

New poll shows Menendez with big lead over Kyrillos in U.S. Senate race

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By **Matt Friedman/Statehouse Bureau**

TRENTON — U.S. Sen. Robert Menendez (D-N.J.) holds a large lead over potential GOP challenger state Sen. Joseph Kyrillos, who is largely unknown to voters, according to a new Rutgers-Eagleton poll.

When asked who they'd vote for in the November general election, 44 percent of voters chose Menendez to 22 percent who picked Kyrillos (R-Monmouth), the poll of 914 registered voters showed.

One reason for the lopsided margin is that 80 percent of voters either have no opinion or are unsure how they feel about Kyrillos, a 23-year veteran of Trenton. Eleven percent view him favorably and 9 percent have an unfavorable impression.

Thirty-seven percent have a favorable opinion of Menendez versus 24 percent who do not — while 39 percent have no opinion or are unsure how they feel about him.



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Democratic U.S. Sen. Robert Menendez holds a large lead over his potential Republican challenger, state Sen. Joseph Kyrillos, who is largely unknown to voters, according to a new Rutgers-Eagleton poll.

"Menendez's favorability numbers crept up slightly early last year, but for an incumbent, he has a very low profile," said poll Director David Redlawsk, a professor of political science at Rutgers University. "Kyrillos, however, is completely unknown at this point, a huge advantage for Menendez. We certainly expect that the numbers will tighten as the campaign develops, but Menendez starts off in a good position."

Kyrillos, a close friend to Gov. Chris Christie, is the frontrunner for the Republican nomination to take on Menendez — an uphill battle in a state that has not elected a Republican to the U.S. Senate since 1972. One other well-known Republican, former Highlands Mayor Anna Little, has said she's considering seeking the nomination as well.

The poll was conducted from Feb. 9 to Feb. 11, with a margin of error of plus or minus 3.3 percentage points.

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