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Poll shows uncertainty in upcoming election

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Incumbent state Congress members currently face no fear of losing their seats this coming November, but there are still many independent voters who remain undecided, according to a poll by the University's Eagleton Institute of Politics.

The poll reported that New Jersey voters gave incumbents a 25 to 32 percent lead statewide when asked about voting for either their current Congress member or a challenger.

David Redlawsk, a University political science professor and poll director, said at this point, it is not out of the ordinary for people to not know whom they are going to vote for.

"We're talking eight months before the elections in November, so it's not surprising that many people don't know who they are going to vote for," Redlawsk said. "Most people just don't think about politics." In the five congressional districts held by Republicans, voters plan to vote for a Republican by a 25 to 40 percent margin.

Meanwhile, in the eight congressional districts held by Democrats, voters intend to vote for Democrats by a 22 to 41 percent margin.

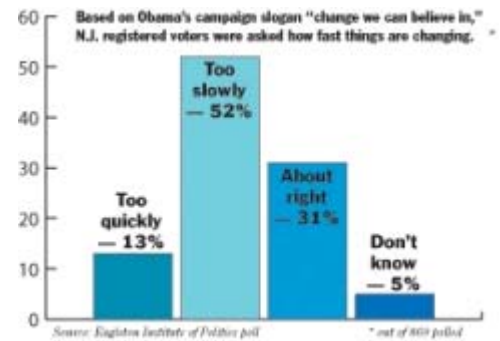
"This suggests that unless a strong anti-incumbent campaign develops, independents may be mostly drawn to the party of their incumbent congressman, but there are risks for Democrats in the current environment," according to the poll.

The danger lies in the fact that only 57 percent of President Barack Obama voters plan to vote for a Democrat, while 75 percent of Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., voters intend to vote Republican.

Of the amount of registered voters that approve of the president's job performance, 51 percent said they will vote Democratic in the 2010 congressional elections.

Ultimately, 20 percent of the 953 adults polled said they were unsure of how they will vote and 10 percent do not plan to vote at all.

This air of uncertainty and apathy is not just present in New Jersey adults, but in college students also. Redlawsk said students should be more aware because the congressional decisions affect not just adults, but everybody.



graphic by Taylere Peterson / Design Editor

A poll by the Eagleton Institute of Politics indicates that 57 percent of the president's voters plan to vote Democratic in future elections.

“Ultimately, the U.S. Congress makes many policies, like student loans,” he said. “Whoever gets elected to Congress has a huge effect on what happens in this country.”

Increasing political awareness at the University is a common goal for both Rutgers Democrats President Alex Holodak and Rutgers University College Republicans President Ron Holden.

Holodak, a School of Arts and Sciences senior, said politics can be a painful process, but students should pay attention.

“I think it is a lot to grasp, and there are a lot of issues out there,” he said. “However, it is the job of our politicians and officials statewide to make this information as clear and articulate as possible.”

Holodak said the congressional elections in November are especially important for students.

“If you look at the protests happening in California over college tuition hikes, students need to know that it was Congress who made such a thing possible,” he said.

Like Holodak, Rutgers College senior Holden also believes more students need to become aware of politics.

“No matter what side of the spectrum you come from, these issues will affect our lives,” Holden said. “I think they don’t attribute the election with any significance. However, students should know what’s going to happen with their future.”

Holden also realizes that politics might be put on the back burner for many students because for some, it is not the most important part of their life.

“I think that because the burdens of being a college student are so great, it is a little challenging for students to keep up on politics,” he said. “Most of the people my age just seem not to care.”

Holodak expressed the same opinion. He said University students do not get involved because it is not a good use of their time.

“People think they are wasting their time with politics, but that’s just not the case,” he said. “There is a need for students to be more vocal about their ideals.”

Despite the partisanship happening in Washington D.C., Holodak and Holden are teaming up to make politics a bigger issue.

Holodak said acting solely in a partisan manner just does not work.

“We’ll do loop-meetings with Ron and try to come together on topics,” Holodak said. “We’ll fight about certain issues, but then we’ll hang out afterwards.”