kean Jr. and Lieut. Gov. Kim Guadagno. Kean, the son of former Gov. Thomas Kean, is recognized by 65 percent of the district’s voters, while Guadagno is familiar to 41 percent. All other officials mentioned – Assembly Minority Leader Jon Bramnick, Evesham Mayor Randy Brown, Assemblyman Jack Ciattarelli, and businessman Joseph Rullo – are recognized by 11 percent or less.

On the Democratic side, three possible candidates are familiar to at least one in five voters: declared candidate Phil Murphy, 22 percent; Assemblyman John Wisniewski, 24 percent; and Tom Byrne, son of former Gov. Brendan Byrne, 25 percent.

A majority of 66 percent do not support any one candidate at this early stage. Seven percent say they support Kean, while 5 percent support Guadagno and 4 percent support Murphy.

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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 University campus called both landlines and cell phones from Oct. 19-23, 2016. The poll was conducted with 625 adults who are likely voters in New Jersey's 2nd Congressional District. The poll's margin of error is +/- 3.9 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.

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