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NEW JERSEY TO OBAMA: SOME ACCOMPLISHMENTS, MORE TO DO

Positive Job Rating, but Policies Seen as Favoring Wall Street over Middle Class

New Jersey continues to give President Barack Obama net positive job approval ratings and the public has more confidence in his leadership than in either party's Congressional leadership. But the latest *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll* also found that more New Jerseyans believe that Wall Street bankers rather than middle class families have been the prime beneficiaries of Obama's first year in office.

Overall, 55% of New Jersey residents approve of the job President Obama is doing while 36% disapprove. This is better than the national average of 48% approve to 49% disapprove according to the *Pollster.com* website. The president garners approval from 83% of Democrats, 49% of independents, and just 15% of Republicans in the Garden State. Obama's job rating is down somewhat from the 59% approve to 29% disapprove numbers he received from Garden State voters in July 2009.

While a majority approve of the job he has done, only 4-in-10 say the president has accomplished either a great deal (10%) or a good amount (31%) during his first year in office. A plurality (41%) feel that he has not accomplished very much and another 16% say he has done nothing at all.

Most New Jerseyans believe that things will turn around, though, with 59% saying that Obama's second year will be better than his first. Only 7% think he will do worse during the coming twelve months and 33% believe his performance will be about the same. Among the large number of people who say he has accomplished "not very much" during his initial year, a majority of 52% believe he will do better in his second.

The poll also found that Barack Obama as a person is viewed favorably by 61% of New Jerseyans and unfavorably by 26%. This compares to the *Pollster.com* national average of 53% favorable to 41% unfavorable.

“President Obama still has a decent amount of good will in the Garden State. But it’s important for him to turn around perceptions and focus on middle class concerns to prevent his approval rating from slipping further,” said Patrick Murray, director of the Monmouth University Polling Institute.

It appears that one major thing holding down Obama’s job ratings is the perception that his policies are not helping the middle class. The poll asked New Jersey residents to assess how much the president’s policies have helped Wall Street bankers, health insurers, and poor, wealthy, and middle class families. Most believe that the middle class has fared the worst while Wall Street has done the best.

Specifically, 51% of Garden State residents say that President Obama’s policies so far have benefited Wall Street bankers a lot, while only 19% feel this group has not been helped at all. One-third (33%) of the state feel that health insurance companies have benefited a lot from the president’s policies while 26% say this group has not been helped at all.

Among families at different income levels, 20% say that wealthy families have been helped a lot by the president’s policies, compared to 38% who say they have not been helped at all. Similarly, 17% of state residents feel that poor families have benefited a lot, while 33% say the poor have not been helped at all.

Bringing up the rear among beneficiaries of the administration’s policies are middle class families. Only 9% feel that this group has benefited a lot from the president’s policies so far and 43% say the middle class has not benefited at all. This is especially true among the all-important group of independent voters, where a majority of 52% say that the middle class has seen no benefit from Barack Obama’s term so far. Two-thirds (68%) of Republicans also feel this way, but just 20% of Democrats agree.

“For most New Jerseyans, it appears that middle class families fell to the bottom of the president’s priority list during his first year in office,” said Murray.

Overall, just 31% of New Jersey residents are satisfied with the way things are going in Washington right now, while the large majority (61%) are dissatisfied. This is a marked decline from the 41% who were satisfied and 48% who were dissatisfied with D.C. politics in a July 2009 poll of Garden State voters.

A positive note for the president is that more New Jerseyans have confidence in him than they do for either party in Congress. The poll found that 51% have either a great deal (25%) or good amount (26%) of confidence that President Obama will make the right decisions for the country’s future. Another 47% have just some (27%) or no confidence (20%).

By comparison, only 29% have at least a good amount of confidence in the Democrats in Congress and 24% have a similar level of confidence in the Republicans in Congress to do what is right for the country.

“The president shouldn’t make the mistake of thinking that low public regard for Congress means they will shoulder the blame for failed policies. When it comes to making progress on issues that are important to New Jerseyans and other Americans, the buck most certainly stops at the president’s desk,” said Murray.

The *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll* was conducted by telephone with 803 New Jersey adults from January 27 to 31, 2010. This sample has a margin of error of ± 3.5 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.)

1. Do you approve or disapprove of the job Barack Obama is doing as president?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			INCOME		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K
Approve	55%	53%	64%	83%	49%	15%	61%	55%	45%
Disapprove	36%	38%	26%	9%	41%	77%	29%	37%	43%
(VOL) Don't know	9%	9%	9%	8%	10%	8%	10%	8%	12%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	803	716	87	251	329	195	173	273	259

TREND: <i>Registered voters only</i>	February 2010	October 2009	July 2009
Approve	53%	54%	59%
Disapprove	38%	33%	29%
(VOL) Don't know	9%	14%	12%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	716	785	792

2. Is your general impression of Barack Obama favorable or unfavorable, or don't you really have an opinion about him?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			INCOME		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K
Favorable	61%	59%	73%	87%	58%	22%	67%	61%	57%
Unfavorable	26%	28%	11%	7%	26%	59%	21%	25%	32%
No opinion/Not heard enough	13%	13%	16%	6%	16%	19%	12%	14%	11%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	803	716	87	251	329	195	173	273	259

TREND: <i>Registered voters only</i>	February 2010	October 2008	September 2008	July 2008	April 2008
Favorable	59%	62%	60%	56%	58%
Unfavorable	28%	23%	23%	19%	27%
No opinion	13%	15%	17%	26%	15%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	716	900	689	874	720

3. Overall, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way things are currently going in Washington?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			INCOME		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K
Satisfied	31%	29%	43%	50%	26%	9%	33%	36%	21%
Dissatisfied	61%	64%	46%	42%	67%	85%	55%	59%	74%
(VOL) Both	3%	3%	2%	5%	3%	0%	4%	2%	3%
(VOL) Don't know	5%	4%	9%	3%	5%	6%	8%	3%	2%
Unwtd N	803	716	87	251	329	195	173	273	259

TREND: Registered voters only	February 2010	July 2009
Satisfied	29%	41%
Dissatisfied	64%	48%
(VOL) Both	3%	6%
(VOL) Don't know	4%	5%
Unwtd N	716	792

4. How much confidence do you have in Obama to make the right decisions for the country's future: a great deal of confidence, a good amount, just some, or none at all?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			INCOME		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K
Great deal	25%	23%	39%	49%	16%	1%	36%	24%	19%
Good amount	26%	27%	20%	36%	24%	8%	26%	29%	24%
Just some	27%	29%	20%	10%	37%	42%	20%	29%	28%
None at all	20%	21%	17%	3%	22%	46%	17%	17%	27%
(VOL) Don't know	1%	1%	4%	1%	0%	3%	1%	1%	1%
Unwtd N	803	716	87	251	329	195	173	273	259

[QUESTIONS 5 AND 6 WERE ROTATED]

5. How much confidence do you have in the Republicans in Congress to make the right decisions for the country's future: a great deal of confidence, a good amount, just some, or none at all?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			INCOME		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K
Great deal	6%	6%	3%	5%	3%	13%	9%	4%	5%
Good amount	18%	18%	19%	8%	15%	41%	20%	20%	19%
Just some	45%	44%	50%	45%	52%	38%	43%	49%	44%
None at all	28%	29%	26%	41%	27%	7%	24%	26%	32%
(VOL) Don't know	2%	2%	2%	2%	3%	0%	4%	1%	0%
Unwtd N	803	716	87	251	329	195	173	273	259

6. How much confidence do you have in the Democrats in Congress to make the right decisions for the country's future: a great deal of confidence, a good amount, just some, or none at all?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			INCOME		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K
Great deal	9%	8%	10%	20%	1%	0%	15%	9%	3%
Good amount	20%	19%	26%	36%	12%	5%	21%	23%	16%
Just some	41%	41%	44%	35%	49%	41%	38%	45%	39%
None at all	28%	29%	18%	7%	34%	54%	22%	22%	40%
(VOL) Don't know	2%	2%	2%	2%	4%	0%	4%	1%	2%
Unwtd N	803	716	87	251	329	195	173	273	259

7. Obama has been president for one year. Would you say he has accomplished a great deal during that time, a good amount, not very much, or nothing?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			INCOME		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K
Great deal	10%	11%	5%	17%	7%	1%	12%	9%	9%
Good amount	31%	29%	41%	51%	27%	8%	38%	32%	25%
Not very much	41%	42%	37%	26%	47%	54%	37%	44%	43%
Nothing	16%	17%	14%	5%	18%	34%	11%	14%	23%
(VOL) Don't know	1%	1%	3%	1%	1%	3%	2%	2%	0%
Unwtd N	803	716	87	251	329	195	173	273	259

8. Do you think the second year of his term will be better, worse, or about the same as his first year?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			INCOME		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K
Better	59%	57%	66%	81%	55%	26%	62%	60%	53%
Worse	7%	7%	5%	3%	6%	14%	4%	7%	9%
About the same	33%	35%	25%	15%	38%	58%	32%	32%	37%
(VOL) Don't know	2%	1%	3%	1%	2%	2%	2%	1%	1%
Unwtd N	803	716	87	251	329	195	173	273	259

9. How much have each of the following groups benefited from President Obama's policies so far [READ ITEM] – Have they benefited a lot, a little, or not at all? [ITEMS WERE ROTATED]

Middle class families

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			INCOME		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K
Lot	9%	7%	19%	17%	5%	3%	18%	5%	7%
Little	43%	42%	51%	57%	40%	25%	40%	47%	42%
Not at all	43%	47%	26%	20%	52%	68%	36%	44%	50%
(VOL) Don't know	4%	4%	4%	5%	3%	4%	6%	4%	1%
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Wealthy families

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			INCOME		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K
Lot	20%	20%	21%	27%	19%	10%	30%	16%	11%
Little	25%	24%	31%	30%	25%	21%	20%	30%	26%
Not at all	38%	39%	36%	25%	41%	55%	29%	34%	55%
(VOL) Don't know	16%	17%	12%	18%	14%	14%	21%	20%	8%
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Poor families

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			INCOME		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K
Lot	17%	17%	17%	19%	14%	19%	14%	20%	17%
Little	43%	43%	44%	47%	42%	39%	42%	43%	47%
Not at all	33%	33%	31%	26%	37%	36%	35%	31%	30%
(VOL) Don't know	7%	7%	8%	7%	7%	6%	9%	6%	6%
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Wall Street bankers

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			INCOME		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K
Lot	51%	52%	45%	56%	48%	45%	48%	50%	51%
Little	21%	20%	25%	15%	26%	23%	20%	24%	18%
Not at all	19%	19%	17%	20%	16%	23%	19%	17%	26%
(VOL) Don't know	9%	9%	13%	9%	9%	10%	13%	8%	5%
Unwtd N	803	716	87	251	329	195	173	273	259

Health insurance companies

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			INCOME		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K
Lot	33%	33%	30%	38%	33%	26%	36%	31%	29%
Little	30%	28%	38%	29%	27%	31%	34%	28%	23%
Not at all	26%	27%	23%	23%	27%	31%	16%	29%	37%
(VOL) Don't know	12%	12%	9%	11%	13%	12%	14%	12%	10%
Unwtd N	803	716	87	251	329	195	173	273	259

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 January 27 to 31, 2010 with a statewide random sample of 803 adult residents. For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling has a maximum margin of plus or minus 3.5 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 (weighted)			
39% Dem	48% Male	30% 18-34	66% White
38% Ind	52% Female	39% 35-54	13% Black
23% Rep		31% 55+	13% Hispanic
			8% Asian/Other

It is the Monmouth University Polling Institute's policy to conduct surveys of all adult New Jersey residents, including voters and non-voters, on issues which affect the state. Specific voter surveys are conducted when appropriate during election cycles.

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