

To: Interested Parties

From: GBA Strategies

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New Jersey 05 Baseline Survey Analysis

New Jersey's 5th District represents a unique opportunity for Democrats in this election cycle. This is a district where Donald Trump's candidacy and the broader weakness of the Republican brand have created unmistakable partisan shifts in this traditionally Republican-leaning district. At the same time, incumbent Scott Garrett's extremism has finally caught up to him, with a growing number of voters now viewing him as out of touch with the district.

Our survey¹ of 400 likely voters finds that Garrett has relatively weak marks for a well-entrenched incumbent. While he enjoys solid overall name ID, his profile is split at 40 percent favorable, 39 percent unfavorable. Exploring Garrett's profile in more depth, we find that a majority of voters believe Garrett 'puts his own beliefs ahead of the people he represents' (53 percent), and this includes 55 percent of Independents. Another 47 percent say he is 'out of step with New Jersey,' and 45 percent believe he 'wants to turn back the clock on social issues.'

The partisan electoral trends in this district are unmistakable. While President Obama narrowly lost this district twice, Hillary Clinton leads Donald Trump by 3 points in the four-way vote (43 to 40 percent). Despite a 3-point Republican advantage in party registration among likely voters, Democrats lead in the generic congressional ballot by 5 points (50 to 45 percent). Garrett holds a slim 2-point edge in the initial congressional ballot, winning 46 percent to Democrat Josh Gottheimer's 44 percent, with Libertarian Claudio Belusic at 7 percent. But it is clear from the outset that Garrett has little room to grow.

Gottheimer is relatively well known for a challenger in such a difficult media market; he is within striking distance of the incumbent already and shows clear potential for greater growth as he uses his fundraising advantage over Garrett to communicate directly with voters. After positive profiles simulating both candidates' early communications messages in this campaign, Gottheimer takes the lead in the race and reaches the critical 50 percent threshold (50 to 47 percent) as his partisan base also consolidates and he takes a small lead among Independents. After an attack from Garrett and a response from Gottheimer, the Democrat maintains his lead. Gottheimer is clearly poised to capitalize on Garrett's controversies and to deliver a critical victory for Democrats in November.

¹ GBA Strategies conducted a survey of 400 randomly selected likely voters on August 21-24, 2016. More than 1-in-3 interviews were conducted via cell phone, reflecting the high level of cell phone reliance within this electorate. This survey carries a margin of error of 4.9 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level.