Poll: Menendez challenger 9 points behind

By Josh Lederman - 04/12/12 12:59 PM ET

Sen. Robert Menendez (D-N.J.)'s lead over his likely Republican opponent has narrowed to 9 points, a new poll showed.

Menendez takes 44 percent to 35 for state Sen. Joe Kyrillos (R) in a Quinnipiac University poll released Thursday.

Eight in 10 New Jersey voters don’t know enough about Kyrillos to form an opinion, but 35 percent have a favorable opinion. Menendez’s approval, meanwhile, climbed from 42 percent in October to 45 in April — within the margin of error.

A Rutgers-Eagleton poll released in February had Menendez up 22 points on Kyrillos, but pollsters in the state have been anticipating that the race might get closer. Kyrillos is a close friend and top ally in the legislature of Gov. Chris Christie (R-N.J.), whose approval rating is at an all-time high.

In the presidential race, the poll showed that President Obama is 9 points ahead of Mitt Romney in New Jersey. Republicans improve their lot by only 2 points there by putting Christie on the ticket as the vice-presidential nominee.

The poll of 1,607 New Jersey voters was conducted April 3-9 and had a margin of error of plus or minus 4.3 percentage points.

Source: