



Written by [Brian Koenig](#) on September 12, 2011

Republican Bob Turner Leads in Race for Weiners Former Seat

Bob Turner (left), former television executive and the Republican candidate vying to secure Anthony Weiner's former congressional seat, has swiped first place in a new poll by Siena College Research Institute. With one day to go before the Sept. 13 special election, Turner holds a six-point lead over Democratic Assemblyman David Weprin, a sharp turn from Siena College's August 10 poll when Weprin led with 48 percent of likely voters over Turner's 42 percent.



"Turner holds a small five-point lead in the Queens portion of the district, where he was trailing by 10 points in the previous Siena College Poll, and he has increased his lead in Brooklyn from six points previously to a now healthy 12-point bulge," said Siena College pollster Steven Greenberg. Turners six-point lead has shocked many pundits and analysts, as the 9th Congressional District has historically been a "blue" district, with a Democrat [holding](#) the reign since 1923.

The disparity in the candidates poll numbers stems from wavering loyalty to the Democratic Party and Turners edge on independent voters. "While Turner has an overwhelming 90-6 percent lead among Republicans, Weprin has only a 63-32 percent lead among Democrats, and Turner has a 38-point lead among likely independent voters," asserted Greenberg. "Currently, Turner enjoys a slightly larger lead among independent voters than Weprin has with Democrats. Weprin needs to find a way to win a larger share of Democratic and independent voters if hes going to turn the race back around in the final days."

Weprin has garnered strong campaign backing by big-name New York Democrats like Sens. Kirsten Gillibrand and Chuck Schumer, as well as Connecticut Sen. Joe Lieberman, but Turner has maintained his competitive edge by placing President Obamas failed policies at the forefront of his campaign. Turner conceded that Obamas falling approval numbers and lack of leadership are making his campaign easier, and he [told](#) Fox News that voters are viewing the election as a "referendum" on the President.

While Weprin has painted his GOP opponent as a Tea Party fanatic who plans to abolish Medicare and Social Security, Turner recently shifted his side of the debate to foreign policy, specifically honing in on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. "Queens and Brooklyn voters of all political parties are sending a terse telegram to President Obama that they are unhappy with his economic agenda and his hostile stance toward Israel," Turner's campaign [said](#) in a statement.



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Analysts note that Turners move to court Jewish voters is canny politics, as Jews account for a third of all registered voters in the district. (Courting the favor of “ethnic” constituencies has long been part and parcel of New York politics.) He has gained support from former New York City Mayor Ed Koch, a Jewish Democrat, who says a Turner candidacy could send a shockwave to the Presidents prosaic stance on Israel. Democratic Assemblyman Dov Hikan tossed an endorsement to Turner last week, also scrutinizing Obamas “reckless” Israeli policy.

“The election of a Republican here in this district, which is so heavily blue, will send a resounding message to the president that his policies on the Israeli question will not be tolerated,” Turner said on former Gov. David Patersons radio program.

Mr. Turner recently launched a new ad campaign, including ads on a number of websites and Jewish newspapers, directed at grappling the conservative Jewish vote in the district. “Obama thinks he can fix the economy on a bus,” [read](#) one of the site banners. “He already threw Israel under it. Its time to put on the brakes and send a clear message to Washington. Vote Bob Turner for Congress this Tuesday September 13.”

Weprin has defended his own Israeli views, assuring voters that Obamas stance on Israel does not reflect his own perception of the enduring Israeli-Palestinian conflict. “I’m very much committed to the security of the state of Israel, and to keep that very special relationship that the United States has had with Israel,” he pledged. “I’ve actually been particularly critical of the president of my own party on that issue, because he made a couple of statements that I thought were wrong.”

Other issues on the Turner campaign table include deficit reduction and entitlement reform. The successful businessman says costly entitlement programs like Medicare and Social Security must be amended, and he believes raising the retirement age for people under 55 should be a pivotal debate in Congress. With entitlement programs that continue to build on the skyrocketing federal deficit, Obamas fiscal and economic policies could also be a critical determinant for Tuesdays special election.

Underdog victories are nothing new in congressional elections, but in the Brooklyn-Queens district, where Democrats outnumber Republicans by three-to-one and where a Democrat has held the seat for almost 90 years a Turner victory would be nothing short of historic.



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