

Poll finds strong support for gay marriage in N.J., including among Republicans

Matt Friedman/The Star-Ledger



Newark Mayor Cory Booker officiates the marriage of Joseph Panessidi, left, and Orville Bell just after midnight today at Newark City Hall. (*John Munson/The Star-Ledger*)

TRENTON — On the same day Gov. Chris Christie [dropped his appeal](#) of a ruling to legalize same-sex marriage, a new poll shows that support for it is so strong in New Jersey that even a plurality of Republicans are in favor.

Sixty-one percent of New Jersey voters support legalizing gay marriage in New Jersey, according to the [Rutgers-Eagleton poll](#) released today, while only 27 percent are opposed.

Among Republicans, 49 percent support gay marriage, while 37 percent oppose it. Democrats support it by more than three-to-one, while independents support it by more than two-to-one.

“Beliefs about same-sex marriage have shifted rapidly,” the poll director, David Redlawsk, said. “Fully one-quarter of today’s supporters tell us they were previously opposed. Not long ago, a ruling like this would have created a significant backlash. Now most voters agree with it.”

Still, when asked whether the courts, the state Legislature or voters should decide whether to legalize gay marriage, 62 percent chose voters. Twenty-three percent said the courts and 10 percent said the state Legislature. Christie has long called for putting the issue to a vote, but gay rights advocates have been opposed on the ground that matters of civil rights should not be decided by majority vote.

“This apparent contradiction occurs partly because 81 percent of those who oppose same-sex marriage want it left to voters, while proponents are far less likely to say voters need to make the decision,” said Redlawsk. “A majority may like the outcome of the court ruling, but any time voters are asked if they should get a chance to decide an issue, they are very likely to say yes.”

The poll, taken more than a week before Christie withdrew his appeal of the case, also found that 53 percent of voters wanted Christie to drop his opposition, while 40 percent wanted the case to go all the way to the Supreme Court.

The poll of 799 registered voters, which was conducted Oct. 7-13, had a margin of error of 3.4 percentage points.