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NEW JERSEY DIVIDED ON GOVERNOR

Fewer than half aware of town hall meetings

New Jersey residents are divided on Governor Chris Christie's job performance and his ratings have dropped since the last *Monmouth University/NJ Press Media Poll* in February. He now stands at 47% approve to 49% disapprove among all state residents. Among registered voters, he has a 46% positive to 49% negative job rating.

The change in Christie's rating comes mainly from the number of people who shifted from having no opinion of the governor a few months ago to holding a negative view today. In February, 47% of residents held a positive opinion of Christie – identical to the result in the current poll. However, the number who disapprove has increased by 9 points, while the number who have no opinion of their governor's job performance decreased by 7 points. Christie receives positive ratings from 75% of Republicans, 53% of independents, and 22% of Democrats.

The state budget looms large in New Jersey's perceptions of Christie. Nearly 9-in-10 (86%) say they have been following the budget debate, including 33% who have heard a lot about it. This is slightly lower than the nearly half who closely followed last year's budget process, but still higher than similar attention levels for the budgets of prior governors. [*Note: the poll was conducted before the latest state revenue projections were released.*]

This year's budget has been less controversial than Christie's inaugural effort, but residents are only slightly more happy with the current spending plan than they were last year. About 1-in-4 (24%) say they are satisfied with the budget compared to 39% who are dissatisfied. Another 35% say they can

live with the budget proposal even though they are not particularly satisfied with it. Last spring, 22% of the public was satisfied with the state budget plan and 44% were dissatisfied.

Like last year, the public is split on whether the budget is the product of tough, thoughtful choices (45%) or just more of the same old political deals (48%). Republicans (63%) and independents (53%) are more likely to say Christie's budget is tough and thoughtful while Democrats (68%) are more likely to see it as political deal making.

"Two years of austere budgets may be taking a toll on the governor. Efforts to sell his reform agenda at town hall meetings generate a lot of media attention, but it appears that New Jerseyans who are paying the most attention to these events have already made up their minds about the governor's proposals," said Patrick Murray, director of the Monmouth University Polling Institute.

Since taking office, Governor Christie has held many town hall meetings throughout the state to present his reform agenda. While these events have received national attention for their "YouTube" moments, less than half (46%) of the New Jersey public report having read or heard anything about them. Among those who have been following the governor's meet-and-greets, 35% say these forums do a lot to help residents understand what's going on in Trenton, 30% say they do a little, and 30% say they don't do much in the terms of informing state residents. About half of Republicans (49%) say they provide a lot of information while about half of Democrats (48%) say they don't provide much at all. Independents are split – 37% say the town halls provide a lot of information and 27% say they provide not much at all.

The governor's cuts to aid for municipalities have increased the burden of providing services at the local level. According to state residents, their local governments have been handling this well. Most New Jerseyans (55%) say that their municipality has done a good job at keeping spending down in the past year. This view is held by majorities of Democrats (58%), Republicans (56%), and independents (54%) alike. Just 35% of state residents say their local government has done a bad job.

About 6-in-10 residents (59%) are aware that their town is now under a two percent property tax cap. While some local officials say they will not be able to meet the needs of their constituents under the cap, only 30% of residents are worried that too many essential services will be cut. Twice as many (62%) believe that their local government will still be able to provide most essential services with the cap in place.

In other poll findings, ratings for the state legislature continue to be negative – just 33% approve of their legislature's performance while 47% disapprove. A majority (54%) of residents say things in New Jersey are on the wrong track. Only 1-in-3 (35%) say the state is headed in the right direction, which is similar to other results over the past five years.

The *Monmouth University NJ Press Media Poll* was conducted by telephone with 807 New Jersey adults from May 12 to 16, 2011. 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 New Jersey Press Media 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. Would you say things in New Jersey are going in the right direction, or have they gotten off on the wrong track?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No
Right direction	35%	34%	40%	26%	36%	49%	29%	37%
Wrong track	54%	55%	51%	63%	53%	42%	67%	50%
(VOL) Depends	8%	8%	7%	8%	8%	6%	1%	10%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	3%	2%	2%	3%	2%	3%	3%
Unwtd N	807	725	82	227	389	172	228	575

TREND: All adults	May 2011	September 2010	April 2010	February 2010	February 2009	September 2008	July 2007	April 2007	February 2007	September 2006	July 2006	April 2006	September 2005
Right direction	35%	37%	37%	29%	21%	26%	39%	33%	34%	29%	27%	30%	31%
Wrong track	54%	51%	55%	56%	72%	64%	50%	51%	55%	58%	62%	55%	54%
(VOL) Depends	8%	6%	5%	5%	3%	4%	6%	8%	6%	6%	4%	9%	5%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	5%	4%	9%	4%	6%	6%	8%	6%	7%	7%	6%	10%
Unwtd N	807	801	804	803	803	808	800	804	801	800	802	803	800

2. Do you approve or disapprove of the job Chris Christie is doing as governor? [*PROBE: Do you approve/disapprove strongly or somewhat?*]

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No
Strongly approve	23%	25%	12%	6%	26%	45%	17%	25%
Somewhat approve	24%	21%	36%	16%	27%	30%	17%	26%
Somewhat disapprove	18%	16%	28%	26%	17%	7%	15%	19%
Strongly disapprove	31%	33%	20%	46%	24%	17%	48%	25%
(VOL) Don't know	5%	5%	5%	5%	6%	1%	2%	6%
Unwtd N	807	725	82	227	389	172	228	575

TREND: All adults	May 2011	February 2011	September 2010	July 2010	April 2010	February 2010
Approve	47%	47%	45%	44%	41%	33%
Disapprove	49%	40%	38%	44%	44%	15%
(VOL) Don't know	5%	12%	17%	12%	15%	52%
Unwtd N	807	801	801	801	804	803

TREND: Registered voters	May 2011	February 2011	September 2010	July 2010	April 2010	February 2010
Approve	46%	49%	44%	45%	42%	31%
Disapprove	49%	41%	40%	43%	44%	15%
(VOL) Don't know	5%	9%	16%	12%	13%	53%
Unwtd N	725	718	726	747	719	716

3. Do you approve or disapprove of the job the state legislature is doing?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No
Approve	33%	32%	39%	36%	30%	35%	25%	36%
Disapprove	47%	48%	41%	43%	53%	40%	53%	45%
(VOL) Don't know	20%	20%	20%	22%	17%	25%	23%	19%
Unwtd N	807	725	82	227	389	172	228	575

TREND: All Adults	May 2011	February 2011	July 2010	April 2010	February 2010	July 2009	February 2009	September 2008	July 2008	April 2008	March 2008	October 2007	February 2007
Approve	33%	30%	24%	20%	26%	30%	25%	29%	27%	29%	28%	33%	35%
Disapprove	47%	44%	49%	56%	46%	47%	52%	47%	45%	53%	50%	41%	40%
(VOL) Don't know	20%	26%	27%	24%	28%	23%	23%	23%	28%	18%	22%	26%	25%
Unwtd N	807	801	801	804	803	923	803	808	1004	803	805	801	801

TREND: Registered Voters	May 2011	February 2011	July 2010	April 2010	February 2010	July 2009	February 2009	September 2008	July 2008	April 2008	March 2008	October 2007	February 2007
Approve	32%	29%	25%	19%	24%	31%	23%	29%	27%	28%	25%	32%	34%
Disapprove	48%	45%	49%	57%	49%	48%	55%	50%	47%	55%	53%	43%	42%
(VOL) Don't know	20%	26%	26%	24%	27%	22%	22%	21%	26%	17%	22%	25%	23%
Unwtd N	725	718	747	719	716	792	721	709	889	720	719	688	681

4. Thinking about Chris Christie's term as governor so far, would you say that he has major accomplishments, minor accomplishments, or no real accomplishments to point to?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No
Major accomplishments	23%	25%	17%	8%	26%	45%	21%	24%
Minor accomplishments	40%	39%	46%	41%	40%	36%	32%	42%
No real accomplishments	34%	35%	32%	49%	31%	18%	47%	30%
(VOL) Don't know	2%	2%	5%	2%	3%	1%	0%	3%
Unwtd N	807	725	82	227	389	172	228	575

TREND:	May 2011	February 2011
Major accomplishments	23%	25%
Minor accomplishments	40%	39%
No real accomplishments	34%	34%
(VOL) Don't know	2%	2%
Unwtd N	807	801

5. How much have you heard or read about Governor Christie's state budget plan – a lot, a little, or nothing at all?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No
A lot	33%	36%	17%	32%	31%	39%	46%	29%
A little	53%	52%	57%	52%	55%	52%	41%	57%
Nothing at all	13%	11%	25%	16%	14%	9%	12%	13%
Unwtd N	807	725	82	227	389	172	228	575

TREND:	May 2011	April 2010
A lot	33%	45%
A little	53%	44%
Nothing at all	13%	11%
Unwtd N	807	804

[NOTE: QUESTIONS 6 AND 7 WERE ASKED ONLY OF THOSE WHO HEARD “A LOT” OR “A LITTLE” ABOUT THE GOVERNOR’S BUDGET PLAN: *moe* = ± 3.7%]

6. How would you describe your reaction to the governor’s budget plan – would you say you are satisfied with it, not particularly satisfied but you can live with it, or you are definitely dissatisfied with it?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			PUBLIC WORKER		BUDGET AWARENESS	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No	Lot	Little
Satisfied	24%	24%	24%	8%	24%	48%	18%	25%	30%	20%
Can live with it	35%	33%	47%	31%	40%	30%	23%	39%	24%	42%
Dissatisfied	39%	40%	27%	61%	32%	18%	55%	33%	45%	35%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	3%	2%	1%	3%	4%	4%	2%	1%	4%
Unwtd N	721	657	64	198	347	159	209	509	309	412

TREND:	May 2011	April 2010
Satisfied	24%	22%
Can live with it	35%	32%
Dissatisfied	39%	44%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	2%
Unwtd N	721	738

7. In general, would you describe the governor’s budget plan as: the product of tough, thoughtful choices - OR - more of the same old political dealings? [ITEMS WERE ROTATED]

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			PUBLIC WORKER		BUDGET AWARENESS	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No	Lot	Little
Tough, thoughtful choices	45%	46%	35%	23%	53%	63%	40%	46%	45%	44%
Same old political dealings	48%	46%	60%	68%	40%	32%	52%	47%	46%	49%
(VOL) Some of both	4%	4%	3%	3%	4%	3%	3%	4%	5%	3%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	4%	2%	5%	3%	2%	5%	3%	4%	3%
Unwtd N	721	657	64	198	347	159	209	509	309	412

TREND:	May 2011	April 2010
Tough, thoughtful choices	45%	46%
Same old political dealings	48%	46%
(VOL) Some of both	4%	2%
(VOL) Don't Know	3%	6%
Unwtd N	721	738

8. Governor Christie has been holding town hall meetings with residents throughout the state to discuss his policies. Have you read or heard anything about these meetings, or not?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No
Yes, heard of	46%	51%	18%	36%	49%	54%	60%	41%
No, not aware	54%	49%	82%	64%	51%	46%	40%	59%
Unwtd N	807	725	82	227	389	172	228	575

[The following question was asked only of those who said “Yes, heard of” to Q8, *moe*= ± 4.6%]

9. Do you think these town hall meetings do a lot, a little, or not much at all in helping residents understand what’s going on in Trenton?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No
A lot	35%	36%	25%	21%	37%	49%	26%	39%
A little	30%	28%	59%	27%	30%	36%	31%	30%
Not much at all	30%	31%	8%	48%	27%	13%	37%	26%
(VOL) Don't know	5%	5%	8%	4%	6%	2%	6%	4%
Unwtd N	460	435	25	113	233	101	158	300

10. Turning to your own town or city – Do you think your local government has done a good job or bad job at keeping spending down in the past year?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No
Good job	55%	56%	48%	58%	54%	56%	60%	54%
Bad job	35%	34%	41%	28%	39%	37%	28%	38%
(VOL) Don't know	10%	9%	10%	14%	7%	6%	12%	9%
Unwtd N	807	725	82	227	389	172	228	575

11. Have you heard about a statewide property tax cap that limits local government to increasing property tax collections by no more than two percent each year, or were you not aware of this?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No
Yes, heard of	59%	63%	36%	48%	62%	67%	73%	54%
No, not aware	41%	37%	60%	51%	36%	33%	26%	45%
(VOL) Don't know	1%	0%	4%	0%	2%	0%	1%	1%
Unwtd N	807	725	82	227	389	172	228	575

[The following question was asked only of those who said "Yes, heard of" to Q11, moe= ± 4.1%]

12. Do you think that with the two percent property tax cap, your local government will still be able to provide most essential services or that too many essential services will be cut?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No
Still able to provide most essential services	62%	64%	36%	46%	68%	71%	61%	62%
Too many essential services will be cut	30%	29%	45%	42%	25%	24%	32%	30%
(VOL) Don't know	8%	7%	18%	12%	7%	5%	7%	8%
Unwtd N	562	522	40	135	288	124	177	383

The Monmouth University/NJ Press Media Poll was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute on May 12 to 16, 2011 with a statewide random sample of 807 adult residents. Sampling and live telephone interviewing services were provided by Braun Research, Inc. 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)			
35% Dem	48% Male	27% 18-34	66% White
21% Rep	52% Female	40% 35-54	12% Black
44% Ind		33% 55+	14% 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 that affect the state. Specific voter surveys are conducted when appropriate during election cycles.

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