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## Siena New York State Senate Polls:

### Four Key Races Will Help Determine Control of Senate In '09

**Republican Incumbents Volker (59<sup>th</sup> SD) & Alesi (55<sup>th</sup> SD) Have Big Leads  
Democratic Incumbent Oppenheimer Has Big Lead in Westchester (37<sup>th</sup> SD)  
Republican Challenger Delano has 13-Point Lead Over Stachowski (58<sup>th</sup> SD)**

Loudonville, NY. Three incumbent senators – two Republicans and one Democrat – have large leads four weeks before Election Day. One incumbent Democratic Senator – William Stachowski in Erie County – is trailing his Republican challenger by double digits, according to new Siena (College) Research Institute polls of likely voters released today. These polls follow up on six other State Senate district Siena New York polls released two weeks ago, as Republicans attempt to maintain their majority in the State Senate – currently by a margin of 31-30 – and the Democrats seek to gain control of the upper house of the State Legislature for the first time in more than four decades.

SD	Candidate	Senate Race	Favorable Rating		Presidential Horse Race		
			Fav	Unfav	McCain	Obama	DK/NO
<b>37</b>	<b>Suzi Oppenheimer (D) *</b>	<b>61%</b>	58%	18%	31%	<b>61%</b>	8%
	Liz Feld (R)	24%	23%	17%			
	Don't know/no opinion	15%					
<b>55</b>	<b>James Alesi (R) *</b>	<b>62%</b>	54%	18%	39%	<b>50%</b>	11%
	David Nachbar (D)	21%	13%	11%			
	Don't know/no opinion	17%					
<b>58</b>	William Stachowski (D) *	36%	39%	14%	41%	<b>45%</b>	14%
	<b>Dennis Delano (R)</b>	<b>49%</b>	63%	15%			
	Don't know/no opinion	15%					
<b>59</b>	<b>Dale Volker (R) *</b>	<b>50%</b>	49%	32%	<b>54%</b>	36%	10%
	Kathy Konst (D)	33%	26%	16%			
	Don't know/no opinion	17%					

\* Incumbent

“Siena has now looked at 10 State Senate races, five with incumbent Republicans, four with incumbent Democrats and one open seat currently held by a Republican. In those races, six incumbents – three Republicans and three Democrats – appear to have comfortable double digit leads. One incumbent Republican has a single digit lead, one incumbent Democrat faces a double digit deficit, and two races are neck and neck,” said Steven Greenberg, spokesman for the Siena New York Poll.

**Key Issues for Voters**

“Property taxes is the most important issue for voters in three races, while health care is the most important issue voters want their State Senator working on in the 58<sup>th</sup> S.D. (Erie County). Education is the third most important issue in the Westchester seat, yet finishes fifth or sixth in the three other districts,” Greenberg said.

<b>What is the most important issue you want your State Senator to be working on in Albany? (choices were rotated)</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>37<sup>th</sup> SD</b>	<b>55<sup>th</sup> SD</b>	<b>58<sup>th</sup> SD</b>	<b>59<sup>th</sup> SD</b>
<b>Property taxes</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>22%</b>	20%	<b>26%</b>
<b>Job creation</b>	9%	18%	20%	16%
<b>Government reform</b>	9%	15%	15%	20%
<b>Health care</b>	21%	18%	<b>22%</b>	15%
<b>Education</b>	17%	6%	7%	5%
<b>State’s budget deficit</b>	11%	17%	13%	13%
<b>Something else</b>	3%	2%	1%	3%
<b>Don’t know/no opinion</b>	2%	1%	2%	1%

**37<sup>th</sup> SD – Westchester County – Suzi Oppenheimer (D, incumbent) vs. Liz Feld (R)**

Oppenheimer has a considerable 61-24 percent lead over Feld in a district where Democrats have a significant enrollment edge. While Oppenheimer gets 82 percent of Democrats, Feld is only winning among Republicans 50-35 percent. Oppenheimer has a two-to-one, 51-25 percent, lead among independent voters. Oppenheimer leads in every region and with every demographic group.

Oppenheimer has 58-18 percent favorable rating, with 24 percent not having an opinion. Feld is viewed favorably by 23 percent and unfavorably by 17 percent, with 60 percent not having an opinion.

Oppenheimer’s favorability is at least 64 percent with voters over the age of 35, however, nearly half of voters less than 35 do not have an opinion of her.

By a margin of 54-33 percent, voters, including a plurality of independent voters, would like to see the Senate controlled by Democrats. Illinois Senator Barack Obama leads Arizona Senator John McCain by a margin of 61-31 percent in the district.

Voters believe Oppenheimer would be better than Feld on every issue. Feld is ‘strongest’ on property taxes, where Oppenheimer has the edge 41-26 percent, and Oppenheimer’s largest lead among the issues is on education, where she leads Feld 50-17 percent.

“Senator Oppenheimer is in very strong position to win re-election for a 13<sup>th</sup> term. Feld would have to make up a lot of ground against a popular opponent in an overwhelmingly Democratic district in only four weeks,” Greenberg said.

**55<sup>th</sup> SD – Monroe County – James Alesi (R, incumbent) vs. David Nachbar (D)**

Alesi has a nearly three-to-one, 62-21 percent, lead over Nachbar. Alesi leads among Republicans 83-7 percent, among independent voters 60-20 percent, and among Democrats 48-34 percent. Nachbar does not get 25 percent support in any area of the district, nor with any age group.

Alesi has a 54-18 percent favorable rating, including a 54-19 percent with Democrats, while about one-quarter of voters have no opinion. Nachbar has a 13-11 percent favorable rating, with three-quarters of voters, including 71 percent of Democrats, having no opinion.

Voters narrowly support, 43-40 percent Democratic control of the Senate. Obama has an 11 point, 50-39 percent, lead over McCain.

By better than two-to-one margins, voters think Alesi would be better on every issue.

“Republican Senator Alesi has a commanding 40-point lead in a district where Democrats outnumber Republicans. Nachbar is unknown to the vast majority of voters without a lot of time to become known. Alesi is well known, well liked and preferred on the seven issues tested,” Greenberg said.

**58<sup>th</sup> SD – Erie County – William Stachowski (D, incumbent) vs. Dennis Delano (R)**

In a district where Democrats outnumber Republicans by more than two-to-one, Delano holds a 49-36 percent lead over Stachowski. While Stachowski has the support of only about half of Democrats, Delano gets nearly two-thirds of Republicans and more than two-thirds of independent voters. Delano leads with men and women, with every age group and religion, and in every region of the district.

Stachowski is viewed favorably by 39 percent of voters and unfavorably by 14 percent, with 47 percent having no opinion. Delano has a 63-15 percent favorable rating, with only 23 percent having no opinion. Delano’s favorable rating is 59 percent with Democrats – significantly higher than Stachowski’s 44 percent – and at least 61 percent in every region of the district.

Nearly half of voters would like to see the Senate controlled by Democrats, with only 35 percent supporting Republican control. Obama has a small four-point lead over McCain in the district, 45-41 percent.

Voters give Delano a significant lead over Stachowski on who they think would be better on virtually every issue: property taxes, state budget deficit, job creation, government reform, and fighting for Upstate. Voters give Delano a small lead on health care, and rate the candidates as virtually even on education.

“The challenger is more well known and better liked than the 27-year incumbent, even among Democrats, in this overwhelmingly Democratic district. Voters think Delano is better on the issues, and when asked a generic ‘re-elect’ question with no opponent, more voters were inclined to ‘prefer someone else’ than to re-elect Stachowski. With four weeks to go, the incumbent, trailing by 13 points, faces an uphill climb if he wants to pull a come-from-behind victory,” Greenberg said.

**59<sup>th</sup> SD – Erie/Livingston/Ontario/Wyoming – Dale Volker (R, incumbent) vs. Kathy Konst (D)**

Volker has a significant 17-point, 50-33 percent, lead over Konst. Volker has the support of two-thirds of Republicans, leading 67-25 percent, while Konst only wins among Democrats 51-33 percent. Volker leads 43-28 percent among independent voters. Volker has an eight-point lead in the Erie County portion of the district and a commanding 29-point lead in the Livingston/Ontario/Wyoming Counties portion of the district.

Volker is viewed favorably by 49 percent of voters and unfavorably by 32 percent. Democrats are nearly evenly divided on Volker. Konst has a 26-16 percent favorable rating, with 58 percent of voters having no opinion.

Voters support keeping Republicans in control of the Senate by a 49-35 percent margin, with independent voters voicing two-to-one support for Republican control. McCain has a 54-36 percent lead over Obama.

By double digits, voters think Volker would be better on nearly every issue, with the exception of government reform and education where they give him seven and eight point leads, respectively.

“A Senator for more than three decades, Volker enters the final four weeks of the campaign in a strong position against a challenger who is unknown to more than half of the voters. Konst has a lot of ground to close and not a lot of time to do it,” Greenberg said.

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These SRI surveys were conducted from September 30-October 5, 2008 by telephone calls to likely registered voters in each State Senate district. For the 37<sup>th</sup> SD, 401 voters were called, with a margin of error of  $\pm 4.9$  percentage points. For the 55<sup>th</sup> SD, 418 voters were called, margin of error  $\pm 4.8$ . For the 58<sup>th</sup> SD, 453 voters were called, margin of error  $\pm 4.6$ . For the 59<sup>th</sup> SD, 403 voters were called, margin of error  $\pm 4.9$ . Data was statistically weighted by respondent age 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/sny](http://www.Siena.edu/SRI/sny).