

## Stockton Poll: Testa Leads in 1<sup>st</sup> District State Legislative Race

*For immediate release*

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**Galloway, N.J.** – Incumbent Republican Mike Testa leads Democratic challenger Yolanda Garcia Balicki by 13 percentage points in the Legislative District 1 State Senate race, according to a Stockton University Poll released today.

Testa's Republican running mates also lead in the 1<sup>st</sup> District Assembly races. But they are far less known than the senator and are ahead by four to six percentage points in the four-candidate field, according to the poll of 407 likely voters conducted for the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy. The voters will elect two Assembly members in each district. The 1<sup>st</sup> District includes all of Cape May County, most of Cumberland County and a small part of Atlantic County.

In the Senate contest, Testa leads 49% to 36% for Garcia Balicki, with 9% unsure. Among the Assembly candidates, Republican Erik Simonsen leads with 25%, followed by Republican Antwan McClellan with 23%. Democrats John Capizola and Julia Hankerson each garnered 19% support, with 10% unsure. Testa, a Vineland resident, leads Garcia Balicki of Millville in both Cape May and Cumberland counties.

One problem for the Democrats is that few voters know who they are. All three were unfamiliar to 67% to 70% of poll respondents. The Republicans didn't fare much better, as 57% to 60% are unfamiliar with the GOP Assembly candidates.

"These are fairly typical results for Assembly candidates who have not been in office for many years," said John Froomjian, Hughes Center executive director.

The Republicans have the best-known candidate at the top of their ticket. Only 34% said they didn't know Testa, and he was viewed favorably by 45% and unfavorably by 19%.

In the 1<sup>st</sup> District, Republican gubernatorial candidate Jack Ciattarelli edged out incumbent Democratic Gov. Phil Murphy, 46% to 44% - a statistical tie – with 5% not sure. Murphy's ratings were 44% favorable and 49% unfavorable. Murphy's job rating was a statistical wash, with 49% approving strongly or somewhat and 48% disapproving. Ciattarelli was viewed in a positive light by 42% compared to 29% unfavorable, with 22%

unfamiliar with him. (Note: The poll was taken before Tuesday night's second and final gubernatorial debate.)

The COVID-19 pandemic was identified as the election's top issue, said Hughes Center Research Associate Alyssa Maurice. But the nationwide polarization on the subject was evident: 14% were concerned with public health and safety, and 13% were concerned with mask and vaccine mandates. Taxes (12%), property taxes (10%) and the economy (8%) followed as major issues. On mask mandates in schools, 57% supported them while 35% opposed them. The split was closer on vaccine mandates, with 51% in support and 42% opposed.

A 52% majority said they were not satisfied with the efforts of state officials to attract or create jobs in South Jersey. However, 51% were optimistic about the future of the South Jersey economy, with 40% being pessimistic.

Asked who would better handle the issue of taxes, Republicans at 54% bested the Democrats at 34%. On handling the pandemic, 44% named the Democrats to 38% for Republicans.

Full poll results are on the [Stockton Polling Institute website](#).

## **Methodology**

The poll of New Jersey adults screened as likely voters was conducted by the Stockton Polling Institute of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy September 28-October 10, 2021. Live interviewers, who are mostly Stockton University students, called cell phones and landlines from the Stockton University campus. Overall, 78 percent of interviews were conducted on cell phones and 22 percent on landline phones. A total of 407 registered voters were interviewed after being screened as likely voters on criteria including self-professed intention to vote on a scale of 1 to 10, having voted in New Jersey's 2017 election, and how closely voters are following the election. Both cell and landline samples included a mix of voter list and random digit dialing (RDD) sample. Data are weighted based on U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey data for New Jersey on variables of age, race, ethnicity, education level, sex and region. The poll's margin of error is +/- 4.8 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence level. MOE is higher for subsets.

## **About the Hughes Center**

The William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy ([www.stockton.edu/hughescenter](http://www.stockton.edu/hughescenter)) at Stockton University serves as a catalyst for research, analysis and innovative policy solutions on the economic, social and cultural issues facing New Jersey, and promotes the civic life of New Jersey through engagement, education and research. The center is named for the late William J. Hughes, whose distinguished career includes service in the U.S. House of Representatives, Ambassador to Panama and as a Distinguished Visiting Professor at Stockton. The Hughes Center can be found on [YouTube](#), and can be followed on Facebook [@StocktonHughesCenter](#), Twitter [@hughescenter](#) and Instagram [@stockton\\_hughes\\_center](#).

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**Stockton University**

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