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NEW JERSEY: CHRISTIE RATINGS DROP AS PRESIDENTIAL BUZZ INCREASES

Garden State divided on Christie versus Jeb Bush

West Long Branch, N.J. – Gov. Chris Christie’s job ratings in New Jersey have continued their post-Labor Day decline according to the *Monmouth University Poll*. Nearly two-thirds of Christie’s constituents say that he is more concerned about his own political future than he is about the state, with increasing skepticism of the stated purpose for his recent foreign trips. New Jersey, which has voted Democratic in the last six presidential elections, feels Hillary Clinton would make a better president than Christie. It may be more surprising that Christie does not have a clear advantage when he is pitted against GOP contender Jeb Bush, even among his fellow New Jersey Republicans.

When New Jerseyans are asked who would make a better president – Chris Christie or Hillary Clinton, Clinton gets the nod from 58%, with 32% choosing the Garden State governor. Clinton is the clear preference among state Democrats (78% to 16% for Christie) and independents (52% to 33%), while Christie gets the nod among Republicans (58% to 29%).

When Christie is pitted against another establishment Republican, specifically former Florida governor Jeb Bush, New Jerseyans are divided on who would make a better president – 40% select Christie while 36% choose Bush. Another 15% say neither would make a good president, 1% volunteer that both would be equally as good in the White House, and 8% have no opinion. New Jersey Democrats (38% Christie to 37% Bush) and independents (38% Christie to 36% Bush) are split down the middle on the two probable candidates. What may be more surprising is that Christie is not the overwhelming presidential preference of his fellow New Jersey Republicans – 46% say Christie would make the better president while 37% say Bush would be a better fit as Commander-in-Chief.

“Clinton leading Christie in ‘Blue Jersey’ isn’t too much of a shock, but Jeb Bush’s competitiveness among Garden State Republicans should give the governor pause,” said Patrick Murray, director of the independent Monmouth University Polling Institute in West Long Branch, N.J.

Christie has a larger advantage over Scott Walker, the Wisconsin Governor who, like Christie, built his reputation on cutting state spending and reducing public pension benefits. More New Jerseyans say Christie (38%) would make a better president than Walker (26%), with 15% saying neither would make a good president, 1% preferring both equally, and 20% having no opinion.

Gov. Christie’s job rating currently stands at 48% approve to 44% disapprove among New Jersey residents and 47% approve to 46% disapprove among the state’s registered voters. This marks an increase in his disapproval numbers since the fall, when his rating stood at 46% approve to 39% disapprove among all residents and 46% approve to 42% disapprove among voters.

“Christie’s ratings stabilized last spring after a big Bridgegate-related drop. But as his travel schedule increased and presidential speculation grew during last fall’s campaign, state voter opinion started to erode again, slowly but steadily,” said Murray.

Two-thirds of New Jerseyans (66%) believe that Gov. Christie is more concerned with his own political future than he is with governing the state (25%). Back in September, 56% of state residents felt that Christie was more focused on his own ambitions while 33% said he was concentrating on New Jersey issues. Similarly, Christie’s trade mission to Great Britain earlier this week was seen by 65% of New Jerseyans as mainly designed to boost his presidential prospects. Only 17% said the trip’s main purpose was to build trade relations between New Jersey and Britain. After Christie made a similar trip to Mexico last fall, 52% saw the trip as primarily to serve his presidential ambitions compared to 21% who said the trip was mainly to help the state.

The shift in public opinion about Christie’s priorities is due mainly to increased skepticism among his fellow Republicans. In September, a majority (54%) of Garden State Republicans said that Christie was more focused on the state than his own political future (33%). The GOP constituency’s view has now flipped, with 54% saying Christie’s ambitions are his paramount concern and only 33% saying his state duties are more important to him. Republicans were divided on the purpose of the Mexico trip – 33% said it was to help Christie’s presidential hopes and 31% said it was to boost New Jersey’s economy. They are much more likely to see this week’s overseas jaunt as a presidential campaign stop (58%) rather than a state-focused trade mission (21%).

“Even New Jersey Republicans are starting to wonder whether Gov. Christie is treating his day job as an afterthought,” said Murray.

Practically 4-in-5 New Jerseyans (79%) believe that Christie is planning a 2016 run for president, slightly higher than September, when 75% said the same before his political action committee was

formed. Overall, 47% say that Christie’s travel schedule and potential presidential plans have had no impact on his performance as governor and 9% say this has actually made him more effective. A sizable 40%, though, say that the presidential campaign focus has made Christie less effective as governor. Among those who believe he will make a presidential run, 44% say his pre-campaign activities have made him less effective as governor, up from 39% of this group who said the same back in September.

Overall, 38% of New Jerseyans have a favorable opinion of Chris Christie as a person and 40% have an unfavorable view. Another 23% have no opinion. The poll also found that 52% of New Jerseyans feel that Christie does not have the right temperament to be president while 44% say he does. These results are similar to a Monmouth University poll taken one year ago when 54% said he does not have the right temperament and 41% said he does.

The poll also found that public opinion of the overall job the state legislature is doing stands at 39% approve to 44% disapprove among all adults and 37% approve to 46% disapprove among registered voters. These results are similar to negative ratings of the state legislature recorded in polls taken over the past twelve months.

The *Monmouth University Poll* was conducted by telephone with 805 New Jersey adults, including 712 registered voters, from January 30 to February 2, 2015. The total sample has a margin of error of ± 3.5 percent and the registered voter sample has a margin of error of ± 3.7 percent. The poll was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute in West Long Branch, New Jersey.

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 Chris Christie is doing as governor?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	Yes	No
Approve	48%	47%	51%	39%	47%	70%	49%	47%	34%	52%
Disapprove	44%	46%	34%	55%	43%	24%	43%	44%	61%	39%
(VOL) Don't know	8%	6%	16%	6%	10%	7%	7%	9%	5%	9%

TREND: <i>All adults</i>	Feb. 2015	Sept. 2014	June 2014	April 2014	Feb. 2014	Jan. 2014	Dec. 2013	Sept. 2013	April 2013	Feb. 2013	Dec. 2012	Sept. 2012	July 2012	April 2012	Feb. 2012	Oct. 2011	Aug. 2011	May 2011	Feb. 2011	Sept. 2010	July 2010	April 2010	Feb. 2010
Approve	48%	46%	50%	51%	50%	59%	65%	61%	63%	70%	67%	53%	52%	51%	52%	54%	48%	47%	47%	45%	44%	41%	33%
Disapprove	44%	39%	42%	41%	44%	32%	25%	24%	26%	17%	21%	35%	36%	35%	38%	38%	42%	49%	40%	38%	44%	44%	15%
(VOL) Don't know	8%	15%	9%	8%	6%	8%	10%	15%	11%	14%	12%	11%	12%	14%	10%	9%	9%	5%	12%	17%	12%	15%	52%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	805	802	800	803	803	541	802	783	806	803	816	805	803	804	803	817	802	807	801	801	801	804	803

TREND: <i>Registered voters</i>	Feb. 2015	Sept. 2014	June 2014	April 2014	Feb. 2014	Jan. 2014	Dec. 2013	Sept. 2013	April 2013	Feb. 2013	Dec. 2012	Sept. 2012	July 2012	April 2012	Feb. 2012	Oct. 2011	Aug. 2011	May 2011	Feb. 2011	Sept. 2010	July 2010	April 2010	Feb. 2010
Approve	47%	46%	49%	51%	49%	58%	65%	63%	65%	70%	69%	55%	53%	50%	55%	55%	50%	46%	49%	44%	45%	42%	31%
Disapprove	46%	42%	43%	43%	46%	35%	27%	24%	26%	16%	22%	36%	35%	38%	37%	37%	41%	49%	41%	40%	43%	44%	15%
(VOL) Don't know	6%	12%	8%	6%	6%	7%	8%	13%	10%	13%	9%	10%	12%	12%	9%	8%	5%	9%	16%	12%	13%	53%	
<i>Unwtd N</i>	712	680	717	690	690	470	698	674	694	697	726	715	678	692	709	693	730	725	718	726	747	719	716

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

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	Yes	No
Approve	39%	37%	48%	46%	33%	40%	39%	38%	31%	41%
Disapprove	44%	46%	34%	39%	49%	42%	46%	41%	55%	41%
(VOL) Don't know	17%	17%	19%	15%	18%	18%	14%	20%	14%	18%

TREND: Registered Voters	Feb. 2015	Sept. 2014	June 2014	April 2014	Feb. 2014	Jan. 2014	Dec. 2013	Sept. 2013	April 2013	Feb. 2013	Dec. 2012	Sept. 2012	July 2012	April 2012	Feb. 2012
Approve	37%	35%	36%	38%	38%	47%	44%	38%	41%	40%	43%	32%	34%	37%	34%
Disapprove	46%	46%	48%	46%	47%	35%	38%	36%	42%	35%	34%	43%	45%	41%	42%
(VOL) Don't know	17%	19%	17%	15%	14%	18%	19%	27%	17%	25%	22%	25%	21%	23%	24%
Unwtd N	712	680	717	690	690	470	698	674	694	697	726	715	678	692	709

TREND: Registered Voters Continued	Oct. 2011	Aug. 2011	May 2011	Feb. 2011	July 2010	April 2010	Feb. 2010	July 2009	Feb. 2009	Sept. 2008	July 2008	April 2008	March 2008	Oct. 2007	Feb. 2007
Approve	33%	35%	32%	29%	25%	19%	24%	31%	23%	29%	27%	28%	25%	32%	34%
Disapprove	45%	48%	48%	45%	49%	57%	49%	48%	55%	50%	47%	55%	53%	43%	42%
(VOL) Don't know	22%	17%	20%	26%	26%	24%	27%	22%	22%	21%	26%	17%	22%	25%	23%
Unwtd N	693	730	725	718	747	719	716	792	721	709	889	720	719	688	681

3. Is your general impression of Chris Christie favorable or unfavorable, or do you have no opinion of him?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	Yes	No
Favorable	38%	39%	32%	29%	35%	61%	38%	37%	27%	41%
Unfavorable	40%	42%	29%	51%	39%	22%	39%	40%	52%	36%
No opinion	23%	19%	39%	20%	27%	17%	23%	23%	21%	23%

TREND: All adults	February 2015	June 2014	April 2014	February 2014	January 2014	February 2013	September 2012
Favorable	38%	45%	40%	42%	44%	70%	52%
Unfavorable	40%	38%	35%	37%	28%	19%	34%
No opinion	23%	17%	25%	21%	28%	11%	15%
Unwtd N	805	800	803	803	541	803	805

TREND: Registered voters only	February 2015	June 2014	April 2014	February 2014	January 2014	February 2013	September 2012
Favorable	39%	46%	41%	43%	46%	71%	54%
Unfavorable	42%	39%	37%	39%	31%	18%	34%
No opinion	19%	15%	22%	18%	23%	10%	13%
Unwtd N	712	717	690	690	470	697	715

4. Do you think Chris Christie is more concerned with governing the state of New Jersey or more concerned about his own political future? [CHOICES WERE ROTATED]

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	Yes	No
Governing the state of NJ	25%	25%	27%	23%	23%	33%	25%	25%	22%	26%
His own political future	66%	67%	60%	72%	67%	54%	66%	65%	71%	64%
(VOL) Both equally	5%	5%	5%	2%	5%	9%	4%	6%	3%	6%
(VOL) Don't know	4%	3%	7%	3%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%

TREND:	February 2015	September 2014	June 2014	April 2014	February 2014	January 2014	September 2013	December 2012	February 2012
Governing the state of NJ	25%	33%	32%	35%	35%	42%	44%	61%	39%
His own political future	66%	56%	55%	54%	56%	47%	38%	30%	48%
(VOL) Both equally	5%	5%	7%	7%	5%	6%	12%	5%	6%
(VOL) Don't know	4%	7%	6%	4%	4%	5%	6%	4%	7%
Unwtd N	805	802	800	803	803	541	783	816	803

5. Chris Christie made a trip to Great Britain this weekend with New Jersey business leaders. Do you think this trip was mainly to build trade relations between Britain and New Jersey OR mainly to help Christie run for president? [ITEMS WERE ROTATED]

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	Yes	No
Build trade relations	17%	17%	15%	18%	15%	21%	16%	17%	13%	18%
Help Christie run for president	65%	64%	65%	67%	67%	58%	69%	60%	70%	63%
(VOL) Both equally	6%	7%	3%	3%	7%	8%	7%	5%	4%	7%
(VOL) Don't know	13%	12%	17%	12%	12%	13%	8%	17%	12%	13%

TREND:	February 2015	September 2014*
Build trade relations	17%	21%
Help Christie run for president	65%	52%
(VOL) Both equally	6%	5%
(VOL) Don't know	13%	21%
Unwtd N	805	802

* Question from September 2014 was asked regarding Christie's trip to Mexico.

6. Do you think Chris Christie is planning to run for president in 2016, or not?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	Yes	No
Yes	79%	80%	75%	81%	75%	82%	81%	77%	82%	78%
No	16%	14%	23%	15%	19%	11%	15%	16%	11%	17%
(VOL) Don't know	6%	6%	3%	4%	6%	7%	4%	7%	6%	5%

TREND:	February 2015	September 2014	February 2014	December 2013
Yes	79%	75%	65%	69%
No	16%	14%	26%	20%
(VOL) Don't know	6%	11%	9%	11%
Unwtd N	805	802	803	802

7. Do you think his travel schedule and planning a possible presidential run has made Chris Christie more effective or less effective as governor, or has it had no impact on his performance as governor?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	Yes	No
More effective	9%	7%	14%	11%	5%	9%	8%	10%	6%	10%
Less effective	40%	41%	35%	43%	42%	32%	41%	39%	51%	37%
No impact	47%	48%	42%	40%	48%	57%	50%	44%	41%	48%
(VOL) Don't know	5%	4%	8%	5%	5%	2%	1%	8%	3%	5%

8. Do you think Chris Christie does or does not have the right temperament to be president?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	Yes	No
Does	44%	41%	55%	37%	40%	66%	48%	41%	35%	47%
Does not	52%	55%	39%	60%	55%	31%	48%	55%	60%	49%
(VOL) Don't know	4%	4%	6%	3%	5%	2%	4%	4%	5%	4%

TREND:	February 2015	February 2014	January 2014	September 2013
Does	44%	41%	44%	56%
Does not	52%	54%	49%	34%
(VOL) Don't know	4%	4%	6%	10%
Unwtd N	805	803	541	783

[QUESTIONS 9 THROUGH 11 WERE ROTATED]

9. Would Chris Christie or Hillary Clinton make a better president? [NAMES WERE ROTATED]

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	Yes	No
		Christie	32%	32%	28%	16%	33%	58%	35%	28%
Clinton	58%	57%	61%	78%	52%	29%	55%	60%	53%	59%
(VOL) Same/Both equally	1%	1%	3%	3%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
(VOL) Neither	6%	7%	6%	2%	11%	7%	6%	6%	8%	6%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	3%	2%	1%	4%	5%	3%	4%	5%	3%

10. Would Chris Christie or Scott Walker make a better president? [NAMES WERE ROTATED]

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	Yes	No
		Christie	38%	36%	49%	39%	33%	51%	44%	33%
Walker	26%	28%	19%	23%	29%	30%	28%	24%	29%	25%
(VOL) Same/Both equally	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%
(VOL) Neither	15%	16%	10%	16%	19%	4%	14%	15%	18%	13%
(VOL) Don't know	20%	20%	22%	21%	18%	14%	13%	27%	24%	19%

11. Would Chris Christie or Jeb Bush make a better president? [NAMES WERE ROTATED]

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	Yes	No
		Christie	40%	38%	47%	38%	38%	46%	39%	40%
Bush	36%	38%	30%	37%	36%	37%	42%	31%	46%	34%
(VOL) Same/Both equally	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	3%	1%	1%	1%	1%
(VOL) Neither	15%	16%	11%	17%	17%	6%	12%	17%	16%	14%
(VOL) Don't know	8%	7%	12%	7%	8%	8%	6%	10%	7%	9%

The Monmouth University Poll was sponsored and conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute from January 30 to February 2, 2015 with a statewide random sample of 805 adult residents, including 605 contacted via live interview on a landline telephone and 200 via live interview on a cell phone, in English. Monmouth is responsible for all aspects of the survey questionnaire design, data weighting and analysis. Final sample is weighted for region, age, education, gender and race based on US Census information. Data collection support provided by Braun Research (field) and SSI (RDD sample). 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 3.5 percentage points (unadjusted for sample design). Sampling error can be larger for sub-groups (see table below). 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)			
38% Dem	49% Male	28% 18-34	64% White
43% Ind	51% Female	39% 35-54	12% Black
19% Rep		33% 55+	15% Hispanic
			9% Asian/Other
Registered Voter Sample (weighted)			
38% Dem	49% Male	24% 18-34	70% White
41% Ind	51% Female	40% 35-54	13% Black
21% Rep		37% 55+	11% Hispanic
			5% Asian/Other

	MARGIN OF ERROR									
	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	Yes	No
Unweighted N	805	712	93	283	342	162	387	418	227	574
moe	3.5%	3.7%	10.2%	5.8%	5.3%	7.7%	5.0%	4.8%	6.5%	4.1%

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

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