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For Immediate Release:

Wednesday, September 24, 2008

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Siena New York State Senate Polls:

Six Key Races Will Help Determine Control of Senate In '09

**Republicans Lead in Suffolk (3rd SD) & Monroe (56th SD)
 Democrats Up Big in Nassau (7th SD) & North Country (48th SD)
 Races in Queens (15th SD) and Erie (61st SD) Are Neck & Neck**

Loudonville, NY. With Republicans currently holding a 31-30 majority in the State Senate, the political eyes of New York are turning to legislative races across the State that will determine whether Republicans continue to control the State Senate or Democrats gain a majority for the first time in more than four decades. The two newest senators – both Democrats elected in special elections – have leads of at least twenty points, while two incumbent Republican senators have smaller leads, another Republican incumbent is tied with his opponent, and an open seat shows a very tight race, according to new Siena (College) Research Institute polls of likely voters released today.

SD	Candidate	Race	Favorable Rating		Presidential Horse Race		
			Fav	Unfav	McCain	Obama	DK/NO
3	Caesar Trunzo (R) *	46%	56%	17%	45%	44%	11%
	Brian Foley (D)	40%	46%	16%			
	Don't know/no opinion	14%					
7	Craig Johnson (D) *	49%	36%	17%	40%	48%	12%
	Barbara Donno (R)	25%	16%	9%			
	Don't know/no opinion	26%					
15	Serph Maltese (R) *	42%	48%	16%	31%	49%	20%
	Joseph Addabbo, Jr. (D)	42%	38%	20%			
	Don't know/no opinion	16%					
48	Darrel Aubertine (D) *	51%	58%	21%	44%	40%	16%
	David Renzi (R)	31%	34%	15%			
	Don't know/no opinion	19%					
56	Joseph Robach (R) *	49%	57%	24%	33%	59%	8%
	Richard Dollinger (D)	38%	36%	25%			
	Don't know/no opinion	13%					
61	Joseph Mesi (D)	40%	45%	18%	45%	40%	15%
	Michael Ranzenhofer (R)	38%	35%	12%			
	Don't know/no opinion	22%					

* Incumbent

“The Senate’s two newest members who came into office after hotly contested special elections both enter the final six weeks of the campaign in very strong shape,” said Steven Greenberg, spokesman for the Siena New York Poll. “Craig Johnson in Nassau County has a 24-point lead and Darrel Aubertine in north, central New York has a 20-point lead.

“Two incumbent Republican senators have smaller leads in their races. Joseph Robach in Monroe County has an 11-point lead, while Caesar Trunzo in Suffolk County has a six-point lead,” Greenberg said. “Two other races are much tighter. Queens Republican incumbent Serph Maltese is tied, and in an open seat in Erie and Genesee Counties, held by Republican Mary Lou Rath, Democrat Joseph Mesi has a slim two-point lead.”

Key Issues for Voters

“Property taxes is the most important issue for voters in both Long Island races as well as the Erie County seat. Health care is the most important issue for voters in the Monroe County and Queens races, while job creation is tops among voters in the Oswego/Jefferson/St. Lawrence Counties district,” Greenberg said.

What is the most important issue you want your State Senator to be working on in Albany? (choices were rotated)						
Issue	3rd SD	7th SD	15th SD	48th SD	56th SD	61st SD
Property taxes	35%	40%	NA	21%	15%	22%
State and local taxes	NA	NA	17%	NA	NA	NA
Housing	4%	2%	7%	NA	NA	NA
Job creation	7%	9%	13%	24%	18%	20%
Government reform	8%	7%	11%	11%	7%	16%
Health care	22%	21%	25%	18%	25%	18%
Education	17%	14%	20%	12%	17%	7%
State’s budget deficit	NA	NA	NA	8%	12%	12%
Something else	5%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%
Don’t know/no opinion	1%	2%	3%	1%	3%	1%

3rd SD – Suffolk County – Caesar Trunzo (R, incumbent) vs. Brian Foley (D)

Trunzo is leading Foley 46-40 percent. While Foley holds 66 percent of Democrats and picks up support from 16 percent of Republicans, Trunzo is supported by 71 percent of Republicans and 23 percent of Democrats. Independents tilt slightly to Foley, 43-40 percent. Trunzo has a solid 50-38 percent lead in Islip, his hometown, and Foley has a slim 43-41 percent lead in Brookhaven, where he is currently Town Supervisor. Trunzo has 51-35 percent lead with men and Foley has a smaller 46-41 percent lead with women.

Trunzo is viewed favorably by 56 percent of voters, including 54 percent of Democrats, and unfavorably by 17 percent of voters. Slightly more than one in four voters has no opinion. Foley has a 46-16 percent favorable rating, with 38 percent having no opinion.

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Forty-six percent of voters, including 26 percent who support Trunzo, would like to see the Senate controlled by Democrats, while 40 percent, including 18 percent of Foley supporters, prefer Republican control. McCain has a one-point lead over Obama in the district.

A small plurality of voters think Trunzo would be better on property taxes, education and protecting quality of life. Voters were virtually evenly divided on who would be better on housing, job creation, government reform, and health care.

“While Senator Trunzo has an early lead that virtually matches the enrollment advantage Republicans have in the district, this race has the potential to be tight given the voters’ positive view of both candidates and the closeness with which they view the candidates on the issues,” Greenberg said.

7th SD – Nassau County – Craig Johnson (D, incumbent) vs. Barbara Donno (R)

Johnson has a 49-25 percent lead over Donno. Johnson has the support of three-quarters of Democrats, while Donno has only a 47-28 percent among Republicans. Johnson leads among independent voters, 36-24 percent, although a plurality of these voters, 40 percent, has yet to make a decision.

Johnson is viewed favorably by 36 percent of voters and unfavorably by 17 percent of voters. Nearly half of voters has no opinion. Donno has a 16-9 percent favorable rating, with 75 percent having no opinion.

Fifty percent of voters would like to see the Senate controlled by Democrats, while 35 percent prefer Republican control. Johnson’s lead is far larger than the 48-40 percent lead Barack Obama has over John McCain in the district.

While Johnson has an approximately two-to-one advantage over Donno on all the issues surveyed, more than four in ten voters could not choose between either candidate on any of the issues.

“Senator Johnson is not over the magic 50 percent mark, however, his 24-point lead is far greater than the nine-point enrollment edge Democrats have over Republicans. He is not widely known throughout the district but is more known than his opponent,” Greenberg said.

15th SD – Queens County – Serph Maltese (R, incumbent) vs. Joseph Addabbo, Jr. (D)

Maltese and Addabbo are tied at 42 percent, with 16 percent undecided. In this district that has an overwhelmingly Democratic enrollment edge, Maltese leads among Republicans 75-22 percent and independent voters 48-32 percent. Addabbo has a 53-27 percent lead with Democrats.

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Maltese is viewed favorably by 48 percent of voters and unfavorably by 16 percent of voters. He has a nearly two-to-one, 40-22 percent favorable rating with Democrats. Addabbo has a 38-20 percent favorable rating, including a virtually even 28-26 percent rating with Republicans. Maltese fairs better with independent voters 49-7 percent, compared to Addabbo's 27-21 percent.

Slightly more than half of voters would like to see the Senate controlled by Democrats, while 32 percent prefer Republican control. Obama leads McCain in this district by 18 points, 49-31 percent.

While a small plurality of voters think Maltese would be better on taxes, voters are virtually evenly divided on every other issue.

“Senator Maltese held on to win a close race in this heavily Democratic district two years ago. The race this year certainly looks like it has the potential to be tight until the polls close on Election Day,” Greenberg said.

48th SD – Oswego/Jefferson/St. Lawrence – Darrel Aubertine (D, incumbent) vs. David Renzi (R)

Aubertine has a 20-point, 51-31 percent lead over Renzi. Aubertine leads among Democrats 78-10 percent, and trails with Republicans, who account for about half of the voters in the district, 41-37 percent. Aubertine has a small lead, 41-37 percent, among independent voters. Renzi trails by at least 16 points in each county.

Aubertine is viewed favorably by 58 percent of voters, including 52 percent of Republicans, and unfavorably by 21 percent of voters. One in five voters has no opinion. He has a two-to-one favorable rating in Oswego County, three-to-one in Jefferson County and four-to-one in St. Lawrence County. Renzi has a 34-15 percent favorable rating, with 51 percent having no opinion.

Voters are closely divided on Senate control, with 41 percent, including one-quarter of Aubertine voters, preferring the Republicans and 38 percent choosing the Democrats. McCain has a small 44-40 percent lead in the presidential race.

A plurality of voters think Aubertine would be better on all the issues.

“In this overwhelmingly Republican district, Senator Aubertine is more well known and liked than Renzi. Six weeks is a long time, however, Renzi has a large gap to close to make this race competitive,” Greenberg said.

56th SD – Monroe County – Joseph Robach (R, incumbent) vs. Richard Dollinger (D)

Robach leads Dollinger 49-38 percent. While Robach holds 78 percent of Republicans and gets the support of one-third of Democrats, Dollinger has the support of 57 percent of Democrats and 11 percent of Republicans. Robach leads among independent voters 46-34 percent. Dollinger has a 10-point lead in the Rochester and Brighton portions of the district, however, Robach has a 64-26 percent lead in Greece and Parma.

Robach is viewed favorably by 57 percent of voters, including 49 percent of Democrats, and unfavorably by 24 percent of voters. One in five voters has no opinion. He is viewed most favorably in Greece and Parma (71-22 percent). Dollinger has a 36-25 percent favorable rating, with 40 percent having no opinion. He is strongest in Brighton (56-14 percent) and least favorable and most unknown in Rochester (28-25 percent)

Voters strongly, 56-31 percent, support Democratic control of the Senate. Interestingly, however, 34 percent of voters saying they support Robach, also indicate they support Democratic control of the Senate. Obama has a commanding 59-33 percent lead over McCain.

“Robach enters the final six weeks of the campaign in this heavily Democratic district in a strong position. He has a double-digit lead, he is popular and viewed as stronger on all the issues,” Greenberg said.

61st SD – Erie and Genesee Counties – Michael Ranzenhofer (R) vs. Joseph Mesi (D)

Mesi has a slim 40-38 percent lead over Ranzenhofer. Ranzenhofer does virtually as well among Republicans as Mesi does with Democrats. Mesi has a 43-28 percent lead among independent voters. Ranzenhofer has identical 40-38 percent leads in Amherst and the Clarence/Newstead/Genesee County portions of the district, while Mesi has a 45-35 percent lead in the Tonawandas.

Mesi is viewed favorably by 45 percent of voters, including 42 percent of Republicans, and unfavorably by 18 percent of voters. More than one in three voters has no opinion. Ranzenhofer has a 35-12 percent favorable rating, with 52 percent having no opinion.

By a 44-38 percent margin, voters support Republican control of the Senate. McCain has a 45-40 percent lead in the presidential race.

A plurality of voters think Ranzenhofer would be better on dealing with the State budget deficit, and a small plurality also give him the edge on government reform and property taxes. Voters rate the candidates as virtually even on job creation, health care and education. They give Mesi a slight nod on fighting for Upstate.

“While this district has a small Republican enrollment edge and has long been represented by a Republican Senator, more voters currently know and have a favorable view of Mesi. On more issues, however, they think that Ranzenhofer would do a better job. The race is close, and seems likely to stay that way,” Greenberg said.

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These SRI surveys were conducted from September 11-17, 2008 by telephone calls to likely registered voters in each State Senate district. For the 3rd SD, 405 voters were called, with a margin of error of ± 4.9 percentage points. For the 7th SD, 402 voters were called, margin of error ± 4.9 . For the 15th SD, 401 voters were called, margin of error ± 4.9 . For the 48th SD, 437 voters were called, margin of error ± 4.7 . For the 56th SD, 429 voters were called, margin of error ± 4.7 . For the 61st SD, 450 voters were called, margin of error ± 4.6 . Data was statistically adjusted by respondent age – and in the 3rd SD, party – to match likely 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/statesenate.