

# Rutgers-Eagleton poll shows top choices for New Jersey Republicans and Democrats

By Maegan Kae Sunaz | 09/02/14

With the 2016 presidential elections drawing closer, potential candidates are picking up momentum and making favorable impressions among New Jersey residents.

According to the published results of a recent Rutgers-Eagleton Poll, seven in 10 Republicans and Democrats can name a preferred nominee. When asked to choose their party's presidential candidate, New Jersey Republicans support Gov. Chris Christie while Democrats embrace former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

No other prospective candidates from either party come close to the league of these two individuals, as nearly all others score below 10 percent as first or second choices.

David Redlawsk, director of the Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling, said this is one of the organization's six or seven annual polls.

When Christie and Clinton are matched head-to-head in a hypothetical 2016 election, Clinton takes the lead by a double-digit margin.

"The key take away is, if the election were now, which of course it is not, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton would beat Governor Christie by double digits," Redlawsk said.

He said the result is not surprising, taking into account how New Jersey is referred to as a blue state, or a Democratic one.

Democrats control the New Jersey legislatures, both of the state's Senators are Democrats and President Barack Obama won the state's last presidential election.

In the voter registration numbers, Democrats outnumber Republicans, but both are outnumbered by independents.

Although Christie won many votes from Democrats to obtain his position, New Jersey remains liberal in national politics.

The Rutgers-Eagleton Poll routinely asks whether people have a favorable or unfavorable impression of various political figures.

"What we found is [former] Secretary Clinton's ratings are somewhat higher than Governor Christie's — 54 percent of New Jerseyans are favorable toward her, and 49 percent are favorable to the governor," Redlawsk said. "This is a question of whether you have a favorable or unfavorable impression. It isn't comparing the two directly."

Clinton's ratings have dropped over the course of the year. She had a higher favorability rating back in January than she does now.

In contrast, Christie's ratings have remained stagnant ever since the Bridgegate scandal.

The Rutgers University Student Assembly assumes no position on candidates, said Francine Glaser, former chair of the Legislative Affairs Committee.

Glaser, a School of Arts and Sciences senior, said the organization is always willing to work with Gov. Christie and his staff.

She said RUSA's relationship with Christie is also important because of the state-appointed positions on the Rutgers Board of Governors.

“When Governor Christie is making decisions that will affect Rutgers and the other universities in New Jersey, RUSA always advocates for the well-being and protection of our constituents and will always have its door open to be consulted by the state about student issues,” she said.

Luke Svasti, current chair of the Legislative Affairs committee, said they generally want to continue advocating for students in various ways, such as keeping tuition down.

Svasti, a School of Arts and Sciences junior, said Legislative Affairs, in particular, wants a stronger bond with the state students union, New Jersey United Students. They will be working on increasing process transparency, voter mobilization and student participation.

“It is great to see students express an opinion, but we hope this translates into increased voter turnout come elections,” he said.