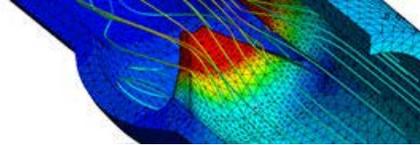




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NJ voters mostly approve \$750M bond referendum

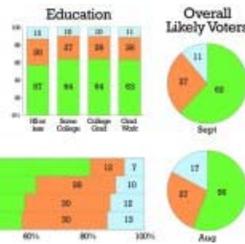
Eagleton Institute of Politics poll finds 62 percent support bond for building higher education facilities

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Bond Poll

In November 2012, New Jersey voters will have the opportunity to vote on a \$750 million bond for new academic buildings and technological upgrades. Here is a sampling of demographics polled.



Posted: Monday, October 8, 2012 12:00 am | Updated: 11:56 pm, Sun Oct 7, 2012.

By Alex Meier / Contributing Writer | 0 comments

A poll of New Jersey voters shows a majority would vote for a proposed \$750 million bond to bring state funding for building higher education facilities.

The poll, conducted by the Eagleton Institute of Politics, counts 62 percent of those polled as in support of the bond referendum, which will be included on November's ballot.

The bond will improve the quality of education that University students receive for years to come, said Peter McDonough, University vice president for Public Affairs, in a statement.

Graphic by Shaodi Huang and Hakan Uzumcu

Source: Eagleton Institute of Politics

Support for the Building Our Future Bond Act has climbed steadily during the year, including a six-point jump since late August, said David Redlawsk, director of the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll.

"As we get closer to the election, support for the higher education bond seems to be solidifying, reflecting the lack of vocal opposition so far," said Redlawsk, a professor in the Department of Political Science.

Most of the increase in support stems from raised awareness about the issue, Redlawsk said.

Voter approval of this bond issue has bipartisan support. The state's Democratic and Republican legislators support the measure. Gov. Chris Christie has signed it, and former Gov. Tom Kean is leading the campaign to approve it, McDonough said.

Facilities built with those bonds are in serious need of upgrades, said Sherif Ibrahim, vice president of Rutgers University Student Assembly.

"It's been talked about state wide for quite some time since it was passed in the state legislature," said Ibrahim, a School of Arts and Sciences junior. "A lot of politicians support the idea of a bond referendum and what it represents because it prioritizes higher education in this state."

A bond to support higher education has not been on the ballot since 1988, McDonough said.

"While people often don't want the state to borrow money, there's broad support for education in this state," he

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said.

Voter approval of this bond issue could save the University \$100 million, McDonough said.

If the bond is not passed, the University would have to pay for renovations out of pocket, greatly affecting the cost of tuition, said Joe Cashin, a student representative to the Board of Governors.

"Eventually these buildings are going to have to be built so that Rutgers can further sustain our reputation of being a top-tier research university," said Cashin, a School of Arts and Sciences junior.

Despite widespread support, activists believe the challenge is to get people to remember to vote in support of the bond, Cashin said.

He said voters might forget to go down to the bottom of the ballot and vote 'yes or no' for the bond issue.

"A lot of people going into the ballot box will be very excited to vote for their candidate ... so they'll hit Democrat, and they'll vote straight down the ballot for all Democrat, or they'll hit Republican and vote straight down the ballot for all Republican," he said.

Ibrahim said nonpartisan issues, such as the Building Our Future Bond Act, are often ignored by 40 percent of voters.

"The fact that it comes from the state and not students' money is also a plus," Ibrahim said.

Bond supporters at the University are hosting events and publicizing the issue to ensure students will remember to vote.

Pam Navrot, legislative affairs committee chair for RUSA, said the University is playing a huge role in the campaign for the bond.

"A few weeks ago, we started pushing the issue, and there's already been an increase of percentage of those supporting it," said Navrot, a School of Arts and Sciences sophomore.

The "Kick-Off Rally for Building Our Future" starts at 10:30 a.m. today at Brower Commons on the College Avenue campus. Among those in attendance are Kean, University President Robert L. Barchi, and N.J. Senate President Steve Sweeney, who will help raise awareness for this issue, Navrot said.

A "Bond Referendum Teach-In" will be held Oct. 18 to inform students of the issue closer to Election Day, Navrot said.

The teach-in will host guest speakers, such as Maggie Moran, president and CEO of M Public Affairs, to inform students about the bond referendum.

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