



The Morning Call
Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion

The 2010 U.S. Senate and Congressional
Elections in Pennsylvania Survey



KEY FINDINGS REPORT
Release Date April 11, 2010

KEY FINDINGS:

Senate Race:

1. Republican challenger Patrick Toomey holds an early advantage over incumbent Arlen Specter in a possible match up in the race for a United States Senate seat from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.
2. Toomey also holds a lead against Democratic Congressman Joe Sestak in a potential match up in the senate race, with a large segment of voters yet to form an opinion about this pairing.
3. Senator Specter's standing in the race for his seat in the Senate is being hampered by high job disapproval ratings, with over half of Pennsylvanians voters surveyed giving a negative rating to his work in Washington D.C..
4. Both Pat Toomey and Joe Sestak maintain good favorable to unfavorable ratios among likely voters in the Keystone State, yet a majority of those likely to cast ballots in November have either not formed an opinion of these candidates or have not heard of them at this point.

Congressional Races:

1. Pennsylvania voters are evenly divided in terms of which political party's candidates they plan to support in the 2010 Congressional election in their district.

METHODOLOGY: The following key findings report summarizes data collected in a telephone survey of 402 likely voters in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania between March 29th and April 7th, 2010. Individual households (land lines) and cell phone numbers from area codes 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 in Allentown, Pennsylvania. This number of completions results in a margin of error of +/- 5% 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. A maximum of 5 attempts were made to conduct a survey with phone numbers selected. The completion rate for this survey based upon the formula established by the American Association of Public Opinion Research was 32%. To determine if a respondent would be categorized as a likely voter two questions were used. Respondents had to indicate that they were both currently registered to vote in Pennsylvania and are either definitely or very likely to vote in the November midterm elections in order to be classified as a likely voter. 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.

SENATE RACE

In the 2010 race for a United States Senate seat from Pennsylvania Republican challenger Pat Toomey holds leads over both incumbent Democrat Arlen Specter and Congressman Joe Sestak in potential math-ups for the November election. These are some of the findings of the latest Muhlenberg College/Morning Call survey of Pennsylvania voters.

The results of the survey indicate that former Congressman Pat Toomey holds a 7 point lead over long time incumbent Arlen Specter among Pennsylvanians likely to vote in the fall election. Toomey gathers support from 47% of likely voters compared to 40% supporting Specter and 13% either undecided or supporting another candidate in the race.

TABLE ONE

Pennsylvania Senate Race
Specter v. Toomey

| | <u>Specter</u> | <u>Toomey</u> | <u>Other/Undecided</u> | <u>Margin</u> |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| Rasmussen (LV) March 15 | 40% | 49% | 12% | Toomey +9% |
| F & M Nov (RV) 1 March 21 | 29% | 33% | 38% | Toomey +4% |
| Quinnipiac (RV) April 5 | 41% | 46% | 12% | Toomey +10% |
| Muhlenberg/MCall (LV) | 47% | 40% | 13% | Toomey +7% |

Senator Specter's poor position relative to Toomey can be partially explained by high unfavorable ratings among the Commonwealth's electorate. Over half (52%) of likely voters surveyed indicated that they had an unfavorable view of Specter, compared with 18% that maintained unfavorable views about Toomey.

TABLE TWO

Favorability Ratings for Senate Candidates

| | Favorable | Unfavorable | Neutral/Not Sure | Never Heard of |
|-------------------|------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Arlen Specter (D) | 41% | 52% | 6% | 1% |
| Pat Toomey (R) | 30% | 18% | 30% | 23% |
| Joe Sestak (D) | 24% | 14% | 31% | 31% |

Toomey's relative strength against Specter is also buoyed by a strong performance among the state's registered independents where he leads Specter by a nearly 2 to 1 margin. Specter, who became a Democrat after forty years as a Republican,

was able to only gather support from about 1 in 5 members of his former party's rank and file members.

TABLE THREE

**Selected Cross Tabulations for the
Specter v. Toomey Race**

| | Specter | Toomey | Neither | Not Sure |
|--------------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Overall | 40% | 47% | 4% | 9% |
| Democrat | 61% | 23% | 5% | 11% |
| Republican | 22% | 66% | 4% | 7% |
| Independent | 30% | 56% | 2% | 12% |
| Male | 42% | 48% | 3% | 7% |
| Female | 38% | 44% | 6% | 13% |
| 18-39 | 42% | 33% | 6% | 18% |
| 40-64 | 42% | 44% | 5% | 9% |
| 65+ | 36% | 51% | 4% | 9% |

In the matchup between Toomey and Sestak, the likely Republican nominee maintains an 11 point lead over the current representative from Pennsylvania's 7th Congressional District. This match-up is defined by the fairly large number of voters in the Commonwealth who have not yet formed an opinion on the race, with nearly half (45%) of voters surveyed not supporting either Sestak or Toomey a little over half a year until election day.

TABLE FOUR

**Pennsylvania Senate Race
Specter v. Toomey**

| | Sestak | Toomey | Other/Undecided | Margin |
|---------------------------|---------------|---------------|------------------------|---------------|
| Rasmussen (LV) March 15 | 37% | 42% | 22% | Toomey +5% |
| F & M Nov (RV) 1 March 21 | 19% | 27% | 54% | Toomey +8% |
| Quinnipiac (RV) April 5 | 34% | 42% | 23% | Toomey +8% |
| Muhlenberg/MCall (LV) | 22% | 33% | 45% | Toomey +11% |

Congressional Election

As the 2010 midterm elections draw nearer Pennsylvania has a very large number of congressional elections that can be considered competitive battles. In eastern Pennsylvania alone there appear to be 7 districts (6th, 7th, 8th, 10th, 11th, 15th, 17th) in which

both Democrat and Republican candidates have a legitimate chances of victory in November. In a generic ballot in which voters were asked if they plan to vote for either the Democrat or Republican candidate in their congressional district, Pennsylvania voters are almost evenly split between the two major parties' candidates.

The even split in support for Democrat and GOP candidates is a departure from pre-election polls in 2008 when the Democrats held a 9 point lead over Republicans as election day approached. In the 2008 congressional races Democrats won 12 of the 19 seats in the state, including picking up a district previously held by a Republican (Pa 3rd).

TABLE FIVE

Pennsylvania Congressional Elections

| | Democrats | Republicans | Other/Neither/Not Sure |
|---------------------------------|------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| MC/Muhlenberg November, 2008 | 47% | 36% | 16% |
| MC/Muhlenberg April, 2010 | 40% | 41% | 32% |

While many factors may be leading to the Democrat's weakened position in Pennsylvania, including a general trend of poor performance for the President's party in mid-term elections, the public standing of both President Obama and Governor Ed Rendell may be damaging the overall position of Democratic candidates in the Keystone State. The President's favorability rating has slipped to 45% in the Commonwealth, with 50% of state voters maintaining a negative view of the 43rd President. This is in marked contrast to a Muhlenberg College/Morning Call Survey taken in April of 2009 when the president had a 61% favorability rating in the state.

TABLE SIX

**Approval Ratings for President, Governor and
Parties in Congress**
(April 2009 Percentages in Parenthesis)

| | Favorable | Unfavorable | Neutral/Not Sure |
|------------------|------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| President Obama | 45% (61%) | 50% (24%) | 6% (14%) |
| Governor Rendell | 44% (51%) | 47% (41%) | 9% (6%) |

Note: Results based on overall adult population in Pennsylvania.
Sample Sizes: 2009 = 467; 2010 492

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SELECTED CROSSTABULATIONS

Q38: Now, if the 2008 U.S. Senate election was being held today and the race was between Arlen Specter and Pat Toomey, who would you vote for?

| | Specter | Toomey | Neither | Not Sure |
|--------------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Overall | 40% | 47% | 4% | 9% |
| Democrat | 61% | 23% | 5% | 11% |
| Republican | 22% | 66% | 4% | 7% |
| Independent | 30% | 56% | 2% | 12% |
| Male | 42% | 48% | 3% | 7% |
| Female | 38% | 44% | 6% | 13% |
| 18-39 | 42% | 33% | 6% | 18% |
| 40-64 | 42% | 44% | 5% | 9% |
| 65+ | 36% | 51% | 4% | 9% |

Q40: Now, if the 2010 U.S. Senate election was being held today and the race was between Joe Sestak and Pat Toomey, who would you vote for?

| | Sestak | Toomey | Neither | Not Sure |
|--------------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Overall | 21% | 32% | 12% | 36% |
| Democrat | 27% | 20% | 15% | 39% |
| Republican | 11% | 48% | 8% | 34% |
| Independent | 37% | 21% | 7% | 35% |
| Male | 29% | 35% | 10% | 27% |
| Female | 14% | 27% | 14% | 46% |
| 18-39 | 18% | 33% | 6% | 42% |
| 40-64 | 26% | 28% | 15% | 31% |
| 65+ | 16% | 36% | 7% | 41% |