

The Morning Call
Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion

The 2006 Pennsylvania Elections
Governor and U.S. Senate

KEY FINDINGS REPORT

August 4, 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, however Casey's lead appears to be narrowing.
2. Senator Santorum's favorability ratings have slightly improved in the commonwealth since the spring.
3. Casey's lead continues to be helped 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.
4. Pennsylvanians are evenly divided in their approval of Rick Santorum's job performance as Senator.
5. While continuing to lead among the state's Catholic electorate, Casey's gap over Santorum has closed in the past three months.
6. Democrats continue to support Casey at a higher level than Republicans support Santorum's reelection bid.
7. While President Bush's low approval ratings appear to be a drag on Santorum's reelection bid, the Senator's numbers among Bush detractors have improved slightly since the spring.

Governor Race:

1. Incumbent Governor Edward Rendell maintains a healthy lead over Republican Lynn Swann.
2. While significantly improving his standing among white voters, Governor Rendell continues to have a sizeable advantage over Swann among the state's minority population.
3. As Rendell's job approval and personal favorability ratings continue to improve Swann's favorability ratings have slightly decreased.
5. 4. Commonwealth voters continue to have significant doubts about Swann's experience to be the Governor of the commonwealth.

METHODOLOGY: The following key findings report summarizes data collected in a telephone survey of 550 registered voters in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania between July 31 and August 3, 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% 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 under sampling of both men and minorities. 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 election day 2006 only three months away, Governor Ed Rendell is maintaining a sizeable lead in his reelection bid, while Senator Rick Santorum has narrowed the gap in the battle for the United States Senate. The most recent Morning Call/ Muhlenberg College survey finds Democrat Bob Casey Jr. continuing to lead in the Senate showdown, but by a smaller margin than most polls found earlier in the summer. Meanwhile, the commonwealth's Democratic governor appears to be well positioned in his contest against Republican challenger Lynn Swann.

THE SENATE RACE

In one of the nation's premier political races Pennsylvania Treasurer Bob Casey Jr. holds a 6 percent lead over two term Republican Senator Rick Santorum. However, the 6 point margin is significantly lower than most major Pennsylvania polls have found this summer. In particular, polls in June found Casey with leads ranging from 15% to 18%, making the current gap much narrower than 6 weeks ago. As can be seen in Table One, Casey's current lead is as small as any state survey has found since last fall.

TABLE ONE

Pennsylvania Senate Race

	<u>Santorum</u>	<u>Casey</u>	<u>Other/Undecided</u>	<u>Margin</u>
F & M. Nov 8	35%	51%	14%	Casey +16%
Quinnipiac Dec 13	38%	50%	12%	Casey +12%
F & M Feb. 9	35%	51%	14%	Casey +16%
Quinnipiac Feb. 13	36%	51%	13%	Casey +15%
Rasmussen Feb. 16	36%	52%	12%	Casey +16%
Muhlenberg/MCall March 2	37%	49%	14%	Casey +12%
Quinnipiac Apr. 6	37%	48%	12%	Casey + 11%
Muhlenberg/MCall April 25	38%	46%	16%	Casey + 8%
F & M May 4	41%	47%	12%	Casey + 6%
Rasmussen June 19	37%	52%	11%	Casey +15%
Quinnipiac June 21	34%	52%	14%	Casey +18%
Rasmussen July 26	39%	50%	11%	Casey +11%
Muhlenberg/MCall Aug 4	39%	45%	16%	Casey +6%

The decreasing size of Casey's lead has emerged as the Santorum campaign has aggressively introduced a number of campaign ads throughout the commonwealth's television markets. These ads which have focused on topics including immigration, energy resources and senior citizen benefits appear to be helping the state's junior senator's overall public standing.

As can be seen in Table Two Santorum' favorable to unfavorable ratio has moved in a positive direction since last spring. In particular the Republican Senator's positives have crept forward to 43% while his negatives have inched downward to 34%.. Meanwhile, Casey continues to maintain a much stronger favorable to unfavorable ratio than Santorum, but has not seen the type of improvement that his opponent has seen over summer.

TABLE TWO

Favorability Ratings for Senate Candidates
Santorum

	Favorable	Unfavorable	Neutral/Not Sure	Never Heard of
Santorum March 2 2006	42%	38%	17%	2%
Santorum April 24 2006	39%	35%	25%	1%
Santorum August 4	43%	34%	22%	<1%

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Casey

Casey, March 2 2006	38%	18%	36%	8%
Casey, April 24 2006	38%	18%	40%	4%
Casey, August 4 2006	39%	21%	40%	1%

The Bush Factor

President Bush’s struggles continue to be considered a threat to Republican candidates in the November election, with close allies such as Rick Santorum considered particularly vulnerable. 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 disapproval rate in Pennsylvania has risen to new high of 58% with a 33% disapproval rating. These high disapproval numbers for the president are similar to national ratings that placed his disapproval score at 58% (LA Times/Bloomberg, August 1, 2006).

TABLE THREE

Approval Ratings for President Bush

	Approve	Disapprove	Neutral/Not Sure
MC/Muhlenberg March 2, 2006	36%	56%	8%
MC/Muhlenberg April 24, 2006	33%	57%	10%
LA Times/Bloomberg August 1, 2006	40%	58%	2%
MC/Muhlenberg August 4, 2006	33%	58%	9%

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 16% of commonwealth voters who disapprove of Bush’s performance as chief executive plan to vote for Santorum. Comparatively, 62% of those who disapprove of the President plan to vote for Casey at this time. While still a drag on Santorum, there has been a slight positive shift in these numbers since the spring when only 13% of PA voters who disapprove of Bush said they would vote for Santorum.

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 50% to 33%. While this 17% lead in this group is 5% higher than our April survey, the results 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 holding a 7% lead among all Catholic voters (45% to 38%). However, this Casey's lead among this important group has been cut in half since our last survey when the Democrat maintained a 14% lead among Pennsylvania Catholics.

Conclusion

As he has been throughout the year State Treasurer Bob Casey remains the frontrunner in the race for the U.S. senate seat in Pennsylvania. However, Senator Santorum appears to be cutting in to Casey's lead as the Republican's favorable ratings have improved in the commonwealth. We suggest that the heavy level of positive ads put out by the Santorum campaign throughout the summer may be paying dividends in the form of greater support among the electorate.

The Governor Race

In the Pennsylvania governor's race incumbent Edward Rendell holds a very strong 16 point lead over Republican challenger Lynn Swann. As can be seen in Table four, polls since the spring have shown the Governor with leads ranging from 14 to 24 points. In the latest Morning Call/Muhlenberg College poll Rendell maintains a 16% lead over Swann, marking a 10 point increase since our last canvas in April. Table Four breaks down recent tracking of the race.

TABLE FOUR

Pennsylvania Governor Race

	<u>Rendell</u>	<u>Swann</u>	<u>Other/Undecided</u>	<u>Margin</u>
Quinnipiac Dec 13	48%	35%	17%	Rendell +13%
F & M Feb. 9	45%	42%	13%	Rendell + 3%
Quinnipiac Feb. 13	48%	36%	16%	Rendell +12%
Rasmussen Feb. 16	46%	43%	11%	Rendell +3%
Muhlenberg/MCall March 2	46%	43%	11%	Rendell +3%
Quinnipiac Apr. 6	47%	37%	16%	Rendell +10%
Muhlenberg/MCall April 24	45%	39%	16%	Rendell + 6%
F & M May 4	49%	35%	16%	Rendell + 14%
Rasmussen June 19	50%	36%	14%	Rendell + 14%
Quinnipiac June 21	55%	31%	14%	Rendell + 24%
Rasmussen July 26	50%	40%	10%	Rendell + 10%
Muhlenberg/MCall Aug 4	51%	35%	14%	Rendell + 16%

Rendell's Job Performance Improves

Since the spring Governor Rendell's job approval ratings have remained generally positive among commonwealth voters. More specifically, the incumbent Democrat has seen his approval ratings move to 50% among PA voters, with a 12% gap in approval to disapproval scores. Table Five provides details on the Governor's approval ratings in MC/Morning Call polls this year.

TABLE FIVE

Approval Ratings for Governor Rendell

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>Neutral/Not Sure</u>
March 2 2006	46%	40%	14%
April 24 2006	49%	36%	15%
August 3 2006	50%	38%	12%

In addition to strong job approval numbers Governor Rendell's personal favorability levels continue to improve. In particular he now maintains a 24% gap in favorable to unfavorable scores, doubling the 12% margin he held in March. The governor's 54% favorability rating has likely been aided by the large advertisement buy that his campaign has conducted during the late spring and early summer months. Meanwhile, Republican nominee Lynn Swann's favorability ratings have gradually slipped throughout the year, with his positive numbers decreasing by 6% since March. Interestingly, Swann's

unfavorable numbers have remained steady as his favorables have declined, with more voters moving to a neutral stance on the GOP candidate.

TABLE SIX

Favorability Ratings for Gubernatorial Candidates

Rendell

	Favorable	Unfavorable	Neutral/Not Sure	Never Heard of
Rendell March 2 2006	49%	37%	13%	<1%
Rendell April 24 2006	49%	32%	17%	<1%
Rendell August 3 2006	54%	30%	15%	<1%

Swann

Swann March 2 2006	37%	17%	38%	8%
Swann April 24 2006	35%	17%	44%	4%
Swann August 3 2006	31%	18%	47%	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. While the former Steeler all-pro Swann has done very well among his team's fans in our earlier polls, Rendell has pulled into a statistical dead heat among black and gold loyalists in the latest poll. In particular, while 43% of Steeler fans support Swann, 41% support the incumbent governor. This 2 point lead is down from a 16% margin in April. This decline may be an indicator of Swann's inability to convince voters of his credentials for the office beyond his fame as a gridiron star. This possibility is further supported by a more direct question posed to respondents regarding Swann's experience to be governor. By a 2 to 1 margin commonwealth voters indicate that Swann does not have the right kind of experience to be governor (46% does not have the right experience to 23% does have the right kind of experience. Such perceptions pose a large hurdle for the GOP nominee as election day grows closer.

TABLE SEVEN

Pennsylvania Governor Race by NFL Preference

	<u>Rendell March 2006</u>	<u>Swann March 2006</u>	<u>Rendell April 2006</u>	<u>Swann April 2006</u>	<u>Rendell August 2006</u>	<u>Swann August 2006</u>
Steeler Fans	36%	50%	35%	51%	41%	43%
Eagle Fans	57%	26%	53%	29%	61%	22%
Fans of Other Teams	39%	45%	31%	31%	51%	24%
Non Football Fans	47%	29%	45%	35%	51%	20%

Race and the Election

With the first African American to be nominated for governor by a major political party in Pennsylvania, the issue of race serves as an interesting element of the election. The survey results shown in Table Seven indicate that Rendell has increased his lead among white voters in the state, while minority Pennsylvanians support the governor's reelection by a 3 to 1 margin. This lead among non-white voters has increased throughout the election season and can be seen as a disappointment to Republican leaders who hoped that Swann's candidacy would help to make inroads in the largely Democratic minority voter block.

TABLE EIGHT

Pennsylvania Governor Race by Race

	<u>Rendell March 2006</u>	<u>Swann March 2006</u>	<u>Rendell April 2006</u>	<u>Swann April 2006</u>	<u>Rendell August 2006</u>	<u>Swann August 2006</u>
White Voters	42%	41%	41%	39%	45%	37%
Minority Voters	59%	29%	56%	27%	64%	21%

Conclusion

With the gubernatorial election now three months away Governor Ed Rendell continues to be well positioned to maintain his control of the commonwealth's highest political office. The Democratic incumbent has seen his job and personal approval ratings improve while his Republican opponent has been unable to improve his standing with Pennsylvania voters. Given his financial advantage and strong organizational structure Rendell stands as a difficult opponent for Swann who has generally failed to make headway in the six months since it became clear that he would be the Republican nominee.

Congressional Elections

Many political analysts are looking at Pennsylvania's congressional races this fall to see if Democrats are capable of defeating a number of Republican incumbents. In this survey respondents were asked which party's candidate they are likely to vote for in their own congressional district. The survey results indicate Democrats have a 10% lead over Republicans in the commonwealth. While these findings may not translate well into district level races, such questions are often good predictors of aggregate level changes. The findings in Pennsylvania are also very consistent with national surveys which show Democrats maintaining double digit leads in generic congressional straw polls.

TABLE NINE

Pennsylvania Congressional Elections

	Democrats	Republicans	Other/Neither/Not Sure
Gallup (National Sample) July 30, 2006	51%	40%	8%
LA Times/ Bloomberg (National Sample) August 1, 2006	48%	37%	15%
MC/Muhlenberg (Pennsylvania Sample) August 4, 2006	45%	35%	20%

Note: Question wording for this question varies slightly across polling organizations

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

2006 Pennsylvania Election Survey

Field Dates: 7/31/06 – 8/3/06

Total Completions: 550 Registered Pennsylvania Voters

Margin of Error: +/- 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	45%
Republican	39%
Independent	10%
Another party	2%
Not sure (VOL)	4%

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	58%
Not sure (VOL)	9%

Q: THREE

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

Approve	39%
Disapprove	39%
Not sure (VOL)	22%

Q: FOUR

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

Approve	50%
Disapprove	38%
Not sure (VOL)	12%

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	54%
Unfavorable	30%
Neutral/not sure (VOL)	15%
Haven't heard of him (VOL)	<1%

Q: SIX

Lynn Swann?

Favorable	31%
Unfavorable	18%
Neutral/not sure (VOL)	47%
Haven't heard of him (VOL)	4 %

Q: SEVEN

Rick Santorum?

Favorable	43%
Unfavorable	34%
Neutral/not sure (VOL)	22%
Haven't heard of him (VOL)	< 1%

Q: EIGHT

Bob Casey Jr?

Favorable	39%
Unfavorable	21%
Neutral/not sure (VOL)	40%
Haven't heard of him (VOL)	1%

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)	50%
Swann (SKIP TO Q11)	32%
Neither/other (VOL) (SKIP TO Q11)	6%
Not sure (VOL) (GO TO Q10)	14%

Q: TEN (ONLY UNDECIDED VOTERS)

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

Rendell	8%
Swann	30%
Neither/other (VOL)	7%
Not sure (VOL)	55%

COMBINED RESULTS OF QUESTIONS 9 and 10 – Leaners Added

Rendell	51%
Swann	35%
Neither/Other	6%
Not sure	8%

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)	38%
Casey (SKIP TO Q14)	44%
Neither/other (VOL) (SKIP TO Q 14)	4%
Not sure (VOL) (GO to Q13)	15%

Q: TWELVE (UNDECIDED ONLY)

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	10%
Casey	10%
Neither/other (don't read)	5%
Not sure (don't read)	75%

COMBINED RESULTS OF QUESTIONS 11 and 12 – Leaners Added

Santorum	39%
Casey	45%

Neither/Other	5%
Not sure	11%