

February 16, 2024

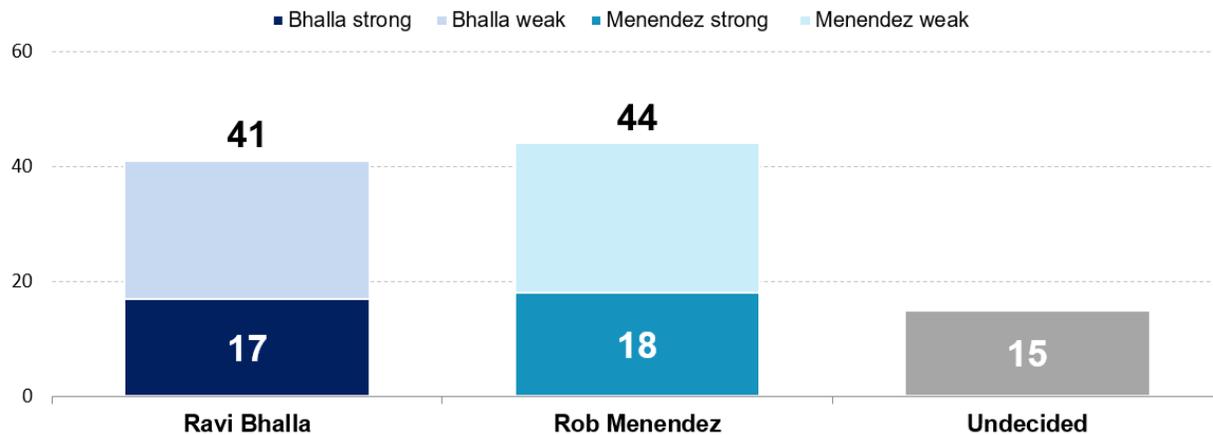
Mayor Ravi Bhalla Well Positioned to Win in New Jersey’s 8th Congressional District

Survey Results

To: Interested Parties
From: Anna Greenberg; GQR

A recent survey of 403 likely primary voters in New Jersey’s 8th Congressional District shows Hoboken Mayor Ravi Bhalla well positioned to beat incumbent Congressman Rob Menendez.¹ The trial heat is statistically tied with Bhalla receiving 41 percent to Menendez’s 44 percent of the vote with 15 percent undecided. Menendez’s share of the vote is likely his ceiling, with his own poll showing the incumbent only receiving 46 percent of the vote among registered Democrats in the district.²

Figure 1. Initial Vote – Ravi Bhalla vs. Rob Menendez



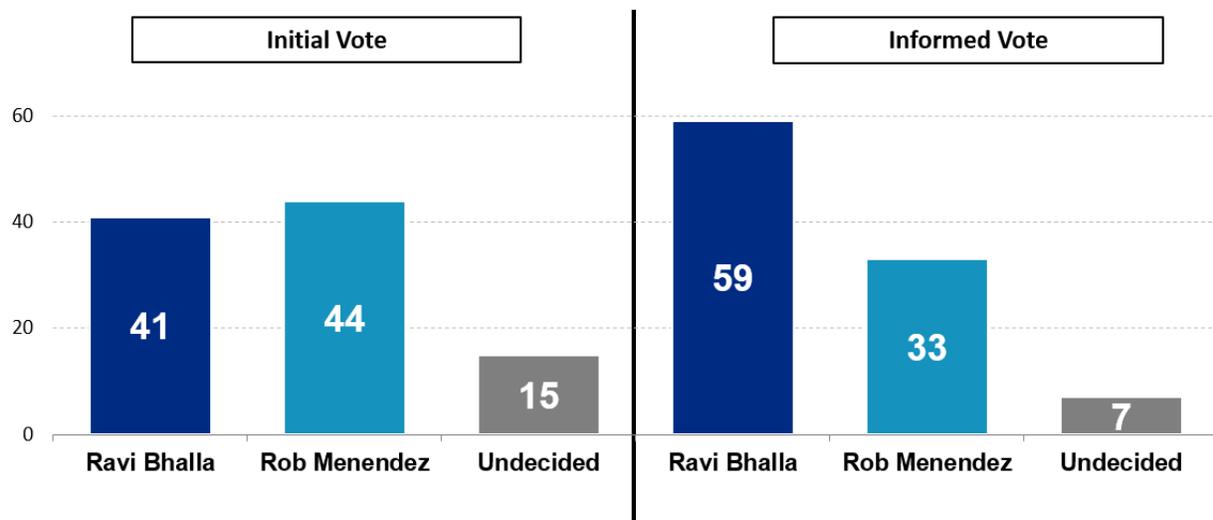
¹ GQR conducted a mixed mode survey among 403 likely Democratic primary voters in New Jersey’s 8th Congressional District from February 1-7, 2024. Live phone interviews made up 92 percent of respondents and text-to-web made up the other 8 percent. Respondents were contacted through the voter file. The data is subject to a margin of error of +/- 4.9 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence interval; the margin of error is higher among subgroups.

²<https://www.insidernj.com/press-release/poll-rob-menendez-leads-race-for-8th-congressional-district-primary/>

There is very little room for Menendez to grow his share of the vote, while Bhalla has tremendous upside. Menendez is known by 87 percent of the voters, but has net negative ratings, 35 percent favorable, 41 percent unfavorable. While voters may confuse Bob and Rob Menendez, the Menendez name remains a significant liability. Bob Menendez is underwater by 33 points (27 percent favorable, 60 percent unfavorable) and fully 73 percent believe he is “guilty of bribery and serving the interests of foreign governments.” Nearly two thirds (64 percent) say “it is time for new leadership in Congress.”

In contrast, Bhalla has room to grow. His name identification stands at 43 percent and voters view him positively, 25 percent favorable versus 8 percent unfavorable. In Hoboken and neighboring Jersey City and Bayonne where voters know him best, his name identification is 54 percent with 37 percent favorable, 8 percent unfavorable. After voters hear positive information about both candidates, Bhalla vaults into the lead garnering 59 percent of the vote to Menendez’s 33 percent. The fact that Bhalla is outraising Menendez means he will have the resources to introduce himself to the rest of the district on his own terms.

Figure 2. Initial Vote and Informed Vote



A methodological note:

We have two competing surveys with an important methodological difference. The Menendez survey was conducted among *registered Democratic voters* – not among voters with a history of voting in the Democratic primary. Even with a competitive Senate primary on the ballot, it is implausible that 100 percent of registered Democrats will participate in this primary. Why does this matter? Registered voters are less informed and less engaged than primary voters; not only would they be less familiar with Bhalla, they would also be less conversant with charges against Bob Menendez. Our poll shows that the most reliable Democratic primary voters are the most hostile to Rob Menendez.