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## **CHRISTIE ADMINISTRATION KICKS OFF WITH LAUNDRY LIST OF EXPECTATIONS**

*Public split on state layoffs; many prepare for pain*

Just two weeks into the job and early reviews are good for Governor Chris Christie, according to the first *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll* conducted during the new administration. Garden State residents also acknowledge that he has a tough task ahead of him, but they have some definite expectations about what a Christie term should achieve and what it should do to get there.

Chris Christie's initial job rating is generally positive – 33% approve to 15% disapprove – although 52% withhold opinion at this early stage. By comparison, the New Jersey legislature is viewed negatively – only 26% of the public approve of the job their representatives in Trenton are doing versus 46% who disapprove. These results are fairly consistent with the legislature's low job rating over the past two years.

The most important issue for voters during last year's gubernatorial campaign was taxes, especially property taxes. New Jerseyans continue to see this as a defining issue by which they will judge the success of a Christie administration. At the same time, they remain skeptical that taxes will actually come down. Specifically, 7-in-10 residents (71%) say they will be very upset with Governor Christie if property taxes remain high four years from now, another 18% would be somewhat upset and just 9% would not be upset by this.

However, only 4-in-10 New Jerseyans say it is likely (8% very and 34% somewhat) that the state will enact reforms to significantly lower property taxes in the next few years. A majority, feel that such reforms are either not too (29%) or not at all (27%) likely to happen. While optimism on the property tax issue is not particularly high right now, the current results do exceed the 26% who thought such reforms were likely four years ago when Jon Corzine took office.

“The public has spoken, Governor Christie. You are hereby expected to defy expectations,” said Patrick Murray, director of the Monmouth University Polling Institute.

With a yawning gap in the state budget, the only way property taxes will come down is through cuts to government spending, especially in the area of education, which is the prime driver of property taxes. And here, the poll gives Governor Christie a major caveat. While 51% of Garden State residents would be very upset with the governor if he doesn't reduce state spending during his term, even more – 62% – would be very upset if school funding was cut. Perhaps a positive note for the governor in this finding is that both Republicans (53%) and independents (53%) are less likely than Democrats (77%) to be troubled by potential education cuts.

The poll also found that 54% of New Jerseyans would be very upset if programs for the poor were cut and 42% would be very upset if environmental regulations were relaxed. Again, both of these outcomes would be more disturbing for Democrats than they would be for Republicans or independents.

Few New Jersey residents would be particularly troubled if Christie didn't come through with cuts in the state workforce. Only 33% of the public would be very upset if he did not reduce the number of state employees, including just 37% of his fellow Republicans, 37% of independents, and 27% of Democrats. Another 32% of the public would be just somewhat upset if such reductions were not made and 28% would not be upset if Christie failed to make such cuts.

When asked specifically whether they would support the governor if he needed to lay off thousands of state workers in order to balance the budget, public opinion is nominally opposed – 40% would support this move while 47% would oppose it. Only Republicans clearly support potential layoffs, by a 56% to 26% margin. Independents would back the governor on layoffs by a slimmer 47% to 40% margin. Democrats would oppose this move (67% against to 24% for). These findings are very similar to an April 2009 poll, when the idea was raised by then-Governor Corzine and 41% of state residents supported the idea of layoffs compared to 52% who opposed it.

“It's important for Governor Christie to remember that New Jersey voters handed him a scalpel, not an axe. He needs to tread carefully where job cuts are concerned and have strong budget justifications for large numbers of layoffs. While the state unions may not be held in high regard, the public sympathizes with the average state worker who has a family to feed. If job cuts appear to be indiscriminate, it could hurt the governor in the court of public opinion,” said Murray.

While Christie's budget plan won't be unveiled until March, just over half (54%) of state residents say they are at least somewhat confident that he will be able to get state spending under control. It's worth noting, though, that only 10% are “very” confident at this point. His initial budget plan will be much anticipated, since just 16% of the public feel they have a clear idea what specific policies Governor Christie will pursue. Another 39% have some idea and 42% have not much or no idea at all.

Regardless of which programs get cut from the state budget, many Garden State residents believe that the magnitude of those expected cuts will probably mean pain in their own pocketbooks. More than 4-in-10 (43%) believe their family’s financial situation will be hurt by anticipated budget cuts, while 39% say they will not really be affected and only 12% believe their personal finances will actually be helped by whatever spending cuts are coming.

Another intriguing result from the poll is that 3-in-4 residents (74%) say they would be very upset with Governor Christie if political corruption was not reduced during his term. This item produced the highest level of concern among the seven areas asked about in the poll, outpacing even property taxes.

“This result may seem surprising since corruption registered as only a small blip on voters’ radar screens during the fall campaign, falling far behind taxes, state spending, and economic issues. But I think voters see corruption as something of a ‘gimme’ for Chris Christie. If the former U.S. Attorney can’t fix corruption with minimal effort, there’s little hope that he will be able to tackle the big ticket items on the public’s agenda,” said Murray.

The poll also found that only 29% of New Jerseyans think the state is headed in the right direction while 56% feel it is on the wrong track. While the “wrong track” number is at its lowest level in two years, this result is yet another indication that Governor Christie has his work cut out for him if he is to turn around the ship of state.

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  $\pm 3.5$  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. 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			INCOME		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K
Right direction	<b>29%</b>	26%	43%	31%	22%	38%	30%	29%	29%
Wrong track	<b>56%</b>	59%	41%	55%	63%	49%	54%	59%	58%
(VOL) Depends	<b>5%</b>	5%	8%	3%	8%	5%	6%	4%	3%
(VOL) Don't know	<b>9%</b>	10%	8%	12%	7%	8%	10%	8%	10%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	<b>803</b>	716	87	251	329	195	173	273	259

TREND:	February 2010	February 2009	September 2008	July 2007	April 2007	February 2007	September 2006	July 2006	April 2006	September 2005
Right direction	29%	21%	26%	39%	33%	34%	29%	27%	30%	31%
Wrong track	56%	72%	64%	50%	51%	55%	58%	62%	55%	54%
(VOL) Depends	5%	3%	4%	6%	8%	6%	6%	4%	9%	5%
(VOL) Don't know	9%	4%	6%	6%	8%	6%	7%	7%	6%	10%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	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 so far?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			INCOME		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K
		Approve	<b>33%</b>	31%	41%	21%	35%	52%	37%
Disapprove	<b>15%</b>	15%	15%	24%	13%	4%	16%	15%	14%
(VOL) Don't know	<b>52%</b>	53%	45%	55%	52%	44%	47%	50%	53%
Unwtd N	<b>803</b>	716	87	251	329	195	173	273	259

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

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			INCOME		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K
		Approve	<b>26%</b>	24%	37%	33%	20%	25%	37%
Disapprove	<b>46%</b>	49%	31%	38%	54%	48%	34%	51%	54%
(VOL) Don't know	<b>28%</b>	27%	31%	29%	26%	27%	29%	26%	24%
Unwtd N	<b>803</b>	716	87	251	329	195	173	273	259

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

4. Do you feel you have a clear idea, some idea, or not much of an idea about the specific policies Chris Christie will pursue as governor?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			INCOME		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K
		Clear idea	<b>16%</b>	17%	12%	14%	14%	24%	13%
Some idea	<b>39%</b>	40%	37%	37%	41%	42%	35%	44%	42%
Not much of an idea	<b>32%</b>	31%	33%	37%	30%	25%	35%	31%	27%
(VOL) No idea at all	<b>10%</b>	9%	16%	10%	11%	6%	12%	8%	9%
(VOL) Don't know	<b>3%</b>	3%	2%	2%	4%	3%	5%	1%	1%
Unwtd N	<b>803</b>	716	87	251	329	195	173	273	259

5. Looking ahead to four years from now, would you be very upset, somewhat upset, or not too upset with Governor Christie if [READ ITEM] during his term? [ITEMS WERE ROTATED]

State spending has not been reduced

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			INCOME		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K
		Very upset	<b>51%</b>	53%	38%	45%	55%	55%	52%
Somewhat upset	<b>34%</b>	33%	36%	36%	31%	35%	26%	40%	32%
Not too upset	<b>11%</b>	9%	18%	15%	8%	7%	13%	8%	8%
(VOL) Not at all upset	<b>2%</b>	2%	3%	2%	3%	1%	5%	0%	2%
(VOL) Don't know	<b>3%</b>	2%	5%	2%	2%	2%	5%	0%	1%
Unwtd N	<b>803</b>	716	87	251	329	195	173	273	259

Property taxes remain high

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			INCOME		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K
Very upset	<b>71%</b>	72%	69%	75%	68%	73%	72%	76%	67%
Somewhat upset	<b>18%</b>	18%	21%	15%	22%	19%	17%	17%	23%
Not too upset	<b>8%</b>	8%	7%	9%	6%	7%	10%	6%	9%
(VOL) Not at all upset	<b>1%</b>	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%
(VOL) Don't know	<b>2%</b>	2%	2%	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Unwtd N	<b>803</b>	716	87	251	329	195	173	273	259

The state workforce has not been cut

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			INCOME		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K
Very upset	<b>33%</b>	34%	27%	27%	37%	37%	33%	34%	36%
Somewhat upset	<b>32%</b>	31%	40%	29%	35%	35%	37%	30%	32%
Not too upset	<b>22%</b>	22%	22%	28%	15%	22%	18%	27%	21%
(VOL) Not at all upset	<b>6%</b>	7%	5%	10%	6%	2%	8%	6%	7%
(VOL) Don't know	<b>6%</b>	6%	6%	5%	6%	4%	5%	4%	5%
Unwtd N	<b>803</b>	716	87	251	329	195	173	273	259

The amount of political corruption has not changed

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			INCOME		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K
Very upset	<b>74%</b>	74%	72%	70%	78%	75%	72%	75%	79%
Somewhat upset	<b>16%</b>	16%	15%	16%	11%	23%	16%	18%	13%
Not too upset	<b>6%</b>	6%	6%	8%	6%	2%	7%	6%	5%
(VOL) Not at all upset	<b>1%</b>	1%	0%	2%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%
(VOL) Don't know	<b>3%</b>	3%	6%	3%	3%	1%	4%	1%	2%
Unwtd N	<b>803</b>	716	87	251	329	195	173	273	259

Funding for schools is cut

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			INCOME		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K
Very upset	<b>62%</b>	59%	74%	77%	53%	53%	69%	65%	52%
Somewhat upset	<b>22%</b>	22%	21%	15%	26%	26%	21%	22%	22%
Not too upset	<b>12%</b>	14%	5%	6%	15%	17%	8%	10%	17%
(VOL) Not at all upset	<b>3%</b>	3%	0%	1%	5%	4%	1%	1%	6%
(VOL) Don't know	<b>2%</b>	2%	0%	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	2%
Unwtd N	<b>803</b>	716	87	251	329	195	173	273	259

Programs that help the poor are cut

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			INCOME		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K
Very upset	<b>54%</b>	52%	62%	75%	45%	33%	70%	51%	45%
Somewhat upset	<b>33%</b>	34%	27%	18%	42%	45%	24%	37%	37%
Not too upset	<b>9%</b>	10%	5%	6%	7%	17%	5%	10%	12%
(VOL) Not at all upset	<b>2%</b>	2%	3%	0%	5%	3%	0%	2%	5%
(VOL) Don't know	<b>2%</b>	2%	3%	1%	2%	2%	1%	2%	0%
Unwtd N	<b>803</b>	716	87	251	329	195	173	273	259

Environmental regulations are relaxed

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			INCOME		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K
Very upset	<b>42%</b>	43%	39%	59%	38%	24%	34%	46%	47%
Somewhat upset	<b>37%</b>	35%	43%	32%	37%	43%	40%	37%	30%
Not too upset	<b>15%</b>	16%	9%	8%	15%	22%	15%	13%	16%
(VOL) Not at all upset	<b>4%</b>	4%	4%	1%	6%	7%	5%	4%	4%
(VOL) Don't know	<b>2%</b>	2%	6%	0%	4%	3%	6%	0%	2%
Unwtd N	<b>803</b>	716	87	251	329	195	173	273	259

6. How likely is it that the state will enact reforms in the next few years to significantly lower property taxes – very, somewhat, not too, or not at all likely?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			INCOME		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K
Very likely	<b>8%</b>	8%	10%	6%	9%	12%	9%	6%	11%
Somewhat likely	<b>34%</b>	32%	44%	33%	32%	38%	41%	32%	25%
Not too likely	<b>29%</b>	28%	32%	30%	29%	25%	25%	32%	28%
Not at all likely	<b>27%</b>	30%	12%	30%	27%	23%	23%	29%	34%
(VOL) Don't know	<b>2%</b>	2%	3%	1%	2%	1%	3%	1%	2%
Unwtd N	<b>803</b>	716	87	251	329	195	173	273	259

TREND:	February 2010	April 2006
Very likely	8%	6%
Somewhat likely	34%	20%
Not too likely	29%	17%
Not at all likely	27%	51%
(VOL) Don't know	2%	5%
Unwtd N	803	803

7. How confident are you that Governor Christie will be able to get state spending under control – very, somewhat, not too, or not at all confident?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			INCOME		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K
Very confident	<b>10%</b>	9%	15%	6%	8%	18%	12%	6%	12%
Somewhat confident	<b>44%</b>	45%	42%	41%	41%	55%	45%	46%	42%
Not too confident	<b>25%</b>	26%	20%	26%	30%	16%	19%	29%	26%
Not at all confident	<b>18%</b>	18%	18%	25%	18%	8%	20%	17%	18%
(VOL) Don't know	<b>2%</b>	2%	5%	2%	3%	2%	5%	1%	1%
Unwtd N	<b>803</b>	716	87	251	329	195	173	273	259

8. Some people say that the governor will need to make deep cuts in many programs in order to balance the state budget. While no specific cuts have been proposed yet, do you expect that your own family's financial well-being will be helped, hurt, or not really affected by the cuts that will be made? [If "Helped/Hurt": Is that by a lot or just a little?]

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			INCOME		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K
Helped a lot	<b>6%</b>	5%	10%	4%	6%	9%	11%	3%	7%
Helped a little	<b>6%</b>	5%	9%	6%	6%	5%	6%	5%	5%
Hurt a lot	<b>23%</b>	24%	18%	34%	22%	10%	38%	17%	16%
Hurt a little	<b>20%</b>	21%	16%	20%	21%	18%	13%	22%	21%
Not really affected	<b>39%</b>	39%	41%	31%	38%	53%	27%	46%	47%
(VOL) Don't know	<b>6%</b>	6%	7%	5%	7%	5%	6%	8%	4%
Unwtd N	<b>803</b>	716	87	251	329	195	173	273	259

9. Some say that that thousands of state workers may have to be laid off to balance the budget. Would you support or oppose the governor if he laid off state workers?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			INCOME		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K
Support	<b>40%</b>	42%	30%	24%	47%	56%	32%	39%	52%
Oppose	<b>47%</b>	44%	61%	67%	40%	26%	60%	47%	32%
(VOL) Depends	<b>10%</b>	11%	5%	7%	9%	15%	5%	11%	14%
(VOL) Don't know	<b>3%</b>	3%	4%	2%	4%	3%	3%	3%	2%
Unwtd N	<b>803</b>	716	87	251	329	195	173	273	259

TREND:	February 2010	April 2009 *
Support	40%	41%
Oppose	47%	52%
(VOL) Depends	10%	4%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	4%
Unwtd N	803	803

\* Question wording in April 2009 was: "Governor Corzine has said that he may have to lay off thousands of state workers if the unions do not agree to furloughs and wage freezes. Would you support or oppose the governor if he laid off state workers?"

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 27-31, 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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