



To: J Street
From: Jim Gerstein
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*2010 Post-Election Survey Summary Findings
National Survey and Pennsylvania Statewide Survey of Jewish Voters*

Election night surveys conducted nationally and in Pennsylvania show that Jewish voters remain a core progressive constituency that strongly supported Democratic candidates despite the national wave that resulted in Republican control of the U.S. House of Representatives.¹ While the national electorate sent a loud message, Jewish voters went in a different direction and gave Democrats a 66 to 31 percent margin in the national vote. In the sharply contested Pennsylvania Senate race, Jewish voters chose Joe Sestak over Pat Toomey by a 71 to 23 percent margin.

As was the case with voters across the country, economic issues dominated this election for Jewish voters. But unlike the rest of the electorate, Jews continue to support President Obama and give him high approval ratings. Similarly, Jews in Pennsylvania viewed Joe Sestak as stronger on a variety of issues, ranging from the economy to national security to Israel. And when it comes to the U.S. role in resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict, Jews are seeking active American leadership even if it means public disagreements with, or exerting pressure on, both the Israelis and Palestinians.

These two surveys provide a unique understanding about how and why American Jews voted as they did in 2010. The Pennsylvania survey focuses primarily on the Senate race, Obama, and the advertising that Toomey supporters ran against Sestak, while the national survey looks at the political dynamics in 2010 but also takes a more expansive look at Jewish attitudes toward America's role in the Arab-Israeli conflict and the controversy over the settlement freeze.

¹ Gerstein | Agne Strategic Communications conducted a national survey of 1,000 Jewish voters and a Pennsylvania statewide survey of 600 Jewish voters on November 2, 2010. The methodology for these surveys is detailed at the end of this memo.



Pennsylvania Survey Primary Takeaways

- ***Despite well-financed attacks on Sestak which were aimed at Jewish voters, Sestak overwhelmingly won the Jewish vote.*** Sestak's 71-23 margin with Jewish voters outpaced Dan Onorato, the Democratic candidate for Pennsylvania Governor, who had a 68-27 margin over Republican Tom Corbett.
- ***Sestak was not damaged by attacks on his positions on military tribunals or Israel.*** Most Jewish voters did not see or hear about the attacks on Sestak, and among those who did, the attacks had little impact. The Khalid Sheikh Mohammed ad had a higher recall (39 percent) – due to its significantly higher advertising buy – than the criticism of Sestak's positions on Israel (30 percent). But more importantly, these attacks on Sestak's support for Israel failed to move a total of 86 percent of Jewish voters who indicated that they were either unaware of the criticism (70 percent) or that it made no difference in their vote even if they were aware of the criticism (16 percent). The remaining voters were split, with 8 percent more likely to vote for Toomey and 5 percent more likely to vote for Sestak as a result of the attacks, and these voters were primarily Republican and Democratic partisans whose votes were not up for grabs.
- ***Jewish voters trusted Sestak to do a better job on both domestic and international issues.*** Sestak was seen as better than Toomey on the economy (61 to 22 percent), Social Security and Medicare (64 to 19 percent), national security (56 to 20 percent), and supporting Israel (41 to 22 percent). Perhaps the most telling comparison is “fighting for the things that are most important to me,” on which Sestak outperformed Toomey 65 to 21 percent.
- ***While the economy continues to struggle, it dominates the political environment for all Americans, including Jewish voters.*** The economy was far and away the most important issue for Jewish voters in Pennsylvania, as 53 percent cited it as one of the top two issues determining their vote. Health care (35 percent) was the only other issue that came within 20 points of the economy. Israel was cited by 8 percent of Pennsylvania Jews and was the 8th most important issue on a list of 12 issues. Iran was the least important issue and cited by 1 percent.



- ***President Obama’s job performance gets high marks from Pennsylvania Jews.*** The President has a 63 percent approval rating for handling his job. This drops to 53 percent approval on his handling of the Arab-Israeli conflict. When examining this gap between Obama’s overall approval and his approval on the conflict, two important dynamics emerge: 1) Jews agree with his policies on the conflict (60 percent), but are divided over whether they like the way he is executing these policies (36 percent like the way he is executing his policy and 24 percent do not like the way he is executing it; only 29 percent disagree with his policies on the Arab-Israeli conflict); 2) Israel and the Middle East is simply not a high priority for most Jewish voters, and Obama’s performance in this area is viewed independently of his overall job performance and personal favorability with Jews.

National Survey Primary Takeaways

- ***Political attitudes are similar to those expressed in the Pennsylvania survey.*** President Obama’s national job approval is 60 percent among American Jews (3 points behind his Pennsylvania Jewish approval), his handling of the Arab-Israeli conflict is 53 percent (same as Pennsylvania), and the national Jewish vote share for Democrats is 66 percent (5 points behind Sestak’s vote and 2 points behind Onorato’s vote). There are larger discrepancies when comparing Democratic Party favorability (56 percent favorable in Pennsylvania and 47 percent nationally) and Obama personal favorability (64 percent in Pennsylvania and 52 percent nationally).
- ***Despite the political environment, Republicans and conservatives have no traction with American Jews.*** The Republican Party’s favorability (18 percent in Pennsylvania and 21 percent nationally) and the Tea Party movement (16 percent in Pennsylvania and 19 percent nationally) put Jewish assessments of the Democrats in perspective, and reveal the tremendous obstacles that conservatives have with the progressive Jewish constituency. Other leading figures on the right, like Glenn Beck (14 percent favorable / 67 percent unfavorable) and Sarah Palin (16 percent favorable / 78 percent unfavorable) who will be strengthened as a result of the 2010 election, are deeply distrusted by American Jews and may effectively drive American Jews away from the Republican Party.
- ***American Jews seek active U.S. leadership to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict.*** Large majorities of Jews (83 percent) want America to play “an active role in helping the parties to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict.” This is an easy position for people to support, and is the first step in a 3-part exercise that measures how the addition of harder tests and language affect Jewish attitudes. It is notable that support remains very strong when people are asked if they would still support active US leadership if it meant public disagreements with (71 percent support) or exerting pressure on (65 percent support) Israelis and Arabs to achieve the compromises required for a peace agreement.



- ***Jews think the U.S. should be an impartial broker in order to achieve peace.*** Moving beyond the 3-part exercise, we pitted two arguments against each other – one stating that the U.S. should act as a “fair and impartial” broker and the other stating that the U.S. should “side with Israel” during negotiations to protect “America’s democratic ally.” The impartial broker argument is favored 50 to 35 percent over the “side with Israel” argument.
- ***Most Jews seek some form of settlement freeze in the West Bank.*** When presented with a generic description of the U.S. request to suspend new construction in Jewish settlements in the West Bank,² 31 percent of Jews think Israel should build without restrictions while a large majority thinks Israel should temporarily extend the partial suspension of new construction (45 percent) or suspend all new construction (24 percent).
- ***Two-state solution language remains very powerful.*** Depending on the framing, arguments for a two-state solution are supported by 79 to 82 percent of American Jews. This language cuts across partisan and denominational divides, and support has remained steady since we first asked the question over two years ago.

Gerstein | Agne Strategic Communications designed the questionnaire for these two surveys conducted November 2, 2010. The national survey of 1,000 self-identified Jewish voters in the 2010 election has a margin of error of +/- 3.1 percent. Gerstein | Agne contracted the research company Mountain West Research Center to administer the survey by email invitation to its web-based panel, which is regularly updated and consists of nearly 900,000 Americans.

The Pennsylvania survey of 600 self-identified Jewish voters has a margin of error of +/- 4 percent and was conducted by telephone, calling a random sample of registered voters with Jewish names and people who self-identify as Jewish in consumer data that has been appended to the voter file. Respondents were re-screened at the beginning of the survey when they were first asked for their religion and then, if they did not identify themselves as Jewish by religion, they were asked again if they considered themselves Jewish.

² As you may know, last year, the United States asked Israel to suspend all new construction of Jewish settlements in the West Bank. Israel decided it would agree to a partial and temporary suspension that would result in no new construction starts for 10 months. When the 10 months expired in September of this year, the U.S. asked Israel to extend its partial and temporary suspension.