

NJ Republicans show higher voting interest

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In the week leading up to today's midterm elections, the Eagleton Institute of Politics conducted a poll showing that New Jersey Republicans are more enthusiastic about voting than their counterparts in the Democratic Party.

About 64 percent of registered Republican voters polled said they were enthusiastic about voting, according to the poll. When asked the same question, 42 percent of registered Democratic voters polled said the same.

"The party not in power gets excited about beating the party that's in power. It's harder to get enthusiastic about continuing work than it is about change," said David Redlawsk, director of the Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling. "[Right now,] Republicans are about change and Democrats are about continuing what they've been doing."

The shift in party enthusiasm is a reflection of which party is dominant in the legislature, he said. For example, in 2008, Democrats were more motivated than Republicans.

The results of the poll in New Jersey are also representative of what is going on nationwide, Redlawsk said.

"[The party that is out of office] can just complain, but they're not responsible for making anything happen," he said. "The party that's in office is responsible. [It is] almost guaranteed that some people will be unhappy with what they do. It's much easier to be in opposition because you don't actually have to do anything."

Eagleton polled 885 randomly selected registered Democrats, Republicans and Independent voters by phone from Oct. 21 to 27, according to an Eagleton Institute of Politics press release.

One question pollsters asked respondents was which party in their congressional district they plan to support with their votes. In New Jersey, 41 percent of registered voters said they intend to vote for

Democrats, while 31 percent plan to vote for Republicans.

Independents in New Jersey are leaning more toward voting for Republicans than Democrats, Redlawsk said. This is likely because Independents are unhappy with the current administration.

"Independents are more likely to be unfavorable toward President [Barack] Obama and they're more likely to think the country is going in the wrong direction than they were two years ago," he said.

"They're at the moment of being a little more Republican."

One of the closest races in the New Jersey midterm elections is in the third congressional district, with incumbent Democrat John Adler going up against Republican Jon Runyan, Redlawsk said.

Both Adler and Runyan are expected to receive 44 percent of the vote, according to the press release.

There two major issues concerning Adler and Runyan are offshore drilling near New Jersey and the state's farmland assessment program, Redlawsk said.

Runyan supports oil drilling off the New Jersey shore, while Adler opposes it, he said. Voters in the district, which is historically Republican, are split on the issue.

"When Adler won two years ago it was a shock. Republicans filled that district hundreds of years," Redlawsk said. "The fact that Adler is keeping it close when things are bad for Democrats says a lot about the power of being the incumbent."

There are similar tight races in the sixth and twelfth districts, he said. Both districts have incumbent Democrats, but the partisan lines are split about more evenly balanced.

Across the state, results show voters are supportive of their congressmen. Of the registered voters polled, 37 percent would vote for their incumbent, compared to 26 percent who would vote for a challenger, according to the release.

In New Jersey, there is great support for incumbents, many of whom do not face popular challengers. There are 13 open congressional seats in New Jersey and in 10 of them, incumbents are vying for the office.

"The candidates running against [incumbents] don't have very much money, don't have much recognition or are well known, they don't have much coverage," Redlawsk said. "The primary reason that people vote for incumbents is that they recognize incumbents."

Five seats held by Republican congressmen right now do not look to be in danger of losing their seats in office, Redlawsk said.

Some students at the University have witnessed the enthusiasm gap between Republicans and

Democrats.

"Democrats are still trying to determine an agenda and they find difficulty in collaborating on an underlying issue they can initiate and put forward," said Jon Pagtakhan, a School of Arts and Sciences senior. "Republicans just need to get back on track. The fact that they're not in power in Congress is a huge factor."

Some University students hear more about Republicans in the news.

"We hear all about Republicans in the tea party movement pushing for their candidates in the election, like [Delaware Senate candidate Christine] O'Donnell, more than ever before," said Jeff O'Yang, a Rutgers Business School junior.

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