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Siena New York State Senate Polls:

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

Incumbents Johnson (D, 7th SD), Oppenheimer (D, 37th SD), Robach (R, 56th SD) & Volker (R, 59th SD) Continue to Lead

Challengers Donno and Konst Gain Some Ground in 7th and 59th SDs

Loudonville, NY. With Republicans currently holding a 31-29 majority in the State Senate, the Siena (College) Research Institute today released four new polls of likely voters in two districts with incumbent Democrats and two with incumbent Republicans. All four continue to maintain double digit leads over their challengers, ranging from 11 to 35 points.

SD 7	Johnson (D)		Donno (R)		Don't Know	Obama	McCain
Oct. 30, 2008	50%		35%		15%	51%	42%
Sept. 2008	49%		25%		26%	48%	40%
	Fav	Unfav	Fav	Unfav		Dem Senate	Rep Senate
Oct. 30, 2008	40%	28%	29%	23%		48%	39%
Sept. 2008	36%	17%	16%	9%		50%	35%
SD 37	Oppenheimer (D)		Feld (R)		Don't Know	Obama	McCain
Oct. 30, 2008	64%		29%		7%	64%	32%
Oct. 8, 2008	61%		24%		15%	61%	31%
	Fav	Unfav	Fav	Unfav		Dem Senate	Rep Senate
Oct. 30, 2008	57%	20%	30%	15%		51%	36%
Oct. 8, 2008	58%	18%	23%	17%		54%	33%
SD 56	Robach (R)		Dollinger (D)		Don't Know	Obama	McCain
Oct. 30, 2008	52%		39%		9%	61%	32%
Sept. 2008	49%		38%		13%	59%	33%
	Fav	Unfav	Fav	Unfav		Dem Senate	Rep Senate
Oct. 30, 2008	62%	24%	43%	34%		51%	35%
Sept. 2008	57%	24%	36%	25%		56%	31%
SD 59	Volker (R)		Konst (D)		Don't Know	Obama	McCain
Oct. 30, 2008	50%		39%		10%	45%	47%
Oct. 8, 2008	50%		33%		17%	36%	54%
	Fav	Unfav	Fav	Unfav		Dem Senate	Rep Senate
Oct. 30, 2008	45%	35%	31%	29%		34%	46%
Oct. 8, 2008	49%	32%	26%	16%		35%	49%

“With less than one week until Election Day, Democrat Suzi Oppenheimer in Westchester County maintains a huge 35-point lead,” said Steven Greenberg, spokesman for the Siena New York Poll. “In Nassau County, Democrat Craig Johnson has seen his earlier 24-point lead tighten to 15 points. Monroe County Republican Joseph Robach has seen his lead edge up to 13 points, from 11 points one month ago. And Republican Dale Volker of Erie County has seen his lead fall by six points, as he holds on to an 11-point lead.

“Siena is looking at six other key Senate races and reporting on those results in a few days,” Greenberg said.

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

Johnson has a 50-35 percent lead over Donno, down from a 49-25 percent lead in the previous Siena New York Poll. Johnson has the support of more than three-quarters of Democrats, while Donno has the support of more than two-thirds of Republicans. Johnson has a nearly two-to-one lead among independent voters, 50-28 percent, up from 36-24 percent in the last poll. Donno’s overall gain in the poll comes largely from Republican voters, where she went from leading 47-28 percent, to now leading 68-19 percent.

Johnson is viewed favorably by 40 percent and unfavorably by 28 percent of voters (36-17 percent last poll). Donno currently has a 29-23 percent favorable rating (16-9 percent last poll).

Johnson’s lead is larger than the 51-42 percent lead Barack Obama has over John McCain in the district.

“Senator Johnson has picked up a point to hit 50 percent, while Donno has picked up 10 points, closing the gap to 15 points. Donno’s challenge in a district with a Democratic enrollment edge is made more difficult because nearly half of voters have no opinion of Donno, and among those who do know her, nearly as many have an unfavorable view as have a favorable view,” Greenberg said.

37th SD – Westchester County – Suzi Oppenheimer (D, incumbent) vs. Liz Feld (R)

Oppenheimer has maintained a large 64-29 percent lead over Feld, down slightly from 61-24 percent in the previous poll. While Oppenheimer has support from 88 percent of Democrats, Feld is only winning among Republicans 64-30 percent. Oppenheimer has a better than two-to-one, 59-28 percent, lead among independent voters. Oppenheimer leads in every region and with virtually every demographic group.

Oppenheimer’s favorable/unfavorable rating, 57-20 percent, has remained virtually unchanged over the last month, when it was 58-18 percent. Feld is viewed favorably by 30 percent of voters and unfavorably by 15 percent, improved from her previous 23-17 percent favorable rating, although more than half of voters continue to have no opinion about her.

By a margin of 51-36 percent, voters would like to see the Senate controlled by Democrats, down from 54-33 percent last month. Obama leads McCain by a margin of 64-32 percent in the district.

“Senator Oppenheimer remains in a very strong position to win re-election for a 13th term. Given Oppenheimer’s advantage in favorability, the district’s large Democratic enrollment edge, and the support for Obama within the district, Feld appears to be headed for defeat,” Greenberg said.

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

Robach leads Dollinger 52-39 percent, edging up slightly from 49-38 percent in the last poll. Robach has the support of 84 percent of Republicans and 34 percent of Democrats in this district with a large Democratic enrollment edge. Dollinger has the support of 55 percent of Democrats and 13 percent of Republicans.

Robach leads among independent voters 56-37 percent, up from 46-34 percent. Dollinger leads by 11 points in Rochester and eight points in Brighton, however, Robach leads 67-27 percent in Greece and Parma.

Robach is viewed favorably by 62 percent of voters, including nearly half of Democrats, and unfavorably by 24 percent of voters, up slightly from 57-24 percent previously. Dollinger has a 43-34 percent favorable rating, compared to 36-25 percent in the last poll. His favorability rating among Democrats, 53-26 percent, is only slightly better than Robach’s 49-34 percent. However, Robach has an 81-8 percent favorable rating with Republicans, compared to Dollinger’s 30-53 percent. And while Dollinger has 39-33 favorable rating with independent voters, Robach’s favorable rating with independents is 66-24 percent.

Obama has a commanding 61-32 percent lead over McCain.

“Senator Robach has strong support among Republicans and independent voters, as well as the support of more than one-third of Democrats. He enters the final week of the campaign in a strong position, particularly given the strength of Obama in this heavily Democratic district,” Greenberg said.

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

Volker has a 50-39 percent lead over Konst, down six points from the last poll, when he led 50-33 percent. Volker has the support of three-quarters of Republicans, while Konst wins among Democrats 60-28 percent. Konst now leads among independent voters 47-40 percent, after trailing with these voters 43-28 percent previously. Volker has a small three -point lead in the Erie County portion of the district and a large 23-point lead in the Livingston/Ontario/Wyoming Counties portion of the district.

Volker is viewed favorably by 45 percent of voters and unfavorably by 35 percent, down from 49-32 percent in the last poll. While he has a 62-28 percent favorable rating with Republicans, he is viewed more unfavorably by both Democrats and independent voters. Konst has a nearly even 31-29 percent favorable rating, compared to 26-16 percent favorable previously.

McCain has a slim 47-45 percent lead over Obama, down considerably from the last poll's 54-36 percent McCain lead in this district with a modest eight-point Republican enrollment advantage.

“While Senator Volker has seen the race tighten, he enters the final week of the campaign with a small double digit lead, outpacing the top of his ticket. He's facing a challenger unknown to 40 percent of voters and half of those who know her view her unfavorably. Konst has narrowed the gap but still has substantially more ground to close, and very little time to do it,” Greenberg said.

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These SRI surveys were conducted from October 27-29, 2008 by telephone calls to likely registered voters in each State Senate district. For the 7th SD, 415 voters were called, with a margin of error of ± 4.8 percentage points. For the 37th SD, 412 voters were called, margin of error ± 4.8 . For the 56th SD, 451 voters were called, margin of error ± 4.6 . For the 59th SD, 405 voters were called, margin of error ± 4.9 . Data was statistically adjusted 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.