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BOOKER V. RIVERA AND THE POWER OF CABLE NEWS OBAMA APPROVAL DOWN SLIGHTLY

Although the field remains fluid, Newark Mayor Cory Booker retains his position atop the heap of potential Democratic candidates to fill the impending Senate vacancy left by retiring Senator Frank Lautenberg. The latest poll from Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind finds that among registered voters who are self-identified Democrats, Cory Booker is the favored candidate to win the Democratic nomination. Half of those queried say they would like to see Booker get the nod, with Congressmen Frank Pallone (4%) and Rush Holt (7%) commanding significantly less support. About a third (32%) are undecided. Booker's support is up modestly from PublicMind's January poll (42%), when the question included Frank Lautenberg, who was still considered a likely candidate.

"Senator Lautenberg's formal announcement that he won't seek reelection in 2014 has definitely opened the door for those aspiring to his seat. Although it's early and we are more than one year away from the Democratic primary, Booker's early lead will be helpful in attempts to raise money and rally the party behind his candidacy," said Krista Jenkins, director of PublicMind and professor of political science at Fairleigh Dickinson University.

Given his early lead over other potential candidates, the poll also asked registered voters, regardless of their party affiliation, to respond to a hypothetical matchup between Mayor Booker and Republican Geraldo Rivera, the Fox News on-air personality who has made repeated statements about a possible candidacy for Lautenberg's seat. In the Booker/Rivera head-to-head, Booker commands a sizable lead over Rivera, with 52 percent endorsing Mayor Booker and 21 percent favoring Rivera. About a quarter (26%) say they are unsure.

Rivera derives a good amount of his support from those who consider Fox News more trustworthy relative to its cable news competitors (CNN and MSNBC). Forty-one percent of those who consider Fox News more trustworthy than CNN (15%) and MSNBC (10%) endorse Rivera, whereas Booker garners his greatest support from those who deem MSNBC the most reliable news source. Seventy-one percent of MSNBC viewers favor

Booker over Rivera, with slightly fewer (66%) trusting CNN the most and about a quarter (26%) who identify Fox News as the most trustworthy news source.

The ideological divide in perceptions of cable news and candidate preference persists when the question turns to which source a respondent trusts the least. Booker is the candidate of choice among those who believe Fox is the least trustworthy (73%), while Rivera polls better among those who believe MSNBC can be trusted the least (40%).

“As cable news has grown increasingly polarized, New Jersey voters seem to be telling us that perceptions of whom they can trust offer insights into candidate preference. These numbers suggest that Booker and Rivera, or whomever emerges as the two major party candidates, should think through the consequences of not only what they say to voters but where they choose to deliver their message,” said Jenkins.

Overall, CNN emerges as the network perceived as the most trustworthy by registered voters. A little more than third (37%) give CNN high marks, followed by Fox (27%) and MSNBC (17%). And, CNN comes in with the lowest percentage of respondents who find it the most unbelievable (11%), followed by MSNBC (23%) and Fox (47%).

The conventional wisdom about the ideological tone of cable news is also borne out in the data. Republicans are far more likely to find Fox the most trustworthy (50%) than Democrats (12%); and MSNBC is perceived by Democrats as the most trustworthy in numbers significantly greater than among Republicans (23 versus 9 percent, respectively). The same pattern emerges when registered voters consider which cable news outlet is perceived as the least trustworthy. Republicans distrust MSNBC more than Democrats (44 versus 8 percent, respectively), while Democrats distrust Fox more than Republicans (70 versus 22 percent, respectively).

Turning to what Garden State voters think of President Obama and the state of the nation, opinion is divided. Forty-nine percent approve of the way the president is handling his job, with 40 percent disapproving. Similar numbers, but reversed, can be found when the question turns to how the nation is faring, with disapproval coming in higher. Forty-eight percent believe the nation is headed down the wrong track while 40 percent believe the opposite.

Obama's job approval is down eight points from January, when PublicMind last measured attitudes toward the president. Back then 57 percent approved of his job performance while similar numbers were found for the right direction/wrong track question.

“The sequestration debate and failure to reach a budget compromise with congressional Republicans has clearly hurt the president, at least for now,” said Jenkins. “Although there’s plenty of blame to go around in Washington, D.C., New Jersey voters have clearly decided that President Obama’s stewardship has lost some luster in recent days.”

The Fairleigh Dickinson University statewide poll of 702 registered voters was conducted by telephone with both landline and cell phones from March 4th through March 10th, 2013, and has a margin of error of +/-3.7 percentage points.

*Methodology, questions, and tables on the web at: <http://publicmind.fdu.edu>
Radio actualities at 201.692.2846 For more information, please call 201.692.7032*

Methodology

The most recent survey by Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind was conducted by telephone from March 4th through March 10th, 2013 using a randomly selected sample of 702 registered New Jersey voters. One can be 95 percent confident that the error attributable to sampling has a range of plus or minus 3.7 percentage points. The margin of error for subgroups is larger and varies by the size of that subgroup. Survey results are also subject to non-sampling error. This kind of error, which cannot be measured, arises from a number of factors including, but not limited to, non-response (eligible individuals refusing to be interviewed), question wording, the order in which questions are asked, and variations among interviewers.

PublicMind interviews are conducted by Opinion America of Cedar Knolls, NJ, with professionally trained interviewers using a CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) system. Random selection is achieved by computerized random-digit dialing. This technique gives every person with a land-line phone number (including those with unlisted numbers) an equal chance of being selected.

Landline households are supplemented with a separate, randomly selected sample of cell-phone respondents interviewed in the same time frame. The total combined sample is mathematically weighted to match known demographics of age, race and gender.

Democratic Senate primary

As you may or may not know, the US Senate seat that is currently held by Frank Lautenberg will be up for election in 2014. If a Democrat were to win, who would you like to see elected?

	All	Party			Gender		Age			
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Men	Women	18-29	30-44	45-59	60+
Cory Booker	50%	50	-	-	50	51	43	49	52	56
Frank Pallone	4%	4	-	-	7	3	2	7	3	5
Rush Holt	7%	7	-	-	11	4	5	7	9	5
Someone else	6%	6	-	-	7	5	6	7	2	9
Unsure	32%	32	-	-	25	38	43	30	33	26

Education			Public Employee		Race	
HS or less	Some college	College grad	Yes	No	White	Non-white
50	40	57	55	50	53	49
8	3	4	5	5	4	4
2	3	11	6	7	8	5
10	6	4	4	6	5	6
31	48	24	30	32	30	36

Booker/Rivera U.S. Senate race

If the election for Frank Lautenberg's United States Senate seat was held today, and the choice was Democrat Cory Booker or Republican Geraldo Rivera, for whom would you vote? [Randomize names]

	All	Party			Gender		Age			
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Men	Women	18-29	30-44	45-59	60+
Cory Booker	52%	74	48	26	55	49	57	63	50	42
Geraldo Rivera	21%	6	17	45	24	19	16	17	24	27
Unsure	26%	20	34	29	21	31	27	21	27	31

Education			Public Employee		Race	
HS or less	Some college	College grad	Yes	No	White	Non-white
55	45	55	58	50	50	60
22	23	20	19	23	23	16
23	32	24	23	27	27	23

News sources**Of the following cable news sources, which do you trust the MOST?**

	All	Party			Gender		Age			
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Men	Women	18-29	30-44	45-59	60+
CNN	37%	49	27	25	38	36	50	43	37	26
FOX	27%	12	26	50	28	27	24	17	27	40
MSNBC	17%	23	16	9	15	18	17	21	14	16
None	13%	11	20	11	13	12	8	16	14	10
Unsure	6%	4	10	4	4	7	1	4	8	7

Education			Public Employee		Race		U.S. Senate support	
HS or less	Some college	College grad	Yes	No	White	Non-white	Booker	Rivera
28	38	41	39	37	34	45	66	15
35	28	23	28	27	28	23	26	41
17	18	16	13	18	17	18	71	10
14	9	14	14	12	15	8	-	-
6	6	5	6	5	6	5	-	-

News sources cont.**Of the following cable news sources, which do you trust the LEAST?**

	All	Party			Gender		Age			
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Men	Women	18-29	30-44	45-59	60+
CNN	11%	9	11	15	9	13	17	10	9	12
FOX	47%	70	37	22	47	47	56	60	42	35
MSNBC	23%	8	24	44	27	20	15	14	29	30
None	9%	5	13	11	9	9	6	11	7	9
Unsure	9%	8	15	8	8	11	5	5	12	12
Refused	1%	1	1	-	1	1	2	-	1	1

Education			Public Employee		Race		U.S. Senate support	
HS or less	Some college	College grad	Yes	No	White	Non-white	Booker	Rivera
21	10	8	12	11	9	15	41	32
36	46	52	52	46	45	53	73	11
17	26	25	19	25	25	17	30	40
8	9	9	7	9	9	8	-	-
18	8	6	9	9	10	6	-	-

Obama Approvals**First, do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as President?**

	All	Party			Gender		Age			
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Men	Women	18-29	30-44	45-59	60+
Approve	49%	81	34	12	46	51	69	60	42	36
Disapprove	40%	9	41	81	44	36	13	31	47	53
Neither	11%	10	23	6	10	12	17	9	11	10
Unsure	1%	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	1

Education			Public Employee		Race		Christie Approval	
HS or less	Some college	College grad	Yes	No	White	Non-white	Approve	Disapprove
45	50	50	56	47	39	76	43	69
43	38	39	33	41	49	14	45	23
11	12	10	10	11	11	10	11	7
-	-	1	1	-	1	-	1	1

Direction of the Country**In your opinion, do you believe the country is moving in the right direction or is it on the wrong track?**

	All	Party			Gender		Age			
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Men	Women	18-29	30-44	45-59	60+
Right direction	40%	67	28	8	39	41	59	46	35	31
Wrong track	48%	17	60	86	53	44	23	44	55	57
Unsure	11%	15	12	7	8	15	17	10	10	12

Education			Public Employee		Race	
HS or less	Some college	College grad	Yes	No	White	Non-white
37	45	39	40	40	32	62
52	43	49	47	48	57	24
11	12	12	12	11	11	14

Exact Question Wording and Order

US1. *First, do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as President?*

- 1 Approve
- 2 Disapprove
- 8 DK/Unsure/mixed [vol]
- 9 Refused [vol]

US2. *In your opinion, do you believe the country is moving in the right direction or is it on the wrong track?*

- 1 Right direction
- 2 Wrong track
- 8 DK/Unsure [vol]
- 9 Refused [vol]

NJ1 through NJ3 released Tuesday, March 12

NJ4 *If the election for Frank Lautenberg's United States Senate seat was held today, and the choice was Democrat Cory Booker or Republican Geraldo Rivera, for whom would you vote? [Randomize names]*

- 1 Democrat Cory Booker
- 2 Republican Geraldo Rivera
- 8 Don't Know [vol]

NJ5 through NJ8 released Tuesday, March 12

S1 through S4 held for later release

AC1 through AC7 held for later release

NEWS1 *Of the following cable news sources, which do you trust the MOST?
[randomize response choices]*

- 1 CNN
- 2 FOX
- 3 MSNBC
- 4 None
- 8 DK [vol]
- 9 Refused [vol]

NEWS2 *Of the following cable news sources, which do you trust the LEAST?
[randomize response choices]*

- 1 CNN
- 2 FOX
- 3 MSNBC
- 4 None
- 8 DK [vol]
- 9 Refused [vol]

D2 As you may or may not know, the US Senate seat that is currently held by Frank Lautenberg will be up for election in 2014. If a Democrat were to win, who would you like to see elected? Cory Booker, Frank Pallone, Rush Holt, or someone else? [Randomize the order of names]

- 1 Cory Booker
- 2 Frank Pallone
- 3 Rush Holt
- 4 Someone else (name)
- 8 Don't Know [vol]
- 9 Ref [vol]

Sample characteristics – Registered voters

Gender

Male	49
Female	51

Age

18-29	13
30-44	28
45-59	31
60+	26
Refused	2

Race/Ethnicity

White	69
Black/African-American	13
Latino or Hispanic	10
Asian	4
Other/refused	4

Public employee household

Yes	23
No	75
Unsure/refused	2

Party identification

Democrat/Lean Democrat	46
Independent/DK/refused	20
Republican/Lean Republican	34