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Siena College 9th State Senate District Special Election Poll:

Kaminsky & McGrath Running Neck and Neck

Both Candidates Have Virtually Identical Favorability Ratings; Kaminsky Seen as Better than McGrath by at Least 5 Points on 2 Issues; On 5 Other Issues, the Candidates Are Within 3 Points

Loudonville, NY. Democratic Assemblyman Todd Kaminsky and Republican Chris McGrath are locked in a tight battle in the special election to fill the Senate seat left vacant by the conviction of former Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos. Forty-seven percent of likely voters support Kaminsky and 45 percent support McGrath, according to a new Siena College poll of likely 9th S.D. voters released today.

McGrath is viewed favorably by 43 percent of likely voters and unfavorably by 23 percent, while Kaminsky has a comparable 44-20 percent favorability rating. Voters give Kaminsky a small edge, saying he would be better fighting corruption in state government and dealing with the minimum wage. On five other issues including education, Sandy relief and two specific ethics reforms voters see little difference between McGrath and Kaminsky.

With five weeks until Election Day, Kaminsky and McGrath are engaged in the textbook definition of a neck and neck race, said Siena College pollster Steven Greenberg. Kaminsky runs a little stronger with Democrats than McGrath does with Republicans. McGrath has a double-digit lead with independent voters, who may play a smaller role in this election than they normally do since the date of the special election coincides with the presidential primary, where independents cannot vote.

Kaminsky leads the Assembly district he currently represents by 18 points and trails McGrath by 15 points in an adjacent Assembly district currently represented by a Republican. The two run close in the other Assembly districts that account for about one-fifth of the Senate district, Greenberg said. McGrath has a narrow edge with men and voters under 55, while Kaminsky has slightly bigger leads with women and voters 55 and older.

If election was today, who would you vote for?			
	Todd Kaminsky	Chris McGrath	Don't Know/ Other
9th SD	47%	45%	8%
<i>Democrats</i>	82%	10%	8%
<i>Republicans</i>	16%	77%	7%
<i>Independents</i>	34%	53%	12%
AD 20	56%	38%	5%
AD 21	37%	52%	11%
Other ADs	47%	43%	9%
Siena College Poll – March 15, 2016			

“Making his first run for public office, McGrath has a strong overall favorability rating, particularly with Republicans and independents. Kaminsky, a first term Assemblyman, also has a strong favorability rating, doing better with Republicans than McGrath does with Democrats, although not nearly as strong with independents as McGrath,” Greenberg said.

Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of?			
	Favorable	Unfav.	Don't Know/ No Opinion
Todd Kaminsky	44%	20%	36%
Chris McGrath	43%	23%	35%
Andrew Cuomo	57%	40%	3%
NYS Senate	34%	55%	10%
Bill de Blasio	28%	67%	5%
Dean Skelos	21%	73%	6%
John Flanagan	18%	17%	64%
Siena College Poll – March 15, 2016			

“Governor Andrew Cuomo is viewed favorably by 57 percent of voters, including three-quarters of Democrats and a majority of independents,” Greenberg said. “The good news for New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio is that he’s viewed more favorably than Skelos; the bad news is that it’s not by very much.

“Voters by a small but discernable margin say Kaminsky would do a better job than McGrath as State Senator dealing with how much if at all the minimum wage should be increased and fighting corruption in state

government. On every other issue, voters essentially see McGrath and Kaminsky as equally strong,” Greenberg said. “Property taxes is the top issue voters want their next Senator to address, followed closely by fighting corruption,

Which candidate would do a better job in the State Senate on . . .		
Issue	Kaminsky	McGrath
Fighting corruption in state government	42%	37%
Ensuring convicted legislators lose pensions	41%	38%
Determining outside income for legislators	41%	38%
Improving education, addressing Common Core	39%	42%
Demanding region gets fair share / Sandy relief	41%	39%
Dealing with minimum wage increase, if any	43%	37%
Representing our community in Albany	41%	43%
Siena College Poll – March 15, 2016		

education, and creating jobs. Democrats see corruption and education as top issues; Republicans see property taxes as far and away the top issue; independents see corruption as number one and property taxes second.

“Voters are also closely divided on which party they want to see control the Senate, with 47 percent supporting the Republicans and 44 percent the Democrats. Independents favor Republicans by 20 points. Voters are also split on how they view the direction of the state,” Greenberg said. “All other things being equal, voters would prefer a candidate who has political or government experience over a candidate who’s never held office before, however, one-third of McGrath supporters would prefer a candidate with experience.”

“This special election can move in any direction over the next five weeks as the campaigns heat up. It may very well turn out to be determined by turnout and which party can do a better job bringing its voters to the polls on this presidential primary day. This has barnburner written all over it,” Greenberg said.

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This Siena College 9th S.D. survey was conducted March 6-9, 2016 by telephone calls to 529 likely voters. The results have a margin of error of ± 4.5 percentage points including the design effects resulting from weighting. Sampling was conducted via a sample of historically active registered voters with telephone numbers provided by Prime New York. A likely voter screen was applied to initial respondents from the sample that had been statistically adjusted to reflect historic party turnout registration, gender and age. The Siena College Research Institute, directed by Donald Levy, Ph.D., conducts political, economic, social and cultural research primarily in NYS. SRI, an independent, non-partisan research institute, subscribes to the American Association of Public Opinion Research Code of Professional Ethics and Practices. For more information, please call Steven Greenberg at 518-469-9858. Survey cross-tabulations and frequencies can be found at: www.Siena.edu/SRI/SNY.