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Siena College 21st Congressional District Poll:

Owens Has Early Double Digit Lead Over Doheny

Despite Large GOP Plurality, Voters Prefer Democrat on All Issues

Voters Side with Obama over Romney on Medicare, Tax Cuts for Wealthy, and Women's Reproductive Health Issues; Closely Divided on Obamacare

Loudonville, NY. With just over eight weeks until an Election Day rematch, Democratic Representative Bill Owens has a 13-point lead over Republican challenger Matt Doheny. Owens leads Doheny 49-36 percent, with six percent for Green Party candidate Donald Hassig and eight percent undecided, according to a Siena College Research Institute poll of likely 21st C.D. voters released today.

Likely voters see Owens as doing a better job than Doheny representing them on a series of six issues, by margins of seven to 18 points in the newly redrawn district that has a 15-point Republican enrollment edge. A sizeable majority of voters side with President Obama on eliminating tax cuts for those earning more than \$250,000, and strong pluralities of voters say the President's position on Medicare and women's reproductive health issues is closer to their view than Governor Mitt Romney's position. Voters are nearly evenly divided on Obamacare, with 50 percent supporting swift implementation and 47 percent favoring repeal. In the race for President, Obama has a modest 50-45 percent lead over Romney among the district's likely voters.

“By any measure, Congressman Owens enters the final two months of this electoral rematch in a very strong position. He has a 13-point lead in the head-to-head matchup. Half of likely voters say they are prepared to re-elect Owens, compared to only 30 percent who say they would prefer ‘someone else.’ He’s viewed more favorably. By double digit margins, voters think Owens is better than Doheny on education, health care, taxes, Afghanistan, and jobs, by far the most important issue to voters,” said Siena College pollster Steven Greenberg.

“While Doheny has a 60-26 percent lead among Republicans, Owens is doing a much better job of garnering support from members of his party, leading 76-11 percent. Among independent voters, Owens has a better than two-to-one lead, 54-24 percent,” Greenberg said. “Owens leads by nearly two-to-one in the western portion of the district. He leads by 22 points in the northern/central portion of the district. Doheny has a slim 41-37 percent lead in the area closest to the Capital District, most of which is new to the district.”

Owens is viewed favorably by 51 percent of voters and unfavorably by 22 percent, with 26 percent not knowing enough about him to have an opinion. Doheny's favorability rating is 36-31 percent, with 33 percent not having an opinion about him.

"In the new portion of the district, both candidates are unfamiliar to more than 40 percent of voters, where they have comparable favorability ratings. However, in the portion of the district where they've run before, Owens has a strong 62-25 percent favorability rating, while Doheny's is split, 36-37 percent," Greenberg said.

Voters with Obama on Taxing Rich, Reproductive Health, Medicare; Divided on Obamacare, Immigration

"Democrats, by a three-to-one margin, and independents, by a two-to-one margin, want to see the Bush-era tax cuts for those earning more than \$250,000 eliminated, while a slim majority of Republicans want them maintained," Greenberg said. "And by double digit margins, likely voters in this strongly Republican district say their views on safeguarding Medicare and addressing women's reproductive health issues are closer to Obama's than they are to Romney's. By a smaller eight-point margin, they side with Obama on insuring the solvency of Social Security and voters are nearly evenly divided between the candidates on immigration.

"Democrats and Republicans in this district, like those statewide, have strongly divergent points of view on Obamacare with more than three-quarters of Democrats wanting it implemented and nearly three-quarters of Republicans wanting it repealed. Independent voters favor implementation by 58-39 percent," Greenberg said.

Obama Leads Romney Narrowly

"Thanks in part to a 19-point bulge among independents, Obama has a five-point lead in the district. Additionally, Obama's support among Republicans, 24 percent, is double the 12 percent support Romney has among Democrats," Greenberg said. "Interestingly, Obama and Paul Ryan have slightly positive favorability ratings, while Romney and Joe Biden have favorability ratings that tip toward the negative side."

"Eight weeks in a political campaign is equal to half a season in the NFL. And as New York Giants fans will remember from the second half of last year, anything can happen over the course of eight weeks. More than half the voters in the district have not yet seen or heard a commercial from the candidates – and we know that is likely to change dramatically," Greenberg said. "That said, Doheny has a lot of ground to make up over the course of two months. It's more than just the horserace. Owens is viewed far more favorably and is seen as better on all the issues. This may be a Republican district by enrollment and it may still be a Presidential tossup, but the opinions of likely voters here currently tilt decidedly more to the Democratic side."

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This Siena College 21st C.D. survey was conducted September 4-6, 2012 by telephone calls to 638 likely voters. A likely voter screen was applied to the sample of registered voters that had been statistically adjusted to reflect party registration, gender and age. It has a margin of error of ± 3.9 percentage points. The Siena College Research Institute, directed by Donald Levy, Ph.D., conducts political, economic, social and cultural research primarily in New York State. 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.