

HOT WATER FOR MENENDEZ? OR NJ VOTERS SAY MENENDEZ IS GUILTY; GOOD NEWS IS EVERYONE ELSE IS TOO

Garden State voters are paying close attention to the recent federal indictment of Democratic Senator Robert Menendez, and many believe that despite his claims to the contrary, he is guilty as charged. That's the bad news from the most recent statewide survey of registered voters from Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind. The good news is that he's not alone! Most also believe that politicians frequently do the kinds of things alleged of the Senator. Apparently he's in good company.

Among New Jersey residents, 58 percent believe that it's likely Senator Menendez is guilty as charged, with 28 percent who believe it is very likely. Republicans (73%), whites (67%), and men (62%) are among those most likely to disbelieve the senator's claims of innocence.

Senator Menendez's alleged behavior is fairly typical of what all politicians engage in. Apparently, it's just that Senator Menendez was caught whereas his peers often get away with it. On this question, the same sentiment prevails across a variety of groups. Majorities of Democrats, Republicans, independents, men, women, whites, the older and younger all believe politicians frequently abuse their power while in office.

"The public has grown almost immune to stories of unethical behavior among politicians. If true, the charges against Senator Menendez would hardly put him at odds with his peers, at least according to the public" said Krista Jenkins, professor of political science and director of PublicMind. "The public increasingly equates political power with its abuse among today's politicians."

The allegations have taken a toll on the Senator's favorability rating in the state as well. A little over a year ago, thirty percent had a favorable impression of him with 33 percent holding unfavorable attitudes. Today his favorable ratings are down to a quarter (23%) and his unfavorable have increased to 39 percent. By contrast, the other senator from New Jersey – Democrat Cory Booker – continues to strike a more positive note among residents. His favorables are more than double those for Senator Menendez (47%), a number that is unchanged from March of 2014 (47%).

As for how closely New Jerseyans are following the legal case against Senator Menendez, 23 percent report paying close attention, with an additional 29 percent who say they're paying some attention. The degree of attentiveness helps to explain respondents' accuracy when asked what, exactly, Senator Menendez is charged with doing. They were asked whether he took money from a wealthy donor in exchange for political influence OR used his political power to punish someone who would not

contribute to his campaign. Over half (54%) correctly said he allegedly took money from a wealthy donor in exchange for political influence. A third (33%) were unsure and seven percent said he tried to punish someone for not making a donation. The most attentive were also the most accurate in their perception of what he is alleged to have done.

“Unfortunately for him, the allegations against Senator Menendez are weakening opinions that were already divided. It doesn’t help that this seems to be one news story about politics that many are following closely and can identify what’s behind the allegations,” said Jenkins.

If events unfold in a way that requires Senator Menendez to leave office before his term expires, the state would be left with a vacancy. Governor Christie would have to pick a replacement. The same survey asked respondents whether a replacement for Senator Menendez should be someone who is currently serving in the state legislature, or is among the New Jersey delegation to the U.S. House of Representatives. Opinion is divided with 30 percent favoring someone from the state legislature, and 24 percent preferring someone who is currently in Congress. A plurality (38%) don’t have a clue whom they’d prefer. As for whether that person should be a woman or a man, the collective response seems to be ‘who cares,’ as 69 percent said it doesn’t matter. Seventeen percent would prefer a woman with five percent favoring a man. However, a quarter of Democrats (28%) elevate the importance of gender in a possible replacement.

The Fairleigh Dickinson University poll of 911 adults in New Jersey was conducted by telephone with both landline and cell phones from April 13 through April 19. The margin of error is +/- 3.3 percentage points.

Methodology, questions, and tables on the web at: <http://publicmind.fdu.edu>

Radio actualities at 201.692.2846

For more information, please call 201.692.7032

Methodology

The most recent survey by Fairleigh Dickinson University’s PublicMind was conducted by telephone from April 13 through April 19 using a randomly selected sample of 911 adults in New Jersey. One can be 95 percent confident that the error attributable to sampling has a range of +/- 3.3 percentage points. The margin of error for subgroups is larger and varies by the size of that subgroup. Survey results are also subject to non-sampling error. This kind of error, which cannot be measured, arises from a number of factors including, but not limited to, non-response (eligible individuals refusing to be interviewed), question wording, the order in which questions are asked, and variations among interviewers.

PublicMind interviews are conducted by Opinion America of Cedar Knolls, NJ, with professionally trained interviewers using a CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) system. Random selection is achieved by computerized random-digit dialing. This technique gives every person with a landline phone number (including those with unlisted numbers) an equal chance of being selected.

Landline households are supplemented with a separate, randomly selected sample of cell-phone respondents interviewed in the same time frame. The total combined sample is mathematically weighted to match known demographics of age, race and gender.

The sample was purchased from Marketing Systems Group and the research was funded by Fairleigh Dickinson University.

Tables

<i>How likely or unlikely do you think it is that Senator Menendez did what is alleged?</i>													
		PID			Gender		Race		Union household?		Age		
	All	Dem	Ind	Repub	Male	Female	White	Non-white	Yes	No	18-34	35-59	60+
Very likely	28%	20	23	44	34	22	33	19	32	27	17	31	32
Somewhat likely	30%	33	28	29	28	33	34	26	34	30	30	31	31
Somewhat unlikely	11%	16	9	7	10	12	9	14	11	11	13	9	11
Very unlikely	8%	9	9	6	7	8	7	9	8	7	2	9	11
DK (vol)	22%	21	28	14	20	25	17	32	14	24	37	19	14
Refused (vol)	1%	1	2	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1

<i>How likely or unlikely do you think it is that Senator Menendez did what is alleged?</i>			
		Awareness of indictment	
	All	A lot/some	Just a little/nothing
Very likely	28%	37	18
Somewhat likely	30%	34	27
Somewhat unlikely	11%	11	11
Very unlikely	8%	10	5
DK (vol)	22%	7	38
Refused (vol)	1%	1	1

<i>Which of the following best describes what you think about Senator Menendez and his indictment? Would you say [rotate] most politicians do the kind of things that Senator Menendez is alleged to have done OR most politicians behave ethically?</i>													
		PID			Gender		Race		Union household?		Age		
	All	Dem	Ind	Repub	Male	Female	White	Non-white	Yes	No	18-34	35-59	60+
Most do the same	56%	56	58	60	54	58	60	49	61	55	51	59	57
Most behave ethically	22%	21	19	28	27	18	23	22	23	22	18	24	25
Both (vol)	4%	4	4	3	2	6	4	4	4	4	4	3	5
DK (vol)	16%	17	17	9	15	17	12	23	9	18	27	12	12
Refused (vol)	1%	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	2	1	0	1	2

<i>Which of the following best describes what you think about Senator Menendez and his indictment? Would you say [rotate] most politicians do the kind of things that Senator Menendez is alleged to have done OR most politicians behave ethically?</i>			
	Awareness of indictment		
	All	A lot/some	Just a little/nothing
Most do the same	56%	64	49
Most behave ethically	22%	24	21
Both (vol)	4%	4	3
DK (vol)	16%	6	26
Refused (vol)	1%	1	1

<i>How much have you heard or read about the federal indictment against Senator Robert Menendez?</i>													
		PID			Gender		Race		Union household?		Age		
	All	Dem	Ind	Repub	Male	Female	White	Non-white	Yes	No	18-34	35-59	60+
A lot	23%	20	24	29	27	19	27	15	34	20	4	26	36
Some	29%	33	20	33	26	32	34	21	35	28	17	33	33
Just a little	24%	24	22	27	25	24	24	24	18	26	26	25	22
Nothing at all	22%	23	31	10	22	23	14	38	12	24	51	14	8
DK (vol)	2%	1	3	0	1	2	1	3	1	2	2	1	1
Refused (vol)	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

<i>Which of the following best describes the reasons for the charges against Senator Menendez? Did he [rotate] take money from a wealthy donor in exchange for political influence OR use his political power to punish someone who would not contribute to his campaign?</i>													
		PID			Gender		Race		Union household?		Age		
	All	Dem	Ind	Repub	Male	Female	White	Non-white	Yes	No	18-34	35-59	60+
Took money	54%	52	49	67	58	50	61	42	64	53	40	61	56
Punished	7%	7	7	6	6	7	6	9	3	7	9	6	5
Both (vol)	3%	2	3	5	4	3	3	3	3	4	2	2	6
DK (vol)	33%	36	39	20	29	37	28	43	27	35	47	27	30
Refused (vol)	3%	2	2	30	3	3	2	3	4	2	1	3	3

<i>Which of the following best describes the reasons for the charges against Senator Menendez? Did he [rotate] take money from a wealthy donor in exchange for political influence OR use his political power to punish someone who would not contribute to his campaign?</i>			
	Awareness of indictment		
	All	A lot/some	Just a little/nothing
Took money	54%	71	37
Punished	7%	6	8
Both (vol)	3%	4	3
DK (vol)	33%	16	51
Refused (vol)	3%	4	1

If Senator Menendez leaves office before his term expires, should Governor Christie appoint someone who is [rotate] a New Jersey member of the House of Representatives OR is a member of the New Jersey state legislature?

	PID				Gender		Race		Union household?		Age		
	All	Dem	Ind	Repub	Male	Female	White	Non-white	Yes	No	18-34	35-59	60+
State legislature	30%	31	25	33	33	27	29	33	28	31	37	31	23
Congress	24%	30	21	22	24	25	23	27	24	25	24	24	25
Both (vol)	4%	2	6	6	4	4	5	1	5	4	2	4	6
DK (vol)	38%	33	42	37	34	41	38	36	36	37	37	36	40
Refused (vol)	4%	4	6	3	5	4	4	3	7	3	1	5	6

Should that person be a man or woman [rotate]?

	PID				Gender		Race		Union household?		Age		
	All	Dem	Ind	Repub	Male	Female	White	Non-white	Yes	No	18-34	35-59	60+
Man	5%	4	4	7	6	4	4	6	3	6	6	4	6
Woman	17%	28	12	6	10	22	15	20	20	15	20	14	18
Doesn't matter (vol)	69%	59	72	81	75	63	73	62	66	70	62	73	70
DK (vol)	8%	7	10	4	7	9	7	10	9	8	12	8	4
Refused (vol)	2%	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	2	2

I'm going to read you some names. Can you tell me if you have a favorable or unfavorable [rotate] opinion of each person, or if you've never heard of them? [Rotate names]

	Haven't heard of			Favorable			Unfavorable			Unsure		
	Dem	Ind	Repub	Dem	Ind	Repub	Dem	Ind	Repub	Dem	Ind	Repub
Robert Menendez	18%			23%			39%			20%		
	18	25	9	31	22	15	31	33	58	21	20	17
Cory Booker	14%			47%			22%			18%		
	12	18	9	65	37	34	10	21	38	12	27	19

MARCH 2014	Haven't heard of	Favorable	Unfavorable	Unsure (vol)
Robert Menendez	17%	30%	33%	19%
Cory Booker	13%	47%	23%	18%

Exact Question Wording and Order

NJ1 and NJ2 released April 21

ID. Now I'm going ask about some people. If you haven't heard of one of them, just say so. Have you heard of ... [ROTATE LIST]? Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of... [MATCH ROTATION]? Would that be very or somewhat?

ID1 Robert Menendez

ID2 Cory Booker
ID3 through ID5 released April 21

ID1-5 Have you heard of [INSERT]?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No (Skip to next name)

ID1-5 Do you have a favorable or unfavorable [rotate] opinion of [INSERT]?

- 1 Favorable
- 2 Unfavorable
- 8 Don't Know (vol) (skip to next name)
- 9 Refused (vol)

RM1 How much have you heard or read about the federal indictment against Senator Robert Menendez?

- 1 A lot
- 2 Some
- 3 Just a little
- 4 Nothing at all
- 8 DK (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

RM2 Which of the following best describes the reasons for the charges against Senator Menendez? Did he [rotate] take money from a wealthy donor in exchange for political influence OR use his political power to punish someone who would not contribute to his campaign?

- 1 He took money from a wealthy donor in exchange for political influence
- 2 He used his political power to punish someone who would not contribute to his campaign
- 3 Both (vol)
- 8 DK (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

RM3 How likely or unlikely do you think it is that Senator Menendez did what is alleged?

- 1 Very likely
- 2 Somewhat likely
- 3 Somewhat unlikely
- 4 Very unlikely
- 8 DK (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

RM4 Which of the following best describes what you think about Senator Menendez and his indictment? Would you say [rotate] most politicians do the kind of things that Senator Menendez is alleged to have done OR most politicians behave ethically?

- 1 Most do the same
- 2 Most behave ethically
- 3 Both (vol)
- 8 DK (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

RM5 If Senator Menendez leaves office before his term expires, should Governor Christie appoint someone who is [rotate] a New Jersey member of the House of Representatives OR is a member of the New Jersey state legislature?

- 1 State legislature
- 2 Congress
- 3 Both (vol)
- 8 DK (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

RM6 Should that person be a man or a woman?

- 1 Man
- 2 Woman
- 3 Doesn't matter (vol)
- 8 DK (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

Weighted sample characteristics

		New Jersey Residents N = 911; MoE = +/- 3
Gender	<i>Male</i>	48%
	<i>Female</i>	52%
Age	<i>18-34</i>	28%
	<i>35-59</i>	41%
	<i>60+</i>	31%
Race	<i>Refused</i>	1%
	<i>White</i>	61%
	<i>African American</i>	14%
	<i>Hispanic</i>	14%
	<i>Asian</i>	6%
	<i>Other/Refused</i>	4%
Party (with leaners)	<i>Dem</i>	41%
	<i>Ind/DK/Refused</i>	27%
	<i>Repub</i>	31%