

Contact:

**PATRICK MURRAY**

732-263-5858 (office)

732-979-6769 (cell)

*pdmurray@monmouth.edu*

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*For more information:  
Monmouth University Polling Institute  
West Long Branch, NJ 07764  
[www.monmouth.edu/polling](http://www.monmouth.edu/polling)*

## **CHRISTIE LEADS LONEGAN IN GOP PRIMARY**

*Corruption busting image and electability key to support*

With two weeks to go before New Jersey Republicans select their party's nominee for governor, former U.S. Attorney Chris Christie holds a sizable 18 point lead over former Bogota mayor Steve Lonigan. However, the *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll* of likely GOP primary voters found that only 1-in-4 of voters feel they know a great deal about either candidates' specific issue positions. Christie's focus on his corruption-busting image and presumed greater electability in the general election appear to be winning over the state's Republicans, including many staunch conservatives.

Fully half (50%) of likely primary voters intend to vote for Christie on June 2 compared to 32% who support Lonigan. Assemblyman Rick Merkt garners just 2% of the vote, making this effectively a two-man race. The remaining 16% are undecided.

Christie holds a commanding 59% to 25% lead among voters age 60 and older. Lonigan does better with voters under 60 years old, trailing Christie by just 7 points – 44% to 37% – among this group.

Christie's strongest region of the state is Central Jersey, where he holds a 63% to 26% advantage. He also has a 49% to 33% lead in Northeast Jersey, despite Lonigan having a 10 point advantage in his home county of Bergen. Lonigan's best region, relatively speaking, is Northwest Jersey, where he trails Christie by just 9 points, 44% to 35%. Christie's overall lead in this region, arguably the most conservative part of the state, is due largely to a 21 point advantage in his home county of Morris. Christie also leads Lonigan in South Jersey by 45% to 33%.

Most observers have cast this race as a battle between the conservative and moderate wings of the Republican party. Indeed, more GOP voters see Christie as politically moderate (47%) than conservative (35%), whereas a majority say Lonegan is a conservative (56%) rather than a moderate (21%).

In fact, Lonegan is ahead among voters who describe themselves as being “very conservative” – a group which comprises one-third of New Jersey’s likely GOP primary electorate. He wins these staunch conservatives with 51% of the vote, to 36% for Christie. However, this advantage is offset by Christie’s sizable lead among voters who call themselves “somewhat conservative” (56% to 28%) or “moderate” (58% to 18%).

“Chris Christie has solidified his front-runner status in this primary by increasing his appeal to the party’s core conservative base. He may not win this group outright, but he has made enough inroads to leave Steve Lonegan with little room to maneuver before June 2,” said Patrick Murray, director of the Monmouth University Polling Institute.

Currently, 67% of GOP voters have a favorable opinion of Chris Christie, compared to just 12% with an unfavorable view and 21% who have no opinion. Among staunch conservatives, Christie’s favorability rating stands at 60% positive to 20% negative, only slightly lower than his ratings among other conservatives (73% to 6%) and moderates (66% to 11%).

By comparison, 54% of likely Republican voters have a favorable opinion of Lonegan, compared to just 13% with an unfavorable opinion. Another 33% have no opinion. While Steve Lonegan is held in high regard by very conservative Republicans (69% positive to 8% negative), his personal ratings are somewhat lower among other conservatives (52% to 10%) and significantly lower among the party’s self-described moderate electorate (39% to 22%).

By most accounts this primary race has taken a nasty turn, with one radio ad even casting the other candidate as a “loser.” However, it seems that most GOP voters have been immune to this aspect of the campaign, with 56% saying the race has been generally positive compared to 32% who say it has been negative. Overall, only 15% of likely primary voters think that the way this campaign has been conducted will hurt their nominee’s chances in November, while 33% say it will actually help and 42% feel it will have no impact on the eventual outcome.

Whatever animosity there may be in this race, it does not appear to have affected most Republican voters’ intention to rally around their nominee. Supporters of the leading candidates were asked what they would do in the general election if their preferred candidate did not get the nomination. Among Christie supporters, 68% said they would vote for Lonegan in November,

12% would vote for another candidate and 6% would not vote at all. The results are nearly identical for Lonegan supporters – 74% would support Christie in the general election, 10% would vote for a different candidate and 4% would not vote for governor. These results are fairly typical of past voting and turnout patterns among GOP voters.

– *The Issues* –

Most GOP voters say they know something, but not necessarily a great deal about where the two candidates stand on the issues. Just 23% say they know a great deal about Chris Christie’s issue positions and another 54% know something about them. A similar 24% know a great deal about where Steve Lonegan stands on the issues and another 45% know something about his positions.

When asked to name the single most important issue facing New Jersey, nearly half (44%) of likely GOP primary voters say it is property taxes. This issue far outweighs the economy, jobs and cost of living (17%), government spending (14%), other taxes (9%), and corruption (7%) as the state’s most pressing problem. However, only about 1-in-5 voters *strongly* agree that either Christie (18%) or Lonegan (24%) have laid out a clear plan to deal with their top concern. Nearly 6-in-10 – 59% for Christie and 56% for Lonegan – say that neither candidate has laid out a clear plan or that they are unaware of any such plan.

The poll results indicate that Chris Christie’s lead in this race appears to be based largely on his reputation as U.S. Attorney and his perceived electability in November. Fully 2-in-3 GOP primary voters feel that Christie can defeat incumbent Governor Jon Corzine in November (70%) and that he will reduce government corruption (67%). Only 4-in-10 GOP voters feel the same about Steve Lonegan – 39% say he can beat Corzine and 37% feel he will reduce corruption.

Christie also holds smaller advantages over Lonegan in having the right experience for the office (62% to 52%), along with the ability to control spending (57% to 52%), reduce property taxes (49% to 44%), and reduce income taxes (45% to 40%). Lonegan is slightly more likely than Christie to be seen as a “pro-life” candidate (42% to 33%).

<b>GOP ISSUE ADVANTAGE</b>								
<b>Christie will handle...</b>					<b>Lonegan will handle...</b>			
All GOP voters	Christie voters	Lonegan voters	Undecided		All GOP voters	Christie voters	Lonegan voters	Undecided
70%	87	61	58	Defeating Corzine	39%	18	76	36
67%	87	56	49	Corruption	37%	17	69	34
62%	85	36	52	Experience	52%	34	88	42
57%	82	38	40	Control spending	52%	35	91	38
49%	70	28	36	Property taxes	44%	26	82	31
45%	65	27	33	Income taxes	40%	26	74	27
33%	45	21	25	Pro-life	42%	31	71	24

“Winning in November trumps any specific issue positions for Republican primary voters. For example, Mayor Lonegan’s flat tax proposal has a good deal of support within the GOP electorate, but it doesn’t seem to be enough to propel him to victory,” said Murray.

Six-in-10 voters have heard of a flat tax being proposed during this campaign and 43% can credit that proposal to Steve Lonegan. In general, GOP primary voters favor a flat rate income tax system by a more than 2-to-1 margin (47% to 19%), while 34% do not have an opinion on the idea. Among flat tax supporters, Lonegan leads Christie in primary vote preference by 46% to 40%. However, among those who oppose or have no opinion on the flat tax, Christie leads the primary race by 59% to 19%.

Chris Christie’s proposal to require a two-thirds legislative super-majority for any future tax increase is seen by most GOP primary voters as a good idea, if not a great one. Just 28% say this proposal would go a long way to fixing New Jersey’s tax problems, while another 46% say it’s a good idea but won’t really fix the problem. Only 9% say it’s a bad idea that will make matters worse and 17% offer no opinion.

The *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll* was conducted by telephone from May 13-18, 2009 with 706 registered Republicans who have voted in New Jersey primaries in the past and say they are very likely to vote in this year’s June primary. This sample has a margin of error of  $\pm 3.7$  percent. The poll was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute and originally published by the Gannett New Jersey newspaper group (Asbury Park Press, Courier-Post, Courier News, Daily Journal, Daily Record, and Home News Tribune).

### DATA TABLES

*The questions referred to in this release are as follows:*

*(\* Some columns may not add to 100% due to rounding.)*

1. If the Republican primary for governor was held today, would you vote for Chris Christie, Steve Lonegan, or Rick Merkt to be the Republican nominee? [*If Undecided: At this moment do you lean more towards Christie, Lonegan, or Merkt?*] [*NAMES WERE ROTATED*]

(with leaners)	Likely GOP Voters	IDEOLOGY			GENDER		AGE		REGION			
		Strong Conser- vative	Conser- vative	Moderate /Liberal	Male	Female	18-59	60+	North- west	North- east	Central	South
Christie	<b>50%</b>	36%	56%	58%	52%	48%	44%	59%	44%	49%	63%	45%
Lonegan	<b>32%</b>	51%	28%	18%	36%	28%	37%	25%	35%	33%	26%	33%
Merkt	<b>2%</b>	0%	0%	5%	1%	2%	2%	0%	3%	0%	0%	3%
(VOL) Undecided	<b>16%</b>	13%	16%	19%	11%	22%	17%	15%	18%	17%	11%	19%

**Composite Table: Strength of Vote Choice**

If the Republican primary for governor was held today, would you vote for [ROTATE]: Chris Christie, Steve Lonegan, or Rick Merkt to be the Republican nominee? [If Undecided: At this moment do you lean more towards Christie, Lonegan, or Merkt?] Are you very sure about voting for [Name]; or might you change your mind before primary day?

	Likely GOP Voters	IDEOLOGY			GENDER		AGE		REGION			
		Strong Conser- vative	Conser- vative	Moderate /Liberal	Male	Female	18-59	60+	North- west	North- east	Central	South
Sure Christie	<b>30%</b>	24%	34%	32%	35%	26%	25%	39%	27%	31%	39%	25%
Weak Christie	<b>13%</b>	6%	18%	15%	11%	15%	13%	13%	12%	13%	15%	11%
Lean Christie	<b>7%</b>	6%	4%	11%	6%	8%	6%	8%	4%	6%	9%	9%
Undecided-Other	<b>18%</b>	13%	16%	24%	13%	24%	19%	16%	21%	17%	11%	22%
Lean Lonegan	<b>2%</b>	2%	3%	2%	2%	3%	2%	3%	4%	2%	2%	1%
Weak Lonegan	<b>9%</b>	13%	7%	5%	9%	9%	9%	9%	5%	10%	7%	16%
Sure Lonegan	<b>21%</b>	36%	17%	10%	25%	16%	26%	13%	26%	21%	17%	16%

[The following question was asked of Christie and Lonegan supporters only:]

2. If [NAME OF OTHER CANDIDATE] won the primary, what would you do in the general election in November – vote for [NAME OF OTHER CANDIDATE], vote for Jon Corzine, vote for an independent candidate, or not vote for governor at all?

<b>Lonegan Supporters:</b>	
Vote for Christie	<b>74%</b>
Vote for Corzine	<b>3%</b>
Vote for independent	<b>7%</b>
Not vote for governor	<b>4%</b>
(VOL) Don't know	<b>12%</b>

<b>Christie Supporters:</b>	
Vote for Lonegan	<b>68%</b>
Vote for Corzine	<b>6%</b>
Vote for independent	<b>6%</b>
Not vote for governor	<b>6%</b>
(VOL) Don't know	<b>15%</b>

3. Is your general impression of Chris Christie favorable or unfavorable, or don't you really have an opinion?

	Likely GOP Voters	VOTE CHOICE			IDEOLOGY		
		Christie	Lonegan	Undecided	Strong Conservative	Conservative	Moderate/ Liberal
Favorable	<b>67%</b>	95%	50%	44%	60%	73%	66%
Unfavorable	<b>12%</b>	1%	30%	6%	20%	6%	11%
No opinion	<b>21%</b>	5%	20%	49%	19%	21%	23%
Do not recognize	<b>0%</b>	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

4. Is your general impression of Steve Lonegan favorable or unfavorable, or don't you really have an opinion?

	Likely GOP Voters	VOTE CHOICE			IDEOLOGY		
		Christie	Lonegan	Undecided	Strong Conservative	Conservative	Moderate/ Liberal
Favorable	<b>54%</b>	41%	97%	28%	69%	52%	39%
Unfavorable	<b>13%</b>	24%	1%	3%	8%	10%	22%
No opinion	<b>33%</b>	35%	1%	68%	23%	38%	37%
Do not recognize	<b>1%</b>	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	2%

5. Is your general impression of Rick Merkt favorable or unfavorable, or don't you really have an opinion?

	Likely GOP Voters	VOTE CHOICE			IDEOLOGY		
		Christie	Lonegan	Undecided	Strong Conservative	Conservative	Moderate/ Liberal
Favorable	<b>10%</b>	10%	12%	3%	13%	6%	11%
Unfavorable	<b>3%</b>	3%	3%	2%	4%	2%	3%
No opinion	<b>68%</b>	65%	65%	80%	64%	67%	73%
Do not recognize	<b>19%</b>	22%	21%	15%	20%	24%	13%

6. In your opinion, what is the single most important issue facing New Jersey?  
[OPEN-ENDED QUESTION – LIST WAS NOT READ]

	Likely GOP Voters	VOTE CHOICE			IDEOLOGY		
		Christie	Lonegan	Undecided	Strong Conservative	Conservative	Moderate/ Liberal
Property taxes	<b>44%</b>	50%	37%	42%	37%	52%	44%
Income tax	<b>3%</b>	2%	4%	3%	6%	1%	2%
Sales tax	<b>1%</b>	0%	2%	2%	2%	1%	1%
Other tax	<b>5%</b>	6%	4%	5%	5%	3%	3%
Jobs	<b>5%</b>	5%	2%	7%	1%	7%	5%

Cost of living/affordability	2%	3%	1%	3%	2%	1%	4%
The economy/downturn	10%	11%	8%	10%	9%	9%	12%
State budget/Govt. spending	14%	12%	24%	7%	15%	12%	13%
Corruption/government ethics	7%	5%	5%	12%	11%	4%	6%
Health care/prescription costs	1%	2%	0%	0%	0%	2%	1%
Environment	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	2%
Same-sex/Gay marriage	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Immigration	1%	0%	3%	0%	1%	1%	2%
Abortion	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	3%	0%
Education/schools	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%
Gun ownership	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%
Other	2%	2%	4%	2%	5%	1%	1%
Nothing/No answer	2%	0%	4%	2%	4%	1%	2%

7. Do you feel that [CANDIDATE NAME] has laid out a clear plan to deal with this issue, or not? [If YES, ASK: Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?]

	Likely GOP Voters	Property tax #1 issue
Chris Christie		
Yes, strongly	18%	20%
Yes, somewhat	22%	25%
No, has not	33%	30%
(VOL) Don't know	26%	26%

	Likely GOP Voters	Property tax #1 issue
Steve Lonegan		
Yes, strongly	24%	21%
Yes, somewhat	20%	20%
No, has not	28%	29%
(VOL) Don't know	28%	30%

8. Overall, how much do you feel you know about where Chris Christie stands on the issues – a great deal, some, not much, or nothing at all?

	Likely GOP Voters	VOTE CHOICE			IDEOLOGY		
		Christie	Lonegan	Undecided	Strong Conservative	Conservative	Moderate/ Liberal
Great deal	23%	34%	22%	6%	29%	18%	22%
Some	54%	53%	60%	47%	54%	61%	48%
Not much	14%	7%	14%	25%	9%	11%	21%
Nothing at all	6%	4%	2%	17%	4%	8%	7%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	2%	2%	5%	4%	2%	2%

9. Overall, how much do you feel you know about where Steve Lonegan stands on the issues – a great deal, some, not much, or nothing at all?

	Likely GOP Voters	VOTE CHOICE			IDEOLOGY		
		Christie	Lonegan	Undecided	Strong Conservative	Conservative	Moderate/ Liberal
Great deal	24%	20%	46%	6%	39%	14%	21%
Some	45%	46%	51%	34%	42%	52%	38%
Not much	18%	19%	4%	33%	8%	19%	27%
Nothing at all	10%	12%	0%	18%	8%	11%	11%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	2%	0%	8%	2%	4%	3%

10. Focusing on just Chris Christie and Steve Lonegan, please tell me if the following statements describe Christie, Lonegan, both, or neither one. [READ EACH ITEM] – does that describe Christie, Lonegan, both, or neither one?

\* Read this table across rows \*

Likely GOP Voters:	Christie	Lonegan	Both	Neither	(VOL) Don't Know
A. Will reduce property taxes	25%	20%	24%	17%	14%
B. Will reduce income taxes	23%	18%	22%	19%	18%
C. Will control state spending	25%	20%	32%	9%	14%
D. Will reduce government corruption	42%	12%	25%	11%	11%
E. Has the right experience to be governor	29%	19%	33%	7%	11%
F. Holds pro-life beliefs	14%	23%	19%	6%	38%
G. Is able to beat Jon Corzine in November	40%	9%	30%	9%	10%

11. In general, would you describe Chris Christie's political views as conservative, moderate, or liberal?

	Likely GOP Voters	VOTE CHOICE			IDEOLOGY		
		Christie	Lonegan	Undecided	Strong Conservative	Conservative	Moderate/ Liberal
Conservative	<b>35%</b>	51%	17%	28%	40%	40%	24%
Moderate	<b>47%</b>	42%	66%	37%	43%	49%	51%
Liberal	<b>5%</b>	2%	12%	3%	9%	2%	5%
(VOL) Don't know	<b>13%</b>	6%	5%	32%	9%	9%	20%

12. In general, would you describe Steve Lonegan's political views as conservative, moderate, or liberal?

	Likely GOP Voters	VOTE CHOICE			IDEOLOGY		
		Christie	Lonegan	Undecided	Strong Conservative	Conservative	Moderate/ Liberal
Conservative	<b>56%</b>	46%	87%	36%	73%	52%	45%
Moderate	<b>21%</b>	29%	11%	22%	13%	29%	20%
Liberal	<b>4%</b>	7%	1%	2%	3%	4%	5%
(VOL) Don't know	<b>19%</b>	18%	1%	40%	11%	15%	30%

13. Have you heard anything in this campaign about a proposal to create a flat tax, that is a single income tax rate, in New Jersey, or not? [If YES, ASK: Which candidate proposed this?]

	Likely GOP Voters	VOTE CHOICE			IDEOLOGY		
		Christie	Lonegan	Undecided	Strong Conservative	Conservative	Moderate/ Liberal
Yes, Lonegan	<b>43%</b>	35%	69%	26%	55%	39%	35%
Yes, other candidate	<b>2%</b>	2%	4%	2%	6%	1%	1%
Yes, don't recall candidate	<b>15%</b>	19%	9%	17%	10%	18%	18%
No, have not heard	<b>38%</b>	44%	17%	51%	29%	40%	45%
(VOL) Don't know	<b>1%</b>	1%	0%	4%	0%	3%	1%

14. In general, do you favor or oppose a flat tax system for income taxes in New Jersey, or don't you have an opinion on this?

	Likely GOP Voters	VOTE CHOICE			IDEOLOGY		
		Christie	Lonegan	Undecided	Strong Conservative	Conservative	Moderate/ Liberal
Favor	<b>47%</b>	38%	69%	42%	59%	50%	32%
Oppose	<b>19%</b>	23%	12%	17%	9%	16%	34%
No opinion	<b>34%</b>	39%	19%	42%	32%	34%	34%

15. The current system taxes upper income people at higher rates and lower income people at lower rates. A flat tax system would tax all income levels at the same rate or percentage. If New Jersey switched to a flat tax with a rate between 2 and 3 percent, do you think the amount you personally pay in state income taxes would go up, go down, or remain about the same?

	Likely GOP Voters	VOTE CHOICE			IDEOLOGY		
		Christie	Lonegan	Undecided	Strong Conservative	Conservative	Moderate/ Liberal
Go up with a flat tax	<b>13%</b>	15%	8%	15%	9%	14%	16%
Go down with a flat tax	<b>34%</b>	38%	33%	29%	33%	35%	34%
Remain about the same	<b>38%</b>	31%	47%	41%	41%	38%	36%
(VOL) Don't know	<b>15%</b>	16%	11%	16%	18%	12%	13%

16. Chris Christie has proposed that any future tax increases must be approved by a two-thirds "super-majority" vote in the state legislature. If approved, do you think this would go a long way to fixing New Jersey's tax problems, is a good idea but really won't fix the problem, or is a bad idea that will make matters worse?

	Likely GOP Voters	VOTE CHOICE			IDEOLOGY		
		Christie	Lonegan	Undecided	Strong Conservative	Conservative	Moderate/ Liberal
Would go a long way to fixing NJ's tax problems	<b>28%</b>	37%	24%	19%	29%	36%	18%
Is a good idea but won't fix the problem	<b>46%</b>	44%	50%	44%	41%	43%	56%
Is a bad idea that will make matters worse	<b>9%</b>	4%	13%	13%	8%	7%	14%
(VOL) Don't know	<b>17%</b>	15%	14%	24%	22%	14%	11%

17. So far, would you characterize this primary race as being generally positive or negative?

	Likely GOP Voters	VOTE CHOICE			IDEOLOGY		
		Christie	Lonegan	Undecided	Strong Conservative	Conservative	Moderate/ Liberal
Positive	56%	60%	55%	50%	55%	60%	49%
Negative	32%	26%	42%	29%	33%	30%	37%
(VOL) Both	5%	6%	2%	7%	7%	3%	5%
(VOL) Don't know	7%	7%	2%	14%	4%	7%	10%

[The following question was asked only of those who said "Negative" or "Both" to Q17]

18. Who has been more negative – Christie, Lonegan, or both equally?

	Christie	Lonegan	Both equally	(VOL) Don't know
Likely GOP Voters	24%	15%	56%	5%

19. And do you think the way this primary campaign has been conducted will help or hurt the Republican nominee's chances in November, or will it have no impact?

	Likely GOP Voters	VOTE CHOICE			IDEOLOGY		
		Christie	Lonegan	Undecided	Strong Conservative	Conservative	Moderate/ Liberal
Help	33%	33%	34%	35%	35%	39%	27%
Hurt	15%	12%	17%	15%	19%	13%	13%
No impact	42%	46%	43%	35%	38%	41%	49%
(VOL) Don't know	10%	9%	6%	15%	9%	7%	11%

The *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll* was conducted and analyzed by the Monmouth University Polling Institute research staff. The telephone interviews were collected by Braun Research on May 13-18, 2009 with a statewide random sample of 706 Republican voters, drawn from registered voter lists, who have voted in at least once primary in the past two years, and also report they are "very likely" to vote in the June 2, 2009 primary. For results based on this sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling has a maximum margin of plus or minus 3.7 percentage points. Sampling error increases as the sample size decreases, so statements based on various population subgroups, such as separate figures reported by gender or ideology, are subject to more error than are statements based on the total sample. In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

POLL DEMOGRAPHICS				
Likely Republican Voter Sample (weighted)				
<u>Political ideology</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Region</u>	<u>Primary turnout since 2005</u>
33% Very Conservative	52% Male	59% 18-59	32% Northwest	17% One primary
36% Somewhat Conservative	48% Female	41% 60+	24% Northeast	13% Two primaries
28% Moderate			25% Central	18% Three primaries
3% Liberal			19% South	52% Four+ primaries

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