

The Morning Call
Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion

The 2006 Pennsylvania Elections
Governor and U.S. Senate

KEY FINDINGS REPORT

March, 2006

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Senate Race:

1. With eight months left before the 2006 elections, Democrat Bob Casey Jr. holds a double-digit lead over Republican Rick Santorum for the U.S. Senate seat.
2. President Bush's job approval rating in the commonwealth is extremely low and appears to be hindering the Santorum campaign's success in the state.
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.
6. In match-ups of lesser known Democratic and Republican candidates against Casey and Santorum, the party frontrunners maintain overwhelming leads against their challengers.
7. While running even among Keystone State protestant voters. Casey holds a lead among the state's Catholic electorate.
8. Casey holds a 6 to 1 lead over Santorum among Pennsylvania Democrats, while Santorum maintains only a 3 to 1 lead among state Republicans.

Governor Race:

1. In the Pennsylvania Governor race incumbent Democrat Edward Rendell holds a slim four point lead over Republican Lynn Swann.

2. Despite a significant portion of the state's electorate expressing doubt about his qualifications to be governor, Lynn Swann trails the current governor by only a few percentage points.
3. While holding a two to one lead among Philadelphia Eagles fans, Governor Rendell is trailing Swann by a significant level.
4. Both Rendell and Swann are maintaining strong leads among voters from their own party, while Pennsylvania independents are fairly divided on the candidates.
5. Governor Rendell's job approval ratings are fairly mixed, with only slightly higher rates of approval in comparison to disapproval.
6. While almost half the state's voters do not have an opinion formed regarding Lynn Swann, the presumptive Republican nominee maintains a favorable to unfavorable ratio of 2 to 1.

METHODOLOGY: The following key findings report summarizes data collected in a telephone survey of 668 voters in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania between February 25 and March 2, 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 +/- 3.8% 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 voters. 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

With the 2006 U.S. Senate elections just eight months away, the most recent Morning Call/ Muhlenberg College survey finds Democrat Bob Casey Jr. maintaining a significant lead over Republican incumbent Republican Rick Santorum among registered voters in the commonwealth. Meanwhile, Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell is being strongly challenged by likely Republican nominee Lynn Swann.

THE SENATE RACE

The survey results show Pennsylvania Treasurer Bob Casey Jr. holding a 12 point lead over two term Republican Senator Rick Santorum in one of the nation's most anticipated Senate races. The findings are consistent with other major statewide surveys since the

Fall of 2005, and the fourth poll in the last month to show the incumbent Senator trailing by double digit margins. As can be seen in Table One, Casey has maintained sizeable leads of 12 to 16% leads in the race to secure one of Pennsylvania's two Senate seats.

TABLE ONE

Pennsylvania Senate Race

	<u>Santorum</u>	<u>Casey</u>	<u>Other/Undecided</u>
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	37%	49%	14%

The Bush Factor

One of the most discussed facets of the Pennsylvania Senate race is the effect of President George W. Bush's public standing on Senator Santorum's reelection bid. The results of the survey indicate that Bush's sagging popularity in the Keystone State may be acting as a hindrance on one of the Senate's highest ranking Republican leaders. The results indicate that the President's job approval rate in Pennsylvania is only 36%, with a 56% disapproval rating. These low job performance ratings for the president are similar to national ratings that placed his approval score at 34% (CBS News, March 2, 2006). For Pennsylvania voters who disapprove of the president's work in office, Senator Santorum draws very minimal support. More specifically, only 13% of commonwealth voters who disapprove of Bush's performance as chief executive plan to vote for Santorum. Comparatively, 70% of those who disapprove of the President plan to vote for Casey at this time. As may be expected, Santorum's close relationship with the president may make him more vulnerable than other Republican candidates in the state. Most notably, presumptive Republican gubernatorial nominee Lynn Swann has significantly better support from Pennsylvanians disapproving of the president. In particular, Santorum's gap among voters disapproving of Bush is 20% larger than Swann's standing among this group.

The Pro Life Voter

With two pro-life candidates battling for the U.S. Senate seat in Pennsylvania, the abortion issue will be of particular interest. While pro-life voters have become a core constituency for Republicans both in Pennsylvania and the nation as a whole, the presence of an anti-abortion Democrat may be diminishing the magnitude of support for Senator Santorum. The survey results indicate that Santorum is leading Casey by a margin of 50% to 35%. While significant, the 15% margin for Santorum 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 Gender Effect

As always, the impact of gender on voting behavior will be an important consideration in the Senate race. The survey results find Bob Casey holding double-digit leads among both men and women voters. While the 10% lead that Casey maintains over Santorum among women voters in the Keystone State might be expected given the history of Democratic success in this demographic, his 12 point lead among Pennsylvania men is particularly notable. Nationally, Democrats have struggled to secure male votes, particularly among white men. As Table Two demonstrates, Casey outpaces Santorum among all male voters, including white men in the commonwealth.

TABLE TWO

Senate Preferences by Gender

	Santorum	Casey
All Male Voters	37%	49%
All Female Voters	40%	50%
White Male Voters	39%	46%
White Female Voters	36%	47%

The Catholic Vote

In Pennsylvania the Catholic vote plays an important role in determining election outcomes. 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 16% lead among all Catholic voters (52% to 38%), and a 74% to 14% 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

The strong consistency of recent polls has firmed the view that Senator Rick Santorum's bid to retain his seat in Congress is in jeopardy. Bob Casey Jr. appears to be breaking down the coalition of voters that have propelled Santorum and other Republicans to

electoral success. Santorum’s challenge is to make inroads among the Catholic, pro-life and male voters that have helped establish his past success.

The Governor Race

In the Pennsylvania governor’s race incumbent Edward Rendell holds a slim lead over Republican challenger Lynn Swann. With all other Republican candidates dropping from the race over the past month, the Swann-Rendell battle has solidified as one of the nation’s most interesting gubernatorial battles. As can be seen, most polls over the last month have placed Rendell with a slight 3 point lead over the former Pittsburgh Steeler great.

TABLE THREE

Pennsylvania Governor Race

	<u>Rendell</u>	<u>Swann</u>	<u>Other/Undecided</u>
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	46%	43%	11%

Divided Approval of Rendell Performance

The tightness of this race is caused by a number of factors. First, Pennsylvanians are fairly mixed in their appraisal of Rendell’s performance as the commonwealth’s governor, While 46% of Keystone state voters approve of the way the Governor is handling his job, 40% disapprove of his efforts as the state’s chief executive. These mixed approval ratings are similar to Rendell’s personal favorability levels which stand at 49% favorable and 37% unfavorable. Meanwhile, as the state’s voters are beginning 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 FOUR

Favorability Ratings for Gubernatorial Candidates

	Favorable	Unfavorable	Neutral/Not Sure	Never Heard of
Rendell	49%	37%	13%	<1%
Swann	37%	17%	38%	8%

Swann's Experience

A major criticism levied against Swann's candidacy is his lack of experience in government. Thus we asked Pennsylvanians if they feel that Swann possessed the right kind of experience to be governor of Pennsylvania or not? The results show that just under 4 out of 10 voters (39%) surveyed believe the television sportscaster lacks the kind of experience necessary to be governor, while 23% of voters feel he does have the right background. Perhaps most importantly, almost 4 out of 10 Keystone state voters are unsure if Swann has the necessary experience for the post he is seeking in November. As can be seen in Table Five below, Swann and Rendell are running even among the voters who are unsure if Swann has the background to be governor. The ability of Swann to convince this group of his abilities to be chief executive of the commonwealth will be crucial as the election proceeds

TABLE FIVE

Pennsylvania Governor Race by Voter Perceptions of Swann's Experience

	<u>Rendell</u>	<u>Swann</u>	<u>Other/Undecided</u>
Swann has Necessary Experience	11%	77%	12%
Swann does not have Necessary Experience	72%	14%	14%
Not Sure	36%	40%	24%

The Football Effect

In an election in which both of the candidates have tight connections with the state's two National Football League franchises, it appears that the voter's preferences in football teams serves as a fairly good predictor of their preference for governor. While former Steeler star receiver Lynn Swann maintains a two touchdown lead (14%) points among Steeler fans in Pennsylvania, Eagle post game commentator Rendell has posted a three touchdown margin among Eagle fans in the Keystone state. Meanwhile, Swann holds a slight lead among fans of NFL teams outside the Keystone State, while Rendell has a solid lead among the 1 in 4 Pennsylvanians who identify themselves as not being football fans.

TABLE SIX

Pennsylvania Governor Race by NFL Preference

	<u>Rendell</u>	<u>Swann</u>	<u>Other/Undecided</u>
Steeler Fans	36%	50%	14%

Eagle Fans	57%	26%	17%
Fans of Other Teams	39%	45%	16%
Non Football Fans	47%	29%	24%

Race and the Election

As Swann will likely 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. In the commonwealth white voters make up an overwhelming share of the electorate. Thus any successful candidate for statewide office must win a large share of this constituency. 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 non-white voters in the commonwealth.

TABLE SEVEN

Pennsylvania Governor Race by NFL Preference

	<u>Rendell</u>	<u>Swann</u>	<u>Other/Undecided</u>
White Voters	42%	41%	17%
Non-White Voters	59%	29%	12%

Conclusion

The race for Pennsylvania Governor appears to be quite tight at this point of the campaign. With the state's long history of electing incumbent governors to second terms, the results of the survey point to a competitive race that may challenge recent experience. Despite substantial voter concern regarding his experience, Lynn Swann seems poised to push Rendell over the course of the next eight months. However, with large portions of the state yet to make up their mind about Swann, the race may display considerable volatility as the fall approaches.

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

2006 Pennsylvania Election Survey

Field Dates: 2/25/06 – 3/2/06

Total Completions: 668 Registered Pennsylvania Voters

Margin of Error: +/- 3.8% 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	45%
Republican	41%
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	36%
Disapprove	56%
Not sure (VOL)	8%

Q: THREE

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

Approve	38%
Disapprove	37%
Not sure (VOL)	25%

Q: FOUR

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

Approve	46%
Disapprove	40%

Not sure (VOL) 14%

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	37%
Neutral/not sure (VOL)	13%
Haven't heard of him (VOL)	<1%

Q: SIX

Lynn Swann?

Favorable	37%
Unfavorable	17%
Neutral/not sure (VOL)	38%
Haven't heard of him (VOL)	8%

Q: SEVEN

Rick Santorum?

Favorable	42%
Unfavorable	38%
Neutral/not sure (VOL)	17%
Haven't heard of him (VOL)	2%

Q: EIGHT

Bob Casey Jr?

Favorable	38%
Unfavorable	18%
Neutral/not sure (VOL)	36%
Haven't heard of him (VOL)	8%

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)	39%
Neither/other (VOL) (SKIP TO Q11)	4%

Not sure (VOL) (GO TO Q10) 14%

Q: TEN

At this point would you say you are leaning more to voting for Ed Rendell or Lynn Swann for Pennsylvania Governor? (n=92)

Rendell	18%
Swann	23%
Neither/other (VOL)	8%
Not sure (VOL)	50%

COMBINED RESULTS OF QUESTIONS 9 and 10 – Leaners Added

Rendell	46%
Swann	43%
Neither/Other	4%
Not sure	7%

Q: ELEVEN

Do you think Link Swann has the right kind of experience to be governor of Pennsylvania or not?

Has the Right Experience	23%
Does Not Have the Right Kind of Experience	39%
Not Sure (VOL)	38%

Q: TWELVE

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)	35%
Casey (SKIP TO Q14)	47%
Neither/other (VOL) (SKIP TO Q 14)	3%
Not sure (VOL) (GO to Q13)	14%

Q: THIRTEEN

At this point would you say you are leaning more to voting for Rick Santorum or Bob Casey for the Senate Seat from Pennsylvania? (n = 93)

Santorum	11%
Casey	7%
Neither/other (don't read)	4%
Not sure (don't read)	78%

COMBINED RESULTS OF QUESTIONS 12 and 13 – Leanners Added

Santorum	37%
Casey	49%
Neither/Other	3%
Not sure	11%

Q: FOURTEEN

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

Santorum	42%
Pennachio	24%
Neither/other (VOL)	6%
Not Sure (VOL)	27%

Q: FIFTEEN

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

Santorum	42%
Sandals	24%
Neither/other (VOL)	5%
Not sure (VOL)	28%

Q: SIXTEEN

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

Featherman	15%
Casey	51%
Neither/other (VOL)	6%
Not sure (VOL)	27%

Q: SEVENTEEN

When it comes to the issue of abortion, would you consider yourself to be pro-choice or pro-life?

Pro-choice	49%
Pro-life	43%
Neither/other (VOL)	2%

Not sure (VOL) 5%

Q: EIGHTEEN

Which of the following best describes your status as a football fan?

My favorite NFL Team is The Pittsburgh Steelers	39%
My favorite NFL Team is The Philadelphia Eagles	24%
My favorite NFL Team is neither the Steelers or Eagles	12%
I'm not a football fan	23%
Not Sure (VOL)	