

Poll shows Booker vs. Lonegan race for U.S. Senate is tighter than expected

Matt Friedman/The Star-Ledger
September 24, 2013

U.S. Senate special election 2013



Republican U.S. Senate nominee Steve Lonegan (left) and Democratic nominee Cory Booker are shown in these file photos. A new poll shows Booker leading by 12 percentage points. (*Star-Ledger file photos*)

TRENTON — A new poll on the U.S. Senate race suggests Cory Booker's expected blowout over Steve Lonegan may not be in the bag.

The Quinnipiac University poll shows Republican Lonegan trailing Democrat Booker by a closer-than-expected 12 points. The survey of 948 likely voters shows Booker with 53 percent support to Lonegan's 41 percent.

The two men are running in the Oct. 16 special election to replace the late Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.), who died in June.

Because the poll — which was conducted from Sept. 19 to Sept. 22 — is the first one Quinnipiac conducted using a likely voter model, there is no previous poll to compare it directly to.

But other polls have shown Booker with a much larger lead, including a [Stockton College poll](#) released Monday that showed Booker leading by 26 points and a [Rutgers-Eagleton poll](#) two weeks ago that showed Booker with a 35-point lead.

And in a Quinnipiac survey of registered voters last month, Booker had a 25-point lead. The Monmouth University/Asbury Park Press poll has shown a closer race : On Aug. 20, it had [Booker leading Lonegan by 16](#) points, 54 percent to 38 percent.

Maurice Carroll, director of the Quinnipiac University Polling Institute, speculated that the numbers could be driven by a spike in violent crime in Newark and negative news stories about Booker's business interests, as well as Lonegan's charges that Booker's celebrity is based on talk and not substance.

"Maybe that 'show horse vs. work horse' charge from Republican Steve Lonegan is having an impact," Carroll said in a statement.

Nevertheless, Carroll is not predicting an upset.

"If it's not a blow-out, it still looks like a comfortable lead for Booker," he said. "New Jersey is a blue state and it hasn't elected a Republican senator — let alone a conservative one — since Sen. Clifford Case in 1972."

Booker can thank women for his lead. Among females, he leads almost two-to-one – 60 percent to 34 percent. Among men, the two are almost evenly split, with Lonegan holding a slight lead of 48 percent to Booker's 46 percent – within the poll's 3.2 percentage point margin of error.

Booker gets the support of 91 percent of Democrats, while 86 percent of Republicans go for Lonegan. Independents are split, with 47 percent choosing Booker and 44 percent picking Lonegan.

Thirty-five percent of voters say Booker is too liberal while 2 percent think he is too conservative and 49 percent say he's "about right." For Lonegan, 33 percent say he's too conservative, 3 percent say he's too liberal and 39 percent say he's "about right."

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