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PDF version; crosstabs by district:

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Siena College State Senate Polls:

58th SD, Currently Held by Democrats, is Neck-and-Neck
40th SD, Currently Held by Republicans is Virtually Even
Republican Incumbent Alesi Has a Wide Lead in 55th SD
Dem Incumbent Valesky Leads by 10 Points in 49th SD

Loudonville, NY. In the second group of four hotly contested Senate races, two – one currently held by a Democrat and one currently held by a Republican – are neck-and-neck, one Republican senator is in a strong position to win another term and one Democratic senator has a 10-point lead, according to new Siena (College) Research Institute polls of likely voters in four State Senate districts released today.

“There are two extremely close and exciting Senate races –in the Hudson Valley and Erie County,” said Siena pollster Steven Greenberg. “Republican Greg Ball and Democrat Michael Kaplowitz are locked in a virtual tie in the 40th SD, currently represented by Republican Vincent Leibell, who is not seeking another term. Democrat Tim Kennedy, after beating Senator William Stachowski (D-58th SD) in a primary, is running neck-and-neck with Republican Jack Quinn, while Stachowski remains in the race on two minor party lines. Senator James Alesi (55th SD), a Republican, in a district evenly divided between Democrats and Republicans, has a strong 20-point lead over challenger Mary Wilmot. Senator David Valesky (D-49th SD) leads Republican challenger Andrew Russo by 10 points.”

SD	Candidate	Senate Race	Favorability Rating			Gubernatorial Horse Race		
			Fav	Unfav	DK/NO	Cuomo	Paladino	DK/NO
40	Greg Ball (R)	45%	39%	39%	22%	49%	44%	7%
	Michael Kaplowitz (D)	44%	34%	23%	43%			
	Undecided	12%						
49	David Valesky (D) *	50%	49%	38%	13%	56%	36%	8%
	Andrew Russo (R)	40%	36%	27%	37%			
	Undecided	11%						
55	James Alesi (R) *	55%	50%	33%	17%	55%	39%	6%
	Mary Wilmot (D)	35%	25%	19%	56%			
	Undecided	10%						
58	Jack Quinn (R)	42%	62%	25%	13%	30%	65%	5%
	Tim Kennedy (D/C)	39%	51%	30%	19%			
	William Stachowski (W/I) *	12%	22%	70%	8%			
	Undecided	7%						

* Incumbent

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Key Issues for Voters

“Job creation is the single most important issue voters want their senator working on in Albany in two districts and it’s tied for the lead in the other two,” Greenberg said. “Ethics reform is a top-three issue in all the districts, as is the state budget, except in the Erie County seat.”

What is the most important issue you want your State Senator to be working on in Albany? (choices were rotated)				
Issue	40 th SD	49 th SD	55 th SD	58 th SD
Property taxes	21%	12%	16%	9%
State budget	15%	14%	19%	11%
State taxes	11%	8%	13%	18%
Government reform	15%	18%	17%	19%
Health care	6%	5%	5%	7%
Education	7%	10%	7%	7%
Creating jobs	21%	30%	19%	27%
Something else	2%	0%	2%	1%
Don't know/no opinion	2%	2%	2%	0%
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40th SD – Dutchess/Putnam/Westchester Counties – Michael Kaplowitz (D) vs. Greg Ball (R)

In a virtual tie, Ball is supported by 45 percent of likely voters and Kaplowitz has the support of 44 percent. Kaplowitz has the support of 80 percent of Democrats, Ball is supported by 68 percent of Republicans, and Ball leads among independent voters 53-35 percent, in a district where party enrollment is closely divided among Democrats, Republicans and independents. Ball leads by 12 points among men and Kaplowitz leads by 11 points among women. Kaplowitz is stronger in Westchester County, where he leads 49-41 percent, and Ball leads 51-36 percent in Putnam and Dutchess Counties.

Ball is viewed both favorably and unfavorably by 39 percent of voters, with 22 percent having no opinion. Kaplowitz has a 34-23 percent favorability rating, with 43 percent having no opinion.

Nearly half of the voters, 46 percent, would like to see the Republicans regain majority control of the Senate, with 27 percent preferring that Democrats increase their majority, and 23 percent wanting to see the Senate continue to be closely divided.

The Governor’s race is also close as Andrew Cuomo has the support of 49 percent of voters and Carl Paladino has the support of 44 percent. Independents side with Paladino 50-42 percent. Paladino has a five-point lead in Dutchess/Putnam and trails Cuomo by 13 points in Westchester. Voters have a moderately favorable, 50-44 percent, view of the Tea Party, and give President Obama a negative 43-52 percent favorable rating.

Property taxes and job creation are the two top issues identified by voters as the most important issue for their senator to be working on, with 21 percent for each. The state budget and government ethics reform tie for third most important issue with 15 percent for each. On property taxes, voters see Ball much stronger, and on job creation, state budget and ethics voters give a very small edge to Ball. Ball is also seen as much stronger on state taxes, while Kaplowitz has a small edge on health care and education.

“This district is evenly divided between Democrats and Republicans. Republican Ball is viewed favorably and unfavorably by equal numbers of voters. More voters view Kaplowitz favorably than unfavorably. Voters see Ball as better on the issues. The race for Governor is tight. Is it any wonder that Ball and Kaplowitz are in a barnburner of a race that figures to remain neck-and-neck until all the votes are counted on Election Day? This is a very interesting race now and figures to remain so for the next four weeks,” Greenberg said.

49th SD – Cayuga/Madison/Oneida/Onondaga Counties –

David Valesky (D, incumbent) vs. Andrew Russo (R)

Valesky holds a 50-40 percent lead over Russo, winning the support of 86 percent of Democrats and leading Russo among independent voters 45-38 percent, while Russo has the support of nearly three-quarters of Republicans. Russo and Valesky split the vote evenly among men, and women give Valesky a 22-point lead. Onondaga favors Valesky by 14 points and he has a five-point edge in Cayuga/Madison /Oneida.

Valesky is viewed favorably by 49 percent of likely voters and unfavorably by 38 percent, with 13 percent having no opinion. Russo has a 36-27 percent favorability rating, with 37 percent having no opinion.

On the issue of Senate control, voters are closely divided, with 34 percent wanting to see the Senate remain closely divided, 31 percent wanting to see Republicans regain control and 28 percent wanting to see the Democrats increase their majority in the Senate.

Cuomo has a 20-point lead over Paladino, 56-36 percent. Independent voters provide a nearly identical 56-35 percent lead for Cuomo. Women and Onondaga are solidly with Cuomo, while men and Cayuga/Madison/Oneida are virtually evenly divided. President Obama has a 51-44 percent favorability rating, and voters have a negative 39-48 percent view of the Tea Party movement.

Creating jobs – particularly for Democrats and women – is the most important issue to voters, with government ethics reform second most important and state budget and property taxes not far behind. On job creation, voters give a small seven-point edge to Valesky. They give him an even smaller advantage on ethics and the voters are evenly divided on the state budget. Russo has a tiny edge of three points on property taxes, the only issue, where voters give him the edge. Valesky advantages, however, are all in the single digits except for education (12 points) and health care (10 points).

“Senator Valesky has an early lead. While Russo is less known in the district, they both have comparable favorability margins and Valesky is not seen as a clear winner on most issues. When voters were asked whether they wanted to re-elect Valesky or they preferred ‘someone else,’ it was a near tie, with Valesky behind ‘someone else’ by one point. Cuomo has a 20-point lead and Valesky’s is half of that. In a district with near equal party enrollment, this has the potential to be a very interesting race,” Greenberg said.

55^h SD – Monroe County – James Alesi (R, incumbent) vs. Mary Wilmot (D)

Alesi holds a 55-35 percent over Wilmot. He has the support of more than three-quarters of Republicans, leads by 26 points among independent voters and picks up the support of 29 percent of Democrats. Wilmot only has the support of 59 percent of Democrats. Alesi has double-digit leads in each of the three regions, as well as among men and women.

Alesi is viewed favorably by 50 percent of likely voters and unfavorably by 33 percent, with 17 percent having no opinion. He is viewed favorably in every region, but is strongest in Rochester/Irondequoit. Wilmot has a 25-19 percent favorability rating, with 56 percent having no opinion. Even 45 percent of voters siding with Wilmot over Alesi have no opinion of her.

Only 24 percent of voters want to see the Democrats increase their majority in the Senate, while 39 percent want to see the Republicans regain control, and 31 percent favor the Senate continuing to be closely divided.

Cuomo has a 55-39 percent lead over Paladino, including an 11-point lead with independents. While Cuomo is winning nearly three-to-one among Wilmot voters, he is only trailing 51-42 percent among voters supporting Alesi. Obama has a break-even 49-48 percent favorability rating, and voters give a slightly negative favorability rating to the Tea Party movement, 41-46 percent.

When it comes to the most important issue for their senator to work on, voters are closely divided among job creation (19 percent), the state budget (19 percent), government ethics reform (17 percent), property taxes (16 percent), and state taxes (13 percent). On four of the five of those issues, voters think Alesi would be better by nearly 20 points and on ethics reform they give him a five-point edge.

“Senator Alesi is popular with voters. They think he’s better – far better in most cases – on every issue and by a 15-point margin think he would do a better job representing their community in Albany. Wilmot is largely unknown to voters, even to nearly half of Democrats, which helps explain why she leads Alesi by 30 points among Democrats and he leads her by more than 60 points among Republicans. There are still more than four weeks until Election Day and Wilmot needs to get herself known and liked and try to convince voters she would be better on the issues they care about. That’s a long road to travel in four weeks,” Greenberg said.

58th SD – Erie County –

Tim Kennedy (DC) vs. Jack Quinn (R) vs. William Stachowski (WFP/I, incumbent)

In a three-way race, Quinn is narrowly in front with 42 percent, followed by Kennedy at 39 percent and Stachowski garnering 12 percent support. Quinn has the support of three-quarters of Republicans and about half of independents. Kennedy is supported by 54 percent of Democrats and about one-third of independents. Virtually all of Stachowski's support comes from Democrats, although he finishes third among Democrats with 17 percent support, trailing Kennedy and Quinn, who attracts about one-quarter of Democrats.

Kennedy leads in Buffalo/Lackawanna (47-32 percent) and Cheektowaga (46-32 percent). Quinn leads in the southern suburbs by a 56-30 percent margin. Quinn has a 12-point lead among voters under 55 years old, while Kennedy leads among voters 55 and older by seven points. Quinn leads by 30 points among those with a favorable view of the Tea Party and Kennedy leads by 31 points among those with an unfavorable view.

Quinn has a 62-25 percent favorability rating and Kennedy's is 51-30 percent. Stachowski is viewed favorably by 22 percent of voters and unfavorably by 70 percent. Both Kennedy and Quinn are viewed favorably in all three regions, with Quinn stronger in the southern suburbs and Kennedy stronger in Buffalo/Lackawanna.

By a better than four-to-one margin, voters view the State Senate unfavorably and 22 percent want to see the Democrats increase their majority in the Senate, while 36 percent want to see the Republicans retake the majority in the Senate, and another 38 percent want to see it remain closely divided.

In the Governor's race, Paladino has a huge 65-30 percent lead over Cuomo, winning a majority of Democrats (51-46 percent) and Kennedy voters (51-43 percent). Among those who view the Tea Party favorably (55 percent, compared to 33 percent who view it unfavorably), Paladino leads Cuomo 94-5 percent. Obama has a negative 43-53 percent favorability rating.

Job creation is the top issue for 27 percent of voters, followed by government ethics reform (19 percent) and state taxes (18 percent). Voters rank Quinn better on all seven issues on which they were asked to compare the candidates, including double digit leads on jobs, ethics, state and property taxes. Between 67 and 77 percent of Republicans rate Quinn better on every issue, while between 44 and 48 percent of Democrats rate Kennedy best on all issues. Independents rate Quinn best on all issues, including 51-25 percent advantage on jobs.

Only seven percent of voters think the state is headed on the right track, while 86 percent say the state is headed in the wrong direction.

“The 58th SD tells a ‘man bites dog’ story. Democrats outnumber Republicans by more than two-to one, however, overwhelmingly favorable Paladino has a better than two-to-one lead over unfavorable Cuomo. This Democratic district says thumbs up to the Tea Party and thumbs down to Obama. Fewer than one in four voters want to see Democrats increase their majority in the Senate. And while voters say Quinn is better on every issue, he and Kennedy are locked in a near dead-heat, separated by only three points,” Greenberg said.

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Favorability Ratings								
	40 th SD		49 th SD		55 th SD		58 th SD	
	Fav	Unfav	Fav	Unfav	Fav	Unfav	Fav	Unfav
Democratic State Senate Candidate	34%	23%	49%	38%	25%	19%	51%	30%
Republican State Senate Candidate	39%	39%	36%	27%	50%	33%	62%	25%
Andrew Cuomo	48%	44%	55%	36%	60%	36%	34%	61%
Carl Paladino	36%	49%	33%	52%	35%	52%	62%	29%
Barack Obama	43%	52%	51%	44%	49%	48%	43%	53%
Tea Party Movement	50%	44%	39%	48%	41%	46%	55%	33%
New York State Senate	15%	79%	17%	74%	17%	77%	18%	76%

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“Siena has now polled eight Senate races – four each held by the Democrats and the Republicans. Three of the four Democratic districts are currently too close to call, and the fourth has a low double-digit lead, smaller than the three Republican incumbents we have polled. Among the Republican districts, one is too close to call and three incumbents have big leads. There are still a lot of doors to be knocked on, commercials to be aired, phones to be called, and mail to be read in these campaigns, and there are other hotly contested districts that Siena will be polling. For the moment, however, the game of political football appears to have more offense being played by the Republicans and the Democrats more on the defensive side of the ball,” Greenberg said.

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These SRI surveys were conducted from September 26-October 1, 2010 by telephone calls to likely voters in each State Senate district. For the 40th SD, 435 voters were included in the sample, with a margin of error of ± 4.7 percentage points. For the 49th SD, 406 voters were included in the sample, margin of error ± 4.9 . For the 55th SD, 417 voters were included in the sample, margin of error ± 4.8 . For the 58th SD, 462 voters were included in the sample, margin of error ± 4.6 . In each district a stringent likely voter screen was applied to a weighted representative sample of registered voters. For more information, please call Steven Greenberg at 518-469-9858. Cross-tabulations and frequencies for these six polls can be found at: www.Siena.edu/SRI/SNY.