

## Poll: Booker leads Lonegan by 35 points in U.S. Senate race

Matt Friedman/The Star-Ledger

### U.S. Senate special election 2013



Newark Mayor Cory Booker has a 35-point lead over conservative activist Steve Lonegan in the race for U.S. Senate, according to a Rutgers-Eagleton poll. (*Star-Ledger* file photos)

**TRENTON** — Despite the two-fisted U.S. Senate campaign being waged by the conservative Republican Steve Lonegan, Mayor Cory Booker of Newark has built a crushing 35-point lead, according to a Rutgers-Eagleton poll released today.

Booker, who hopes to fill the seat left vacant by the death of his fellow Democrat, Sen. Frank Lautenberg, has run up a 64 percent to 29 percent lead in the polls with more than a month to go until the Oct. 16 special election.

"Booker appears to be building an insurmountable lead," David Redlawsk, director of the poll, said. "While special elections are notoriously hard to predict, given uncertainties about turnout, Booker's name recognition, celebrity-type status and stances on issues that align more with New Jersey's 'blue' political climate seem to be driving momentum toward him and away from Lonegan."

Redlawsk said the survey of 462 likely voters, who were polled from Sept. 3 to Sept. 9, showed that 63 percent had a favorable impression of Booker, compared with 19 percent who held an unfavorable one.

The likely voters were split on Lonegan, a former mayor of Bogota — 22 percent to 22 percent — while 56 percent said they did not know enough about him to form an opinion.

Redlawsk also said Lonegan's recent controversial statements about Booker's sexuality — that he may be playing for the "gay vote by acting ambiguous," and his poking fun at Booker's fondness for pedicures — may have damaged him in the poll, which had a margin of error of 3.4 percentage points.

"Lonegan has taken some hard hits in the media on Booker and the gay issue," he said. "It could be partly related to that."

Booker leads across virtually all demographic groups in the state, and he has been more successful at locking up Democratic votes than Lonegan has been at securing Republican ones.

Ninety-three percent of likely Democratic voters said they would vote for Booker, while just 3 percent chose Lonegan.

On the other hand, 75 percent of Republicans said they planned to vote for Lonegan, while 19 percent chose Booker.

Moreover, Redlawsk said, Democrats polled were more enthusiastic about voting.

"The nearly unanimous party support is a key for Booker," he said. "Democrats seem motivated in this election, and may even be more likely to turn out than Republicans, who are much more split on their candidate."

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