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RENZI MAINTAINS SOLID LEAD IN FIRST CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT RACE

Republican Congressman Rick Renzi has an 11-point lead over Paul Babbitt, his Democratic opponent, among likely voters in the First Congressional District election in Arizona. Renzi is supported by 51 percent of likely voters, while Babbitt is supported by 40 percent of likely voters. One percent of likely voters support John Crockett, the Libertarian Party candidate, and 8 percent remain undecided. These results are consistent with an April 2004 survey which found Renzi leading Babbitt 49 percent to 38 percent among likely voters. Both surveys were conducted by the Social Research Laboratory of Northern Arizona University.

The latest survey was conducted between September 10 and 13 with 410 likely District One voters. Results are accurate within a margin of error of +/- 4.9 percent, at a 95 percent confidence level.

VOTER IMPRESSIONS OF CANDIDATES

Overall, First Congressional District voters approve of the job Rick Renzi has been doing in Congress. Fifty percent of voters rate his performance as either “excellent” or “good.” Almost two-thirds (64%) of likely voters have a positive impression of Rick Renzi, while 27 percent have a negative impression.

Forty-two percent of likely voters have a positive impression of Paul Babbitt; however, 31 percent say they know nothing about him or are unable to form an impression. Ninety-two percent of voters are unfamiliar with Libertarian candidate John Crockett.

Kristi Hagen, Acting Director of the Social Research Laboratory, commented, “Rick Renzi has been raising his profile throughout the congressional district over the past two years. Although Paul Babbitt is well-known in some areas of the district, Babbitt’s challenge before Election Day is to define himself as a viable candidate throughout the First Congressional District. This is a difficult task, as the First Congressional District is one of the largest in the nation and includes a diverse set of interests.”

ISSUES

Generally speaking, First Congressional District voters believe Rick Renzi is better able to handle issues in Congress than Paul Babbitt. Voters think Renzi would do a better job of improving education, improving healthcare, creating jobs, handling foreign policy, and protecting veterans’ benefits. Paul Babbitt is seen as better able to protect the environment.

By a margin of 42 percent to 36 percent, more voters believe Rick Renzi, rather than Paul Babbitt, better understands people like themselves. Almost one-in-five voters (19%) say they do not know which candidate better understands people like themselves.

CANDIDATE PREFERENCE

If the congressional election was held today, 51 percent of First Congressional District voters say they would vote to re-elect Rick Renzi to office. Forty percent would vote for Paul Babbitt. One percent of voters would vote for John Crockett, the Libertarian candidate. Eight percent of voters have yet to make up their minds.

This 11-point lead for Rick Renzi is consistent with findings from an April 2004 survey in which 49 percent of likely voters said they supported Rick Renzi’s reelection and 38 percent preferred Paul Babbitt.

“While Renzi maintains a comfortable lead, the election is not over yet,” said Fred Solop, professor of Political Science at Northern Arizona University. “Seventeen percent of voters are either ‘undecided’ at this point or say they might change their mind about who to vote for. Also,

Babbitt still has money to spend and organizations like the League of Conservation Voters and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee are planning on putting money into the congressional race on Babbitt's behalf. There is time for Babbitt's campaign to pick up steam."

Renzi is holding on to support from members of his party. Three-quarters of Republican voters (76%) say they will vote for Renzi. Babbitt, on the other hand, lacks strong support from within his own party. Fifty-eight percent of Democratic voters say they will vote for Babbitt in the congressional election, but 34 percent say they will vote for Renzi.

Renzi's lead is greater among women than men. Of likely women voters, 54 percent support Renzi, while 40 percent back Babbitt. Among men, 48 percent favor Renzi, as opposed to 40 percent for Babbitt.

Each major candidate is holding on to his ideological base, with Renzi claiming support from conservative voters (77%), and Babbitt receiving backing from liberal voters (70%). Moderates prefer Babbitt, 46% to 43%. Thirty-five percent of district voters define themselves as "conservative," while 13 percent call themselves "liberal."

Younger voters (35 and under) favor Babbitt 54% to 40% over Renzi. Middle-aged voters are more likely to support Renzi (55%), as are voters over 55 (51%).

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Social Research Laboratory, Northern Arizona University

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**ARIZONA FIRST CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT SURVEY
BACKGROUND MEMO**

The *Arizona First Congressional District Survey* was conducted between September 10 and September 13, 2004. A random sample of 410 likely voters living in Arizona's First Congressional District was asked questions regarding the upcoming congressional election. Survey question results are subject to a sampling error of +/- 4.9 percent at a 95 percent confidence level. Sampling error is the probable difference in results between interviewing everyone in the population versus a scientific sample taken from the population. Sampling error does not take into account additional sources of error inherent in any study of public opinion. The data referred to in this release are presented below.

JOB APPROVAL

Rick Renzi currently represents your district in Congress. How good a job has Rick Renzi been doing? Do you think he has been doing an excellent, good, fair or poor job?

| | Excellent | Good | Fair | Poor | Don't Know |
|--------------|------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------|
| Total | 16% | 34% | 31% | 12% | 7% |

IMPRESSIONS OF CANDIDATES

Overall, do you have a very positive, somewhat positive, somewhat negative, or very negative impression of Rick Renzi?

| | Very Positive | Somewhat Positive | Somewhat Negative | Very Negative | Don't Know |
|--------------|----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Total | 23% | 41% | 13% | 14% | 9% |

Overall, do you have a very positive, somewhat positive, somewhat negative, or very negative impression of Paul Babbitt?

| | Very Positive | Somewhat Positive | Somewhat Negative | Very Negative | Don't Know |
|-------|----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Total | 14% | 28% | 14% | 6% | 31% |

Overall, do you have a very positive, somewhat positive, somewhat negative, or very negative impression of John Crockett?

| | Very Positive | Somewhat Positive | Somewhat Negative | Very Negative | Don't Know |
|-------|----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Total | 1% | 4% | 2% | 1% | 92% |

ISSUES

Now I am going to read a list of issues. Please tell me which candidate you think would do a better job handling each issue: Paul Babbitt, John Crockett, or Rick Renzi? [rotate names]

| | Paul Babbitt | John Crockett | Rick Renzi | Don't Know |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Improving education | 37% | 2% | 40% | 21% |
| Protecting the environment | 42% | 2% | 36% | 20% |
| Improving healthcare | 34% | 2% | 40% | 25% |
| Creating jobs | 32% | 2% | 41% | 26% |
| Handling foreign policy | 26% | 1% | 45% | 28% |
| Protecting veterans' benefits | 28% | 1% | 44% | 28% |

Which candidate better understands people like you?

| | Paul Babbitt | John Crockett | Rick Renzi | Don't Know |
|-------|---------------------|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Total | 36% | 2% | 42% | 19% |

CANDIDATE PREFERENCE

If the Congressional election were held today, would you vote for Paul Babbitt, the Democratic candidate, John Crockett, the Libertarian candidate, or Rick Renzi, the Republican candidate? [rotate names]

| | Paul Babbitt | John Crockett | Rick Renzi | Don't Know |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Total | 40% | 1% | 51% | 8% |
| <i>Gender</i> | | | | |
| --Female | 40% | --- | 54% | 7% |
| --Male | 40% | 3% | 48% | 9% |
| <i>Party Affiliation</i> | | | | |
| --Democrat | 58% | 1% | 34% | 8% |
| --Republican | 15% | 1% | 76% | 8% |
| --Independent/ Other | 51% | 4% | 39% | 6% |
| <i>Ideology</i> | | | | |
| --Conservative | 17% | ---- | 77% | 7% |
| --In-between | 46% | 3% | 43% | 8% |
| --Liberal | 70% | --- | 20% | 10% |
| <i>Age</i> | | | | |
| --18 – 35 | 54% | 3% | 40% | 3% |
| --36 – 55 | 36% | 1% | 55% | 8% |
| --56 + | 41% | 1% | 51% | 8% |
| <u>PAST SURVEY</u> | | | | |
| April 7-11, 2004 | 38% | --- | 49% | 12% |