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Poll finds Adler-Runyan race close

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The race between freshman Democratic U.S. Rep. John Adler and Republican newcomer Jon Runyan, a former Eagles tackle, remains close despite Adler's numerical lead, according to a Richard Stockton College poll released Monday.

The poll's sponsor cautions that not much should be made of Adler's advantage of 38 percent to Runyan's 30 percent.

"There's no clear person ahead, even though we see 8 points, because of that margin of error. And it's only September," said Sharon Schulman, executive director of Stockton's William J. Hughes Center, which sponsored the poll. The margin of error is plus or minus 5 percentage points.

A third-party candidate, Peter DeStefano, who identifies himself with the phrase "NJ Tea Party," had 7.6 percent of the vote. However, tea party groups in the district, which spans Burlington and Ocean Counties and includes Cherry Hill in Camden County, have endorsed Runyan.

The poll of 1,200 likely South Jersey voters, conducted between Sept. 21 and 23, had an overall margin of error of plus or minus 2.9 percentage points.

In sections covering congressional districts, 400 likely voters were questioned.

Veteran incumbents U.S. Rep. Rob Andrews, a Camden County Democrat, and U.S. Rep. Frank LoBiondo, a Republican who represents southern Shore counties, each had 59 percent of the vote against their challengers.

The poll queried all 1,200 respondents on the biggest issues facing them, and 66 percent chose jobs and the economy as their top issue. Another 27 percent said it was health care.

Voters "are saying, 'Feel my pain.' That's their biggest concern," Schulman said. Interestingly, it is not helping the tea party at this time, she said.

As for the Adler-Runyan race, the poll gives a glimpse of the role of independent DeStefano's

