

*The Morning Call*  
**Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion**

The 2006 Pennsylvania Elections  
Governor and U.S. Senate

**KEY FINDINGS REPORT**

April 25, 2006

## **KEY FINDINGS:**

### **Senate Race:**

1. Democratic challenger Bob Casey Jr. continues to hold an advantage over incumbent Rick Santorum in the race for the United States Senate seat, but the size of his lead has narrowed in the most recent survey.
2. With President Bush's job approval ratings in the commonwealth reaching record lows, Senator Santorum continues to struggle among Pennsylvania voters disenchanted with the president's work as chief executive.
3. While maintaining a moderate lead among Pennsylvania's pro-life voters, Senator Santorum has not been able to surpass 50% support among this key voting block.
4. Casey's lead seems to be buoyed by strongly favorable ratings among the electorate, with voters over twice as likely to view the Democrat favorably as they are to view him unfavorably.
5. Pennsylvanians are evenly divided in both their approval of Senator Santorum's job performance, as well as their views of him as an individual.
7. Casey continues to hold a lead among the state's Catholic electorate, while running even among Pennsylvania protestants..
8. Democrats continue to support Casey at a higher level than Republicans support Santorum's reelection bid.

### **Governor Race:**

1. Incumbent Governor Edward Rendell continues to hold a slim lead over Republican Lynn Swann.
2. While splitting the commonwealth's white voters, Governor Rendell continues to have a sizeable advantage over Swann among the state's minority population.
3. Public favorability towards both Swann and Rendell remains unchanged over the past two months with both candidates maintaining generally positive public standing.
4. The "football factor" continues to play a role in the governor's race, with Rendell holding a large lead among Eagle fans and Swann winning among Steeler loyalists.
5. Swann and Rendell are holding on to about 2 out of 3 voters from their respective political parties.

6. Governor Rendell's modest lead in the race appears to be buoyed by increasingly positive job approval ratings among state voters.

**METHODOLOGY:** The following key findings report summarizes data collected in a telephone survey of 508 registered voters in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania between April 17 and 25, 2006. Individual households throughout the state were selected randomly for inclusion in the study. The sample of phone numbers used in the survey was generated by Genesys Sampling Systems of Ft. Washington, PA. Interviewing was conducted by the staff of the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion and PMI of Easton Pennsylvania. This number of completions results in a margin of error of +/- 4.3% at the 95% confidence interval. However the margin of errors for sub groups (i.e. women, Republicans) is larger due to smaller sample size. Percentages throughout the survey have been rounded to the nearest percentage, thus many totals in the results will not equal 100. The data has been weighted to account for an over sampling of women. The survey questionnaire was designed by Christopher Borick, Ph.D. of the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion in consultation with staff members of the *Morning Call*. Analysis and report writing were completed by the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion under the direction of Dr. Borick.

## **ANALYSIS**

As the 2006 elections continue to draw nearer, Pennsylvania Democrats continue to hold leads in the commonwealth's high profile governor and senate races. The most recent Morning Call/ Muhlenberg College survey finds Democrat Bob Casey Jr. holding a substantial, yet slightly diminishing lead over Republican incumbent Republican Rick Santorum in the U.S. Senate race. In the Governor's race Democratic incumbent continues to hold a lead over Republican challenger Lynn Swann.

## **THE SENATE RACE**

With election day 2006 just over 7 months away Pennsylvania Treasurer Bob Casey Jr. continues to hold a substantial lead over two term Republican Senator Rick Santorum, but the race shows signs of tightening. While maintaining an 8 point lead over Santorum, Casey's lead is the smallest margin found in major Pennsylvania polls this spring. In particular, polls this spring have consistently shown Casey with leads ranging from 11% to 16%. The last two statewide polls have shown a diminishing lead for Casey, with Quinnipiac's early April canvassing of PA voters placing Casey's lead at 11%. As can be seen in Table One, Casey lead appears to be gradually declining.

**TABLE ONE**

**Pennsylvania Senate Race**

	<b><u>Santorum</u></b>	<b><u>Casey</u></b>	<b><u>Other/Undecided</u></b>
F & M. Nov 8	35%	51%	14%
Quinnipiac Dec 13	38%	50%	12%
F & M Feb. 9	35%	51%	14%
Quinnipiac Feb. 13	36%	51%	13%
Rasmussen Feb. 16	36%	52%	12%
Muhlenberg/MCall March 2	37%	49%	14%
Quinnipiac Apr. 6	37%	48%	12%
Muhlenberg/MCall April 25	38%	46%	16%

The slight drop in Casey's lead corresponds with the introduction of television advertisements criticizing the State Treasurer's job attendance record. The airing of these ads may have helped moved more voters from the Casey camp into the undecided category.

Despite the arrival of negative ads and a declining lead in his match-up with Santorum, Casey continues to hold a positive 2 to 1 favorable to unfavorable ratio among the commonwealth's electorate, while Santorum draws fairly equal levels of positive and negative reactions from Pennsylvania voters.

**TABLE TWO**

**Favorability Ratings for Senate Candidates**

**Santorum**

	<b>Favorable</b>	<b>Unfavorable</b>	<b>Neutral/Not Sure</b>	<b>Never Heard of</b>
Santorum March 2 2006	42%	38%	17%	2%
Santorum April 24 2006	39%	35%	25%	1%

**Casey**

Casey, March 2 2006	38%	18%	36%	8%
Casey, April 24 2006	38%	18%	40%	4%

## **The Bush Factor**

A great deal of attention is being given to the impact of President Bush's diminishing public standing on Republican candidates nationwide. Nowhere is this issue more relevant than in the U.S. senate race where longtime Bush supporter Rick Santorum is battling for his political life. The results of the survey indicate that Bush's sagging popularity in the commonwealth is continuing to act as a drag on Santorum. The results indicate that the President's job approval rate in Pennsylvania has dropped to new low of 33% with a 57% disapproval rating. These low job performance ratings for the president are similar to national ratings that placed his approval score at 32% (CNN, April 22, 2006).

**TABLE THREE**

### **Approval Ratings for President Bush**

	<b>Approve</b>	<b>Disapprove</b>	<b>Neutral/Not Sure</b>
MC/Muhlenberg March 2, 2006	36%	56%	8%
CNN, April 23, 2006	32%	60%	8%
MC/Muhlenberg April 24, 2006	33%	57%	10%

As we have seen in earlier surveys, Senator Santorum draws very minimal support among commonwealth voters who disapprove of Bush's handling of the presidency. More specifically, only 13% of commonwealth voters who disapprove of Bush's performance as chief executive plan to vote for Santorum. Comparatively, 65% of those who disapprove of the President plan to vote for Casey at this time.

## **The Pro Life Voter**

The Santorum-Casey race is notable because the candidate's both hold pro-life positions. The importance of pro-life voters to the success of Republican candidates has been well noted in recent elections and Santorum's bid for reelection may be closely tied to mobilizing voters from this core conservative group. The survey results indicate that Santorum is leading Casey by a margin of 48% to 36%. This lead remains statistically unchanged from our survey from two months ago, and can be seen as disappointing when compared to the percentage of votes President Bush received from pro-life voters in 2004. In particular, Bush beat Kerry by a margin of 3 to 1 among pro-life voters, winning 75% support from this key group.

## **The Catholic Vote**

With one of the largest Catholic populations in the nation, this religious group is very important in Pennsylvania politics. Given a history of voting across party lines, Catholic voters have been much coveted by both parties. In particular, successful Republican candidates have been able to siphon off Catholic Democrats in recent elections. With both Casey and Santorum Catholic candidates, control of this voting block once again seems important. The survey results show Casey maintaining a 14% lead among all Catholic voters (49% to 35%), and a 75% to 10% advantage among Catholic Democrats. Such a strong performance in this group adds to Casey's solid standing and undermines a key ingredient in recent Republican strategies for victory.

### **Conclusion**

Despite a decline in the size of his lead, State Treasurer Bob Casey remains the frontrunner in the race for the U.S. senate seat in Pennsylvania. Bob Casey Jr. appears to be breaking down the coalition of Catholic, pro-life voters that have propelled Santorum and other Republicans to electoral success. However, the onset of negative ads against Casey has coincided with a noticeable drop in Casey support, thus providing an indicator that this race may be tightening as we move towards November.

### **The Governor Race**

In the Pennsylvania governor's race incumbent Edward Rendell holds a 6 point lead over Republican challenger Lynn Swann. As can be seen, polls throughout 2006 have shown the Governor with leads ranging from 3 to 12 points, with most surveys placing Rendell's lead in single digits. In the latest Morning Call/Muhlenberg College poll Rendell increased his lead over Swann by 3 points since February. Table Four breaks down recent tracking of the race.

**TABLE FOUR**

**Pennsylvania Governor Race**

	<b><u>Rendell</u></b>	<b><u>Swann</u></b>	<b><u>Other/Undecided</u></b>
Quinnipiac Dec 13	48%	35%	17%
F & M Feb. 9	45%	42%	13%
Quinnipiac Feb. 13	48%	36%	16%
Rasmussen Feb. 16	46%	43%	11%
Muhlenberg/MCall March 2	46%	43%	11%
Quinnipiac Apr. 6	47%	37%	16%
Muhlenberg/MCall April 2006	45%	39%	16%

## **Rendell's Job Performance Improves**

Over the past two months Governor Rendell's job approval ratings have risen among commonwealth voters. More specifically, the incumbent Democrat has seen his approval ratings move from a 6% positive over negative margin to a 13% gap in approval to disapproval ratings. Table Five provides details on the Governor's approval ratings.

**TABLE FIVE**

### **Approval Ratings for Governor Rendell**

	<b>Approve</b>	<b>Disapprove</b>	<b>Neutral/Not Sure</b>
March 2 2006	46%	40%	14%
April 24 2006	49%	36%	15%

The governor's increased standing in the commonwealth has occurred as his campaign has introduced major pro-Rendell television ads in many of Pennsylvania's television market. These ads which trumpet the governor's accomplishments in the areas of fiscal management, government performance and senior citizen support appear to be providing a boost to public perceptions of his work as the state's chief executive.

These increasingly positive job approval ratings are similar to Rendell's personal favorability levels which stand at 49% favorable and 32% unfavorable. Meanwhile, as the state's voters continue to form views of Swann as a political figure, there seems to be generally favorable attitudes towards the Republican. As can be seen in Table Four, Swann maintains a favorable to unfavorable ration of over 2 to 1 among Pennsylvania voters who have stated a position on the candidate.

**TABLE SIX**

### **Favorability Ratings for Gubernatorial Candidates**

#### **Rendell**

	<b>Favorable</b>	<b>Unfavorable</b>	<b>Neutral/Not Sure</b>	<b>Never Heard of</b>
Rendell March 2 2006	49%	37%	13%	<1%
Rendell April 24 2006	49%	32%	17%	<1%

#### **Swann**

Swann March 2	37%	17%	38%	8%
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2006				
Swann April 24 2006	35%	17%	44%	4%

### **The Football Effect**

In one of the more intriguing facets of the gubernatorial race both Swann and Rendell have strong ties to the state's two National Football League franchises. As we found two months ago it appears that the voter's preferences in football teams serves as a fairly good predictor of their preference for governor. The former Steeler all-pro has built a 16 point lead over Rendell among fans of the "black and gold," while the Eagles post-game analyst and commonwealth governor leads Swann by 24 points. Meanwhile, the candidates draw even support among fans of NFL teams outside the Keystone State, while Rendell has a 10 point lead among Pennsylvanians who identify themselves as not being football fans.

### **TABLE SEVEN**

#### **Pennsylvania Governor Race by NFL Preference**

	<b><u>Rendell March 2006</u></b>	<b><u>Swann March 2006</u></b>	<b><u>Other/Undecided March 2006</u></b>	<b><u>Rendell April 2006</u></b>	<b><u>Swann April 2006</u></b>	<b><u>Other/Undecided April 2006</u></b>
Steeler Fans	36%	50%	14%	35%	51%	14%
Eagle Fans	57%	26%	17%	53%	29%	18%
Fans of Other Teams	39%	45%	16%	31%	31%	28%
Non Football Fans	47%	29%	24%	45%	35%	20%

### **Race and the Election**

As Swann appears destined to be the first African American to be nominated for governor by a major political party in Pennsylvania, race serves as an interesting element of the election. The survey results shown in Table Seven indicate that Swann and Rendell are in a statistical dead heat among white voters in the Keystone State. Meanwhile, Rendell holds a sizeable lead among the commonwealth's minority population.

### **TABLE EIGHT**

**Pennsylvania Governor Race by Race**

	<b><u>Rendell March 2006</u></b>	<b><u>Swann March 2006</u></b>	<b><u>Other/Undecided March 2006</u></b>	<b><u>Rendell April 2006</u></b>	<b><u>Swann April 2006</u></b>	<b><u>Other/Undecided April 2006</u></b>
White Voters	42%	41%	17%	41%	39%	20%
Non-White Voters	59%	29%	12%	56%	27%	17%

**Conclusion**

The race for Pennsylvania Governor appears to remain fairly tight, with Republican Lynn Swann providing a strong early challenge to incumbent Ed Rendell. However, the governor may be poised to increase his marginal lead by employing his financial resource advantage in statewide advertisements such as the commercials running in many commonwealth television markets. The arrival of these ads appears to have slightly buoyed his standing in the polls.

***Christopher P. Borick, Director  
Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion***

**Morning Call/Muhlenberg College  
Institute of Public Opinion**

**2006 Pennsylvania Election Survey**

Field Dates: 4/17/06 – 4/25/06

Total Completions: 508 Registered Pennsylvania Voters

Margin of Error: +/- 4.4% at 95% Level of Confidence

(Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding)

**ELECTION QUESTIONS**

**Q: ONE**

Which of the following best describes your current voting status.

Are you registered as a(READ LIST):

Democrat	44%
Republican	42%
Independent	9%
Another party	2%
Not sure (VOL)	2%

**Q: TWO**

Next I have a few questions about elected officials in the United States.

First, do you approve or disapprove of the way George W.

Bush is handling his job as president of the United States?

Approve	33%
Disapprove	57%
Not sure (VOL)	10%

**Q: THREE**

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Rick Santorum is handling his job as a United States Senator?

Approve	39%
Disapprove	38%
Not sure (VOL)	23%

**Q: FOUR**

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Ed Rendell is handling his job as the Pennsylvania governor?

Approve	49%
Disapprove	36%
Not sure (VOL)	15%

Q: FIVE

Now I would like to ask you about your thoughts regarding a few political figures. For each name I read, please tell me if your impression of him is favorable or unfavorable. First, Ed Rendell?

Favorable	49%
Unfavorable	32%
Neutral/not sure (VOL)	17%
Haven't heard of him (VOL)	<1%

Q: SIX

Lynn Swann?

Favorable	35%
Unfavorable	17%
Neutral/not sure (VOL)	44%
Haven't heard of him (VOL)	4 %

Q: SEVEN

Rick Santorum?

Favorable	39%
Unfavorable	35%
Neutral/not sure (VOL)	25%
Haven't heard of him (VOL)	1%

Q: EIGHT

Bob Casey Jr?

Favorable	38%
Unfavorable	18%
Neutral/not sure (VOL)	40%
Haven't heard of him (VOL)	4%

Q: NINE

If the 2006 election for Governor was being held today and the race was between Democrat Ed Rendell and Republican Lynn Swann, who would you vote for?

Rendell (SKIP TO Q11)	43%
Swann (SKIP TO Q11)	38%
Neither/other (VOL) (SKIP TO Q11)	4%
Not sure (VOL) (GO TO Q10)	16%

Q: TEN

At this point would you say you are leaning more to voting for Ed Rendell or Lynn Swann for Pennsylvania Governor?

Rendell	25%
Swann	10%
Neither/other (VOL)	2%
Not sure (VOL)	63%

**COMBINED RESULTS OF QUESTIONS 9 and 10 – Leaners Added**

<b>Rendell</b>	<b>45%</b>
<b>Swann</b>	<b>39%</b>
<b>Neither/Other</b>	<b>4%</b>
<b>Not sure</b>	<b>12%</b>

Q: ELEVEN

If the 2006 election for Senator was being held today and the race was between Republican Rick Santorum and Democrat Bob Casey Jr, who would you vote for?

Santorum (SKIP TO Q14)	37%
Casey (SKIP TO Q14)	45%
Neither/other (VOL) (SKIP TO Q 14)	3%
Not sure (VOL) (GO to Q13)	14%

Q: TWELVE

At this point would you say you are leaning more to voting for Rick Santorum or Bob Casey for the Senate Seat from Pennsylvania?

Santorum	12%
Casey	12%
Neither/other (don't read)	4%
Not sure (don't read)	72%

**COMBINED RESULTS OF QUESTIONS 11 and 12 – Leaners Added**

<b>Santorum</b>	<b>38%</b>
<b>Casey</b>	<b>46%</b>
<b>Neither/Other</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>Not sure</b>	<b>13%</b>