

The Morning Call
Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion

The 2006 Pennsylvania Elections
Governor and U.S. Senate

KEY FINDINGS REPORT

October 9, 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, with little change in the numbers since the last Morning Call/Muhlenberg Poll in August.
2. As negative ads are dominating the commonwealth's airwaves, the favorability ratings for both Santorum and Casey have substantially increased.
3. Pennsylvanians continued to be very divided on Senator Santorum's performance as a Senator.
4. Senator Santorum appears to be gaining a greater advantage over Casey among the commonwealth's pro-life voters.
6. While Santorum and Casey are drawing equal levels of support from the rank and file members of their parties, Pennsylvania independents are breaking more towards the Democratic challenger.
7. Despite improved approval ratings in Pennsylvania, President Bush appears to be a drag on Senator Santorum's reelection bid.

Governor Race:

1. Incumbent Governor Edward Rendell lead over Republican Lynn Swann has grown since the August Morning Call/Muhlenberg College survey.
2. Rendell has made gains among both white and minority voters over the last two months..
3. Swann has experienced a significant increase in the percentage of Pennsylvania voters who view him unfavorably.
4. Commonwealth voters continue to have significant doubts about Swann's experience to be the Governor of the commonwealth.
5. Governor Rendell's job approval ratings have risen for the third consecutive poll fielded by the Morning Call and Muhlenberg College.

Congressional Races:

1. Pennsylvania voters are more likely to support Democratic candidates than Republican candidates in their congressional district elections.

METHODOLOGY: The following key findings report summarizes data collected in a telephone survey of 511 likely voters in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania between October 3 and October 8, 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 more accurately reflect the demographic makeup of voters in the state. 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 four weeks away, Governor Ed Rendell has increased his lead in his reelection bid, while Democrat Bob Casey maintains a lead over Republican Senator Rick Santorum. The most recent Morning Call/ Muhlenberg College survey finds State Treasurer Bob Casey Jr. continuing to lead in the Senate showdown, while his Democratic colleague Ed Rendell remains in a very strong position 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 5 percent lead over two term Republican Senator Rick Santorum. This 5 point margin is nearly identical to the 6 point lead that was found in the last Morning Call/Muhlenberg College survey in early August. While unchanged from the last MC/MC canvass, the 5 point Casey lead appears smaller than most recent polls from other independent polling firms. In particular, polls in September found Casey with leads ranging from 7% to 14%, making the current Casey gap of 5% on the low side of recent surveys. As can be seen in Table One, Casey's current lead is as small as any margin since Franklin and Marshall's Keystone Poll in August. .

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%
Quinnipiac Aug 13	42%	48%	10%	Casey +6%
F & M Aug 21	39%	44%	17%	Casey+5%
Rasmussen Aug 22	40%	48%	8%	Casey+8%
F & M Sept 18	38%	45%	17%	Casey+7%
Phil. Inquirer/Temple Sept 20	39%	49%	12%	Casey+10%
Rasmussen Sept 20	39%	49%	12%	Casey+10%
Quinnipiac Sept 24	40%	54%	14%	Casey+14%
Muhlenberg/MCall Oct 8	41%	46%	13%	Casey+5%

While the race appears unchanged since the last survey produced by MC/MC, the incredible amount of negative advertising put out by both campaigns has taken its toll on the candidates' favorability ratings. More specifically, both Santorum and Casey have seen their unfavorable ratings creep up over the last two months, with Santorum's negatives going from 34 to 41% and Casey's negatives moving from 21% to 31%. As can be seen in Table Two these increases in negatives have occurred while Santorum's positives have remained stagnant, and Casey's favorables have increased only slightly.

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 2006	43%	34%	22%	<1%
Santorum, October 9 2006	43%	41%	16%	1%

Casey

	Favorable	Unfavorable	Neutral/Not Sure	Never Heard of
Casey, March 2 2006	38%	18%	36%	8%
Casey, April 24 2006	38%	18%	40%	4%
Casey, August 4 2006	39%	21%	40%	1%
Casey, October 9 2006	43%	31%	24%	1%

The Bush Factor

Throughout the year there has been great interest regarding the impact of President Bush's poor job performance ratings on Senator Santorum's bid to retain his seat in the Senate. With a strong record of supporting the president's positions, Senator Santorum has been identified as a potential casualty of Bush's struggles. The results of the survey indicate that despite a slight rebound in the President's numbers in Pennsylvania, Bush continues to act as a drag on Santorum.

The President's current approval rating of 38% is his highest mark in the four surveys conducted by MC/MC in 2006, and therefore provides a positive indicator for Santorum's efforts to return to Washington as Pennsylvania's junior senator. Table Three summarizes these results.

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%
MC/Muhlenberg August 4, 2006	33%	58%	9%
Newsweek October 6, 2006	33%	59%	8%
MC/Muhlenberg October, 9 2006	38%	53%	9%

The President's rebounding approval numbers are important to Santorum's efforts because of the tight correlation between support for Bush and support for the Senator's race against Casey. More specifically, only 13% of commonwealth voters who disapprove of Bush's performance as chief executive plan to vote for Santorum. Comparatively, 71% of those who disapprove of the President plan to vote for Casey at this time. These numbers have been consistent throughout the year, thus a strong month for the President may be very important to Santorum's survival on election day.

The Pro Life Voter

Republican candidates throughout the nation have relied on pro life voters to help them achieve electoral victories. However, this year's senate race challenges this dynamic because of Bob Casey's pro choice stance. With two pro-life candidates the Republican dominance of this voting block appears more tenuous. The survey findings demonstrate that Santorum's lead among pro life voters has risen to 25 points, marking an 8 point gain since August and a 13% increase since April. These results may indicate that a core component of the Republican base may be shifting their support towards the Republican candidate, and thus strengthening Santorum's chances of reelection.

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 21% lead among all Catholic voters (54% to 33%). The Casey's lead among this important group has been expanded by 14 points since our last survey when the Democrat maintained a smaller 7% 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. Incumbent Senator Rick Santorum remains in striking distance of his Democratic challenger, but continues to struggle with fairly high negative perceptions among the commonwealth's voters.

The Governor Race

In the Pennsylvania governor's race incumbent Edward Rendell has extended his lead over Republican nominee Lynn Swann. As can be seen in Table four, polls over the last this month have found the Governor with leads ranging from 16 to 27 points. In the latest Morning Call/Muhlenberg College poll Rendell maintains a 21% lead over Swann, marking a 5 point increase since our last canvas in August. 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%
Quinnipiac Aug 13	54%	37%	9%	Rendell+17%
F & M Aug 21	53%	34%	13%	Rendell+19%
Rasmussen Aug 22	50%	38%	12%	Rendell+12%
F & M Sept 18	52%	34%	14%	Rendell+18%
Phil. Inquirer/Temple Sept 20	60%	33%	7%	Rendell+27%
Rasmussen Sept 20	56%	36%	8%	Rendell+20%
Quinnipiac Sept 24	55%	39%	6%	Rendell+16%
Muhlenberg/MCall Oct 8	56%	35%	9%	Rendell+21%

Rendell's Job Performance Improves

Over the course of the year Governor Rendell's job approval ratings have grown increasingly positive among commonwealth voters. More specifically, the incumbent Democrat has seen his approval ratings move to 57% among PA voters, with a 25% 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

	Approve	Disapprove	Neutral/Not Sure
March 2 2006	46%	40%	14%
April 24 2006	49%	36%	15%
August 3 2006	50%	38%	12%
October 8 2006	57%	32%	11%

In addition to strong job approval numbers Governor Rendell's personal favorability levels also remain strong. In particular he now maintains a 24% gap in favorable to unfavorable scores, equaling the margin he held in August. Meanwhile, Republican nominee Lynn Swann's favorability ratings have remained fairly stagnant over the course of the year while his unfavorable ratings have risen sharply since early August.

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%
Rendell October 9 2006	57%	33%	12%	<1%

Swann

	Favorable	Unfavorable	Neutral/Not Sure	Never Heard of
Swann March 2 2006	37%	17%	38%	8%
Swann April 24 2006	35%	17%	44%	4%
Swann August 3 2006	31%	18%	47%	4%
Swann October 9 2006	33%	31%	33%	3%

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, 42% support the incumbent governor. This 1 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 (49% does not have the right experience to 26% does have the right kind of experience.) With half of commonwealth voters doubting his experience to be Governor with only one month to Election Day, Swann remains in a precarious position in the race.

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>	<u>Rendell October 2006</u>	<u>Swann October 2006</u>
Steeler Fans	36%	50%	35%	51%	41%	43%	42%	43%
Eagle Fans	57%	26%	53%	29%	61%	22%	69%	23%
Fans of Other Teams	39%	45%	31%	31%	51%	24%	46%	43%
Non Football Fans	47%	29%	45%	35%	51%	20%	55%	31%

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 margin of 7 to 1. 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</u> <u>March</u> <u>2006</u>	<u>Swann</u> <u>March</u> <u>2006</u>	<u>Rendell</u> <u>April</u> <u>2006</u>	<u>Swann</u> <u>April</u> <u>2006</u>	<u>Rendell</u> <u>August</u> <u>2006</u>	<u>Swann</u> <u>August</u> <u>2006</u>	<u>Rendell</u> <u>October</u> <u>2006</u>	<u>Swann</u> <u>October</u> <u>2006</u>
White Voters	42%	41%	41%	39%	45%	37%	53%	35%
Minority Voters	59%	29%	56%	27%	64%	21%	74%	10%

Conclusion

With the gubernatorial election now only four weeks away Governor Ed Rendell has solidified his lead over his Republican challenger. The Democratic incumbent has seen his job and personal approval ratings improve while Swann standing with Pennsylvania voters appears to be diminishing. Given his financial advantage and strong organizational structure Rendell stands as a difficult opponent for Swann who has generally failed to make headway in his bid to unseat the incumbent.

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 13% 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
Newsweek (National Sample) October 6, 2006	51%	38%	11%
Time (National Sample) October 4, 2006	54%	39%	7%
MC/Muhlenberg (Pennsylvania Sample) August 4, 2006	45%	35%	20%
MC/Muhlenberg (Pennsylvania Sample) October 9, 2006	49%	36%	15%

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: 9/3/06 – 9/8/06

Total Completions: 511 Likely Pennsylvania Voters

Margin of Error: +/- 4.3% 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	47%
Republican	42%
Independent	10%
Another party	1%
Not sure (VOL)	<1%

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	38%
Disapprove	53%
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	40%
Disapprove	43%
Not sure (VOL)	18%

Q: FOUR

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

Approve	57%
Disapprove	32%
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	57%
Unfavorable	33%
Neutral/not sure (VOL)	10%
Haven't heard of him (VOL)	<1%

Q: SIX

Lynn Swann?

Favorable	33%
Unfavorable	31%
Neutral/not sure (VOL)	33%
Haven't heard of him (VOL)	3%

Q: SEVEN

Rick Santorum?

Favorable	43%
Unfavorable	41%
Neutral/not sure (VOL)	16%
Haven't heard of him (VOL)	< 1%

Q: EIGHT

Bob Casey Jr?

Favorable	43%
Unfavorable	31%
Neutral/not sure (VOL)	24%
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)	54%
Swann (SKIP TO Q11)	33%
Neither/other (VOL) (SKIP TO Q11)	2%
Not sure (VOL) (GO TO Q10)	10%

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	15%
Swann	23%
Neither/other (VOL)	12%
Not sure (VOL)	51%

COMBINED RESULTS OF QUESTIONS 9 and 10 – Leaners Added

Rendell	56%
Swann	35%
Neither/Other	3%
Not sure	5%

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	39%
Casey	45%
Neither/other (VOL)	4%
Not sure (VOL)	12%

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	13%
Casey	6%
Neither/other (don't read)	12%
Not sure (don't read)	69%

COMBINED RESULTS OF QUESTIONS 11 and 12 – Leaners Added

Santorum	41%
Casey	46%
Neither/Other	5%
Not sure	8%