

# Gov. Christie's Coattails Seem 'Short'

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Democrats continue to hold a double-digit lead over Republicans in a test between the two parties in November's state Senate and Assembly races.

Christie has some sway among those who like him, but it is not overwhelming according to a new Rutgers-Eagleton Poll: 35 percent of those favoring the governor will vote GOP for the Assembly, but 27 percent will vote for Democrats. Disliking Christie has a very strong effect: 67 percent of this group plans to support Democratic Assembly candidates, while only 5 percent support Republicans.



Because Democrats significantly outnumber Republicans, GOP chances are hurt in these statewide ballot tests since few voters expect to cross party lines with their legislative vote. Eighty percent of Democrats and 75 percent of Republicans will vote for their own parties in the Assembly, and most of the others are undecided so far.

Independents, however, are leaning Republican, with 17 percent preferring Democrats (down three points), 21 percent favoring Republicans (up two points) and 31 percent undecided – numbers very different from the strong independent support Christie gets in his own re-election effort.

Republicans lead only among a few groups – conservatives (62 percent support), exurban voters (37 percent) and shore county voters (31 percent). Those with a favorable impression of the Legislature are 30 points more likely to vote for Democrats than Republicans, while those feeling unfavorable side with Republicans by a only a two-point margin.

Similar results are seen for the state Senate, where Christie backers are also eight points more likely to vote for Republicans. Sixty-nine percent of his detractors will vote for a Senate Democrat, while only 8 percent will vote GOP.

As with the Assembly, most partisans will vote their party for state Senate. Independents once again lean toward Republicans at 25 percent, with another 19 percent saying they will vote for Democrats (down six points) and 32 percent unsure. Republicans in the state Senate do no better with winning over demographic groups than does the GOP in the Assembly.

"These generic ballot tests are useful for giving us the big picture, and so far we see no statewide movement toward the GOP," said David Redlawsk, director of the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll and professor of political science at Rutgers University. "Two years ago the statewide numbers were less favorable toward Democrats but they ended up picking up one Assembly seat. Again, the dynamic can change due to local issues, and the question of who will show up at the polls is likely to matter even more than usual."

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