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CORZINE RE-ELECTION FACES TOUGH ROAD

Voters want the candidates to address property tax issue

In a state that favors Democrats, the Republicans are hanging tight in their bid to oust incumbent Governor Jon Corzine. The latest *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll* finds former U.S. Attorney Chris Christie with a small lead over Corzine, while the incumbent has a slight advantage over former Bogota mayor Steve Lonegan. But voters seem to be wondering why no one is talking about their number one issue – property taxes.

Governor Corzine's job performance rating currently stands at 40% approve to 49% disapprove, a slight improvement from the 34%-51% rating he held in February. Currently, 43% of voters have a personally favorable view of Jon Corzine compared to 47% who have an unfavorable view. These numbers are nowhere near where an incumbent wants to be at this stage in a re-election campaign.

In head-to-head match-ups with the two leading GOP contenders, Jon Corzine trails Chris Christie by 39% to 35% among registered voters. However, Corzine leads Steve Lonegan by 37% to 33%.

More voters have a favorable rather than unfavorable opinion of the GOP candidates. Christie's personal rating is 41% favorable to 16% unfavorable, with another 24% who have no opinion and 19% who do not recognize his name. Lonegan's personal rating is 28% favorable to 10% unfavorable, with another 24% who have no opinion and 38% who do not recognize his name.

Among Republican voters only, Chris Christie stands at 56%-9% favorability with 88% overall name recognition. In January, Christie's rating among GOP voters was 69%-3% with 89% name recognition. Steve Lonegan now stands at 49%-7% favorability with 77% overall

name recognition among Republican voters. This is a marked increase in both positive opinion and overall name recognition from January when the former Bogota mayor had an 18%-9% rating with only 43% name recognition among GOP voters.

“For a Democratic incumbent in a blue state like New Jersey, Jon Corzine is certainly not in an enviable position.” said Patrick Murray, director of the Monmouth University Polling Institute. “However, the Republican primary campaign has recently taken a nasty turn which may have stalled Chris Christie’s momentum and boosted Steve Lonegan’s profile.”

The poll asked voters to name the top issues they would like the gubernatorial candidates to address. Taxes – particularly property taxes (48%) – are clearly the New Jersey electorate’s chief concern. This issue is named by more voters than either the economy (33%), jobs (14%), education (18%) or health care (13%).

Despite the voters’ express concern over this issue, the candidates appear to be silent on it. Just over 1-in-10 voters (13%) say they have heard of a specific property tax proposal from any of the GOP candidates now running. Among Republican voters, this number goes up only slightly to 19%.

Nearly half (47%) of all voters say they would be more likely to vote for the eventual Republican nominee if he promised to reduce property taxes. This includes 72% of Republicans, 45% of independents, and 32% of Democrats who say they would give the GOP nominee more consideration if he made a property tax pledge. Only 7% say they would be less inclined to vote for a candidate who made such a promise, another 36% say it would have no effect on their vote, and 7% say their support would depend on the specific proposal.

At the same time, the vast majority of voters say they would view any pledge to reduce property taxes as more of an election year promise just to get elected (68%) rather than a serious intention to change the property tax system (21%). Perhaps one of the more interesting findings of the poll is that even among those who say such a pledge would be an empty promise, nearly 4-in-10 (38%) still say they are more inclined to vote for the Republican if he made such a promise.

“The state’s property tax burden is clearly the top concern among voters, but it seems to be absent from the current campaign. It’s probably a sign of just how desperate voters have become that, even if they won’t believe the promises, they would still like to see some sign that the candidates acknowledge the state’s top issue,” said Murray.

The poll also asked voters about supporting an independent candidate for governor this year and found that 12% are very likely to consider doing this, including 16% of independents, 11% of Democrats, and 7% of Republicans. Another 26% say they are somewhat likely to consider an independent candidate for governor and the remainder say they are not too (20%) or not at all (38%) likely.

“Traditionally, independent candidates fare very poorly in New Jersey elections. Given the two-party hold on the process and a prohibitively expensive media market, an independent candidate would need to enter the field with instant name recognition to make a decent run,” said Murray.

Former state DEP Commissioner Chris Daggett recently announced his intention to run for governor as an independent candidate. At this stage of the campaign, about 3-in-10 voters (31%) recognize his name, although only 1-in-10 are familiar enough with him to say whether they have a favorable (5%) or unfavorable (6%) opinion.

The *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll* was conducted by telephone with 690 New Jersey registered voters from April 23-27, 2009. This sample has a margin of error of ± 3.7 percent. The poll was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute and originally published by the Gannett New Jersey newspaper group (Asbury Park Press, Courier-Post, Courier News, Daily Journal, Daily Record, and Home News Tribune).

DATA TABLES

The questions referred to in this release are as follows:

(Some columns may not add to 100% due to rounding.)*

[QUESTIONS 1 AND 2 WERE ROTATED]

- As you may know, there will be an election for governor of New Jersey this November. If the election for governor was held today between Jon Corzine the Democrat and Chris Christie the Republican, for whom would you vote? [NAMES WERE ROTATED]

	Registered Voters	PARTY ID			REGION		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	North	Central	South
Corzine	35%	57%	31%	7%	42%	28%	30%
Christie	39%	20%	39%	69%	34%	44%	40%
(VOL) Other candidate	2%	1%	1%	4%	1%	1%	4%
(VOL) Neither, won't vote	7%	7%	7%	7%	3%	10%	10%
(VOL) Don't know	18%	15%	23%	14%	20%	16%	16%
Unwtd N	690	260	233	178	323	163	195

TREND:	April 2009	January 2009
Corzine	35%	38%
Christie	39%	36%
(VOL) Other candidate	2%	2%
(VOL) Neither, won't vote	7%	4%
(VOL) Don't know	18%	21%
Unwtd N	690	413

2. If the election for governor was held today between Jon Corzine the Democrat and Steve Lonegan the Republican, for whom would you vote? [NAMES WERE ROTATED]

	Registered Voters	PARTY ID			REGION		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	North	Central	South
Corzine	37%	60%	32%	10%	41%	35%	33%
Lonegan	33%	13%	32%	65%	29%	34%	38%
(VOL) Other candidate	3%	2%	4%	5%	2%	4%	5%
(VOL) Neither, won't vote	6%	7%	7%	4%	5%	6%	7%
(VOL) Don't know	20%	17%	25%	16%	23%	20%	17%
Unwtd N	690	260	233	178	323	163	195

TREND:	April 2009	January 2009
Corzine	37%	45%
Lonegan	33%	29%
(VOL) Other candidate	3%	0%
(VOL) Neither, won't vote	6%	5%
(VOL) Don't know	20%	20%
Unwtd N	690	413

3. There will also be independent candidates on the ballot in November. Usually, very few people vote for independent candidates. How likely are you to consider voting for an independent candidate for governor this year – very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely, or not at all likely?

	Registered Voters	PARTY ID			REGION		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	North	Central	South
Very likely	12%	11%	16%	7%	10%	14%	11%
Somewhat likely	26%	23%	31%	23%	25%	24%	26%
Not too likely	20%	19%	21%	22%	21%	23%	16%
Not at all likely	38%	43%	25%	45%	38%	33%	42%
(VOL) Don't know	5%	4%	7%	3%	5%	5%	4%
Unwtd N	690	260	233	178	323	163	195

4. Do you approve or disapprove of the job Jon Corzine is doing as governor?

	Registered Voters	PARTY ID			REGION		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	North	Central	South
Approve	40%	58%	34%	19%	46%	34%	34%
Disapprove	49%	32%	56%	71%	43%	56%	54%
(VOL) Don't know	11%	11%	10%	10%	11%	10%	12%
Unwtd N	690	260	233	178	323	163	195

TREND: Registered voters only	April 2009	February 2009	January 2009	October 2008	Sept 2008	July 2008	April 2008	March 2008	January 2008	October 2007	July 2007	April 2007	February 2007	Sept 2006	July 2006	April 2006
Approve	40%	34%	43%	38%	40%	39%	36%	34%	42%	47%	46%	52%	44%	44%	40%	33%
Disapprove	49%	51%	40%	45%	49%	47%	53%	55%	46%	34%	36%	30%	36%	41%	41%	38%
(VOL) Don't know	11%	15%	17%	18%	11%	14%	11%	11%	12%	19%	17%	17%	20%	16%	19%	29%
Unwtd N	690	721	413	900	709	889	720	719	698	688	678	668	681	663	670	652

5. I'm going to read you the names of some potential candidates for governor. Please tell me if your general impression of each is favorable or unfavorable, or if you don't really have an opinion. If you don't recognize a name, just let me know. [NAMES WERE ROTATED]

Jon Corzine

	Registered Voters	PARTY ID			REGION		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	North	Central	South
Favorable	43%	62%	37%	21%	49%	36%	40%
Unfavorable	47%	27%	52%	72%	41%	52%	51%
No opinion	9%	10%	10%	7%	9%	11%	9%
Do not recognize	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%
Unwtd N	690	260	233	178	323	163	195

TREND:	April 2009	January 2009	July 2008	September 2006
Favorable	43%	49%	43%	46%
Unfavorable	47%	38%	44%	30%
No opinion	9%	12%	10%	24%
Do not recognize	0%	0%	2%	n/a
Unwtd N	690	413	889	630

Chris Christie

	Registered Voters	PARTY ID			REGION		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	North	Central	South
Favorable	41%	30%	44%	56%	38%	50%	37%
Unfavorable	16%	22%	16%	9%	16%	18%	14%
No opinion	24%	24%	23%	23%	25%	19%	26%
Do not recognize	19%	24%	18%	12%	21%	13%	22%
Unwtd N	690	260	233	178	323	163	195

TREND:	April 2009	January 2009	July 2008
Favorable	41%	42%	30%
Unfavorable	16%	12%	9%
No opinion	24%	25%	25%
Do not recognize	19%	21%	37%
Unwtd N	690	413	889

Steve Lonegan

	Registered Voters	PARTY ID			REGION		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	North	Central	South
Favorable	28%	16%	29%	49%	25%	30%	30%
Unfavorable	10%	14%	8%	7%	9%	13%	9%
No opinion	24%	21%	26%	21%	25%	25%	21%
Do not recognize	38%	48%	38%	23%	41%	31%	39%
Unwtd N	690	260	233	178	323	163	195

TREND:	April 2009	January 2009
Favorable	28%	12%
Unfavorable	10%	11%
No opinion	24%	20%
Do not recognize	38%	58%
Unwtd N	690	413

Rick Merk

	Registered Voters	PARTY ID			REGION		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	North	Central	South
Favorable	6%	10%	3%	6%	5%	7%	7%
Unfavorable	4%	5%	2%	4%	5%	2%	4%
No opinion	17%	14%	18%	15%	14%	22%	17%
Do not recognize	73%	71%	77%	74%	77%	69%	72%
Unwtd N	690	260	233	178	323	163	195

TREND:	April 2009	January 2009
Favorable	6%	5%
Unfavorable	4%	6%
No opinion	17%	13%
Do not recognize	73%	76%
Unwtd N	690	413

Chris Daggett

	Registered Voters	PARTY ID			REGION		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	North	Central	South
Favorable	5%	6%	3%	7%	5%	4%	6%
Unfavorable	6%	6%	6%	6%	5%	7%	6%
No opinion	20%	18%	23%	17%	18%	24%	19%
Do not recognize	69%	71%	68%	71%	71%	66%	70%
Unwtd N	690	260	233	178	323	163	195

6. In your opinion, what are the most important one or two issues that the candidates for governor should talk about? [Note: Results add to more than 100% because multiple responses were accepted]

	Registered Voters	PARTY ID			REGION		
		Dem	Ind	Rep	North	Central	South
Property taxes	48%	38%	51%	58%	44%	52%	50%
Income tax	12%	6%	14%	20%	13%	16%	8%
Sales tax	7%	4%	6%	13%	4%	7%	10%
Other tax	6%	5%	8%	8%	7%	3%	8%
Jobs	14%	19%	14%	9%	16%	13%	11%
Cost of living/affordability	3%	3%	3%	3%	2%	4%	3%
The economy/downturn in general	33%	36%	37%	22%	36%	36%	26%
Development/building boom	1%	3%	0%	2%	2%	1%	1%
Roads/traffic/congestion	2%	3%	2%	0%	2%	2%	2%
Health care/prescription drug costs	13%	18%	11%	7%	14%	9%	13%
Environment	5%	6%	5%	3%	5%	6%	3%
Same-sex/Gay marriage	2%	4%	0%	1%	3%	1%	2%
Immigration	2%	0%	3%	4%	1%	1%	4%
Corruption/government ethics	4%	1%	5%	5%	4%	3%	4%
Education/schools	18%	19%	17%	17%	19%	17%	17%
State Budget/Govt spending	5%	3%	6%	7%	4%	6%	6%
Crime, police	2%	1%	5%	2%	3%	3%	1%
Other	6%	7%	5%	5%	6%	3%	8%
(VOL) Don't know	4%	5%	2%	4%	3%	2%	7%
Unwtd N	690	260	233	178	323	163	195

TREND:	April 2009	January 2009
Property taxes	48%	38%
Income tax	12%	6%
Sales tax	7%	4%
Other tax	6%	2%
Jobs	14%	19%
Cost of living/affordability	3%	3%
The economy/downturn in general	33%	35%
Development/building boom	1%	1%
Roads/traffic/congestion	2%	2%
Health care/prescription drug costs	13%	14%
Environment	5%	2%
Same-sex/Gay marriage	2%	1%
Immigration	2%	3%
Corruption/government ethics	4%	6%
Education/schools	18%	18%
State Budget/Govt spending	5%	6%
Crime, police	2%	2%
Other	6%	5%
(VOL) Don't know	4%	5%
Unwtd N	690	413

7. Have you heard or not heard of specific plans from any of the Republican candidates about how they would reduce property taxes?

	Registered	PARTY ID			REGION		
	Voters	Dem	Ind	Rep	North	Central	South
Yes, have heard	13%	9%	13%	19%	12%	15%	14%
No, have not heard	84%	88%	85%	79%	87%	82%	84%
(VOL) Don't know	2%	3%	2%	3%	2%	4%	2%
Unwtd N	690	260	233	178	323	163	195

8. If the Republican nominee promised to reduce property taxes in New Jersey – would you be more likely or less likely to vote for him in November, or would it have no effect on your vote for governor?

	Registered	PARTY ID			REGION		
	Voters	Dem	Ind	Rep	North	Central	South
More likely	47%	32%	45%	72%	47%	49%	47%
Less likely	7%	15%	2%	1%	7%	5%	8%
No effect	36%	39%	46%	22%	36%	40%	35%
(VOL) Depends	7%	10%	5%	4%	8%	7%	6%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	3%	2%	2%	2%	0%	5%
Unwtd N	690	260	233	178	323	163	195

9. And if the Republican nominee promised to reduce property taxes – do you think this would be more a serious intention to change the system or more an election year promise just to get elected?

	Registered	PARTY ID			REGION		
	Voters	Dem	Ind	Rep	North	Central	South
Serious intention to change the system	21%	12%	19%	37%	20%	25%	19%
Election year promise just to get elected	68%	77%	71%	52%	70%	65%	68%
(VOL) Both	3%	2%	2%	4%	3%	2%	2%
(VOL) Depends	4%	4%	3%	4%	3%	4%	6%
(VOL) Don't know	4%	4%	5%	3%	4%	4%	5%
Unwtd N	690	260	233	178	323	163	195

The *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll* was conducted and analyzed by the Monmouth University Polling Institute research staff. The telephone interviews were collected by Braun Research on April 23-27, 2009 with a statewide random sample of 690 registered voters. For results based on this sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling has a maximum margin of plus or minus 3.7 percentage points. Sampling error increases as the sample size decreases, so statements based on various population subgroups, such as separate figures reported by gender or party identification, are subject to more error than are statements based on the total sample. In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

POLL DEMOGRAPHICS			
Registered Voter Sample (weighted)			
41% Dem	49% Male	25% 18-34	71% White
33% Ind	51% Female	44% 35-54	11% Black
26% Rep		31% 55+	12% Hispanic
			6% Asian/Other

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