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GOV. CHRISTIE RATINGS SHIFT, STILL POSITIVE

Many see Rutgers-Camden, Rowan Merger as Political

Governor Christie's job rating from New Jersey residents has slipped slightly, but hits the coveted 50% mark, according to the latest *Monmouth University/NJ Press Media Poll*. At the same time, his grades on cost cutting, schools, and property taxes have notched up a bit.

Currently, Governor Christie earns a 51% approve to 35% disapprove job rating among all Garden State residents. Among registered voters, his rating stands at 50% approve to 38% disapprove. This registered voter approval number is down 5 points from the ratings he received in our February 2012 poll.

The gender gap in the governor's ratings, which closed for a short time in the fall, has widened again. Currently, 59% of men approve of Gov. Christie while 28% disapprove. Among women, approval stands at 43% and disapproval at 42%. On the other hand, his standing among public worker households has improved to 44% approve and 43% disapprove – up from 32% to 61% just a few months ago.

“There have been some changes in the governor's job rating over the past two months. Some groups have become more positive, while others have become more negative,” said Patrick Murray, director of the Monmouth University Polling Institute. “Gov. Christie's overall rating remains positive, so I'm not ready to say his ratings are slipping. But this poll indicates that the political sands are shifting. He has skillfully navigated those shifts in the past. We'll be following these numbers to see if he can continue the positive track in public opinion he has maintained for the past year.”

Voter opinion of his performance on key issues is an important element as the governor looks toward his 2013 re-election bid. The poll asked New Jerseyans to grade Gov. Christie's performance on controlling costs and cutting waste, improving schools, and providing property tax relief. The percentage

of New Jerseyans giving the governor positive grades on these three issues is up between 8 and 13 points since last August, while the percent giving him negative grades is down between 6 and 10 points.

Gov. Christie gets his best grades in the area of controlling costs and cutting waste. Nearly half the public give the governor a positive grade of A (18%) or B (29%), while just one-in-five give him a poor grade of D (11%) or F (10%).

He also does well on education. Nearly 4-in-10 grade him an A (13%) or B (24%) compared to 3-in-10 who say he deserves a D (14%) or F (16%). This marks the first time in Gov. Christie's tenure where more New Jerseyans give him a positive rather than a negative grade on school improvement.

While the governor's grades on handling property taxes have also improved over the past year, this remains a weaker area. Currently, just under 3-in-10 residents give Gov. Christie an A (11%) or B (17%), while just under 4-in-10 give a D (16%) or F (21%) on his handling of the issue that prior polls have shown to be the state's most pressing concern. These grades are similar to the 31% A/B to 38% D/F split he received in a July 2010 poll early in his term.

Two competing tax cut proposals are currently vying for support in Trenton. Gov. Christie has proposed a 10% across-the-board income tax cut, while Senate President Steve Sweeney has proposed a 10% property tax credit on residents' income taxes. When asked which one they prefer, New Jerseyans select the property tax credit by a 2-to-1 margin, 61% to 32% over the income tax cut. There is no difference in these results by residents' party identification. *[Note: These results reflect New Jerseyans' initial reaction to the proposals based on how much they assume each will benefit them. Moreover, the Monmouth poll question wording did NOT tie either of these proposals to the politicians proposing them, and therefore, the results do not reflect any "anchoring" that the public may attach to either plan's sponsor in evaluating these proposals.]*

A couple of other issues have been in the news recently that are indicative of the political climate's shifting sands. One involves the defunct Hudson River ARC Tunnel project which Gov. Christie canceled over a year ago. This has been in the news again because of a General Accounting Office report which has been used to suggest that the governor's projections of New Jersey's share of the cost may have been overstated. About 1-in-3 (35%) New Jerseyans are aware of this news.

Overall, 26% of New Jerseyans agree that the governor made the right call when he canceled the tunnel project while a similar 27% disagree. Nearly half – 46% – have no opinion on this. Among those who have heard the recent news reports, 37% back the governor's decision while 43% think it was a bad choice.

Regarding the fallout from the GAO report, half (50%) the state thinks that Gov. Christie probably overstated the tunnel costs while just 26% say his projections were basically accurate. Among

those who have followed the recent news reports, 54% say his estimates were overstated compared to 31% who say they were accurate.

“During the first two years of his term, most New Jerseyans have given Gov. Christie credit for making tough choices. With the 2013 election looming, it is likely that more issues will arise to dent the perception that he is above mere politics. How the governor handles these challenges will have a significant impact on his future success,” said Murray.

The plan to restructure higher education in the state is another issue which led to a political firestorm. The proposed merger of Rutgers University-New Brunswick and the UMDNJ medical school gets a thumbs up from 36% of state residents and a thumbs down from 20%. Another 43% have no opinion. In a February poll, shortly after the plan was introduced, 31% said it was a good idea to 13% who said it was not. Opinion in the most affected Route 1 Corridor counties of Mercer, Middlesex, and Union is more positive – 48% say it is a good idea to just 14% who say it is a bad idea. This is up from 35% good to 16% bad just two months ago.

The idea to fold the Rutgers-Camden campus into Rowan University, on the other hand, has generated greater opposition as residents hear more about it. Currently, 23% of New Jerseyans say it is a good idea while 33% say it is a bad idea, and another 44% have no opinion. In February, statewide opinion was split at 20% good idea to 22% bad idea. Among those in the most affected Delaware Valley counties of Burlington, Camden, and Gloucester, opposition to the merger is higher – 25% call it a good idea, while nearly half – 47% – see it as a bad idea. Two months ago, Delaware Valley opinion stood at 25% good idea to 36% bad idea.

Only 1-in-4 (26%) New Jerseyans say the merger of Rutgers-Camden and Rowan was proposed mainly to improve higher education in the Garden State. More (45%) say that it was done mainly to benefit powerful political interests. Another 3% say both considerations figured equally into the plan and another 26% offer no opinion.

The *Monmouth University/NJ Press Media Poll* was conducted by telephone with 804 New Jersey adults from April 11 to 15, 2012. 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. 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	51%	50%	54%	33%	54%	74%	59%	43%	44%	53%
Disapprove	35%	38%	25%	55%	28%	18%	28%	42%	43%	33%
(VOL) Don't know	14%	12%	21%	12%	17%	8%	13%	15%	12%	14%

TREND: All adults	April 2012	February 2012	October 2011	August 2011	May 2011	February 2011	September 2010	July 2010	April 2010	February 2010
Approve	51%	52%	54%	48%	47%	47%	45%	44%	41%	33%
Disapprove	35%	38%	38%	42%	49%	40%	38%	44%	44%	15%
(VOL) Don't know	14%	10%	9%	9%	5%	12%	17%	12%	15%	52%
Unwtd N	804	803	817	802	807	801	801	801	804	803

TREND: Registered voters	April 2012	February 2012	October 2011	August 2011	May 2011	February 2011	September 2010	July 2010	April 2010	February 2010
Approve	50%	55%	55%	50%	46%	49%	44%	45%	42%	31%
Disapprove	38%	37%	37%	41%	49%	41%	40%	43%	44%	15%
(VOL) Don't know	12%	9%	8%	8%	5%	9%	16%	12%	13%	53%
Unwtd N	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	38%	37%	45%	43%	35%	38%	39%	37%	38%	39%
Disapprove	38%	41%	28%	34%	41%	37%	39%	38%	40%	37%
(VOL) Don't know	24%	23%	27%	22%	24%	25%	22%	25%	22%	24%

TREND: All Adults	April 2012	Feb. 2012	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	38%	35%	35%	35%	33%	30%	24%	20%	26%	30%	25%	29%	27%	29%	28%	33%	35%
Disapprove	38%	39%	43%	47%	47%	44%	49%	56%	46%	47%	52%	47%	45%	53%	50%	41%	40%
(VOL) Don't know	24%	26%	22%	19%	20%	26%	27%	24%	28%	23%	23%	23%	28%	18%	22%	26%	25%
Unwtd N	804	803	817	802	807	801	801	804	803	923	803	808	1004	803	805	801	801

TREND: Registered Voters	April 2012	Feb. 2012	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	37%	34%	33%	35%	32%	29%	25%	19%	24%	31%	23%	29%	27%	28%	25%	32%	34%
Disapprove	41%	42%	45%	48%	48%	45%	49%	57%	49%	48%	55%	50%	47%	55%	53%	43%	42%
(VOL) Don't know	23%	24%	22%	17%	20%	26%	26%	24%	27%	22%	22%	21%	26%	17%	22%	25%	23%
Unwtd N	692	709	693	730	725	718	747	719	716	792	721	709	889	720	719	688	681

3. I'd like you to grade the Christie administration on how it has handled specific issues over the past year. For each one I read, please give a letter grade of A, B, C, D or F for failing. What grade would you give the Christie administration for [READ ITEM]? [ITEMS WERE ROTATED]

Controlling costs and cutting waste

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	Yes	No
A - Highest grade	18%	19%	16%	10%	16%	37%	23%	14%	19%	19%
B	29%	28%	33%	21%	35%	29%	31%	28%	30%	29%
C	26%	26%	27%	32%	25%	24%	23%	29%	23%	27%
D	11%	11%	9%	14%	13%	4%	11%	11%	12%	10%
F - Failing grade	10%	11%	7%	17%	7%	6%	9%	12%	14%	9%
(VOL) Don't know	5%	5%	7%	6%	4%	1%	4%	7%	1%	6%

TREND:	April 2012	August 2011	February 2011	July 2010
A - Highest grade	18%	12%	18%	21%
B	29%	22%	23%	22%
C	26%	34%	27%	24%
D	11%	14%	13%	12%
F - Failing grade	10%	14%	14%	15%
(VOL) Don't know	5%	4%	4%	6%
Unwtd N	804	802	801	801

Providing property tax relief

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	Yes	No
A - Highest grade	11%	10%	16%	11%	9%	14%	14%	8%	9%	12%
B	17%	17%	16%	12%	16%	25%	21%	13%	23%	15%
C	27%	27%	27%	25%	31%	26%	23%	31%	24%	28%
D	16%	18%	9%	19%	14%	18%	16%	16%	13%	17%
F - Failing grade	21%	22%	16%	26%	22%	9%	17%	24%	25%	19%
(VOL) Don't know	8%	6%	16%	7%	8%	8%	8%	8%	7%	9%

TREND:	April 2012	August 2011	February 2011	July 2010
A - Highest grade	11%	4%	5%	10%
B	17%	16%	19%	21%
C	27%	30%	24%	24%
D	16%	17%	18%	15%
F - Failing grade	21%	26%	27%	23%
(VOL) Don't know	8%	6%	8%	6%
Unwtd N	804	802	801	801

Improving our schools

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	Yes	No
A - Highest grade	13%	14%	10%	12%	12%	15%	14%	13%	13%	14%
B	24%	24%	23%	19%	22%	40%	29%	19%	25%	24%
C	25%	24%	34%	23%	30%	23%	27%	24%	19%	27%
D	14%	15%	10%	21%	13%	7%	12%	17%	12%	15%
F - Failing grade	16%	17%	13%	22%	16%	9%	11%	22%	24%	14%
(VOL) Don't know	7%	6%	11%	3%	7%	7%	7%	6%	6%	7%

TREND:	April 2012	August 2011	February 2011	July 2010
A - Highest grade	13%	8%	10%	12%
B	24%	20%	22%	17%
C	25%	26%	22%	22%
D	14%	17%	15%	12%
F - Failing grade	16%	23%	26%	32%
(VOL) Don't know	7%	5%	5%	5%
Unwtd N	804	802	801	801

4. Which kind of tax cut would you prefer to get: a 10 percent cut to your New Jersey state income taxes OR a 10 percent property tax credit? [ITEMS WERE ROTATED]

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	Yes	No
Income tax cut	32%	30%	41%	33%	31%	36%	33%	30%	37%	31%
Property tax credit	61%	64%	48%	62%	60%	61%	60%	61%	56%	61%
(VOL) Don't know	7%	7%	10%	5%	9%	3%	7%	8%	7%	8%

5. Do you agree or disagree with Governor Christie's decision to cancel the Hudson River ARC Tunnel project over a year ago, or don't you have an opinion on this?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	Yes	No
Agree	26%	29%	14%	11%	29%	49%	34%	19%	28%	26%
Disagree	27%	28%	24%	40%	23%	13%	29%	25%	30%	26%
No opinion	46%	43%	62%	49%	47%	38%	36%	56%	42%	48%
(VOL) Refused	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%

6. Have you seen or heard any recent reports questioning Governor Christie's cost estimates when he canceled the tunnel project over a year ago?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	Yes	No
Yes, heard	35%	39%	19%	30%	35%	42%	43%	27%	37%	34%
No, not heard	62%	59%	78%	66%	62%	56%	55%	70%	60%	63%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	3%	4%	3%	3%	2%	2%	3%	3%	3%

7. Do you think that Governor Christie's cost projections were basically accurate or were they probably overstated?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	Yes	No
Basically accurate	26%	27%	22%	16%	26%	42%	32%	21%	22%	27%
Probably overstated	50%	49%	54%	64%	52%	27%	47%	53%	50%	50%
(VOL) Don't know	24%	24%	25%	21%	21%	31%	22%	26%	28%	23%

8. Do you think merging the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey into Rutgers University is a good idea or bad idea, or do you have no opinion on this?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	Yes	No
Good idea	36%	36%	36%	40%	34%	38%	38%	35%	37%	36%
Bad idea	20%	21%	18%	21%	21%	17%	19%	21%	19%	20%
No opinion	43%	43%	45%	39%	45%	44%	43%	43%	42%	44%
(VOL) Refused	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%	2%	0%

TREND:	April 2012	February 2012
Good idea	36%	31%
Bad idea	20%	13%
No opinion	43%	56%
(VOL) Refused	1%	1%
Unwtd N	804	803

9. Do you think taking the Rutgers Camden campus and merging it into Rowan University is a good idea or bad idea, or do you have no opinion on this?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	Yes	No
Good idea	23%	23%	24%	23%	21%	32%	28%	19%	24%	23%
Bad idea	33%	33%	31%	40%	32%	23%	30%	36%	34%	32%
No opinion	44%	44%	44%	37%	47%	44%	43%	45%	41%	45%
(VOL) Refused	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%

TREND:	April 2012	February 2012
Good idea	23%	20%
Bad idea	33%	22%
No opinion	44%	57%
(VOL) Refused	0%	0%
Unwtd N	804	803

10. Do you think the Rutgers-Camden and Rowan merger was proposed mainly to improve higher education in New Jersey or mainly to benefit powerful political interests?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	Yes	No
Improve higher education in NJ	26%	27%	20%	24%	25%	32%	30%	22%	25%	26%
Benefit powerful political interests (VOL) Both	45%	43%	52%	52%	45%	34%	44%	45%	43%	45%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	3%	1%	4%	3%	2%	3%	3%	5%	2%
	26%	27%	26%	20%	27%	32%	23%	30%	27%	26%

The *Monmouth University/NJ Press Media Poll* was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute on April 11 to 15, 2012 with a statewide random sample of 804 adult residents, including 644 contacted on a landline telephone and 160 on a cell phone. Live interviewing services were provided by Braun Research, Inc. and the telephone sample was obtained from Survey Sampling International. Monmouth is responsible for all aspects of the survey questionnaire design, data weighting and analysis. 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)			
36% Dem	49% Male	29% 18-34	64% White
22% Rep	51% Female	39% 35-54	12% Black
42% Ind		32% 55+	15% Hispanic
			9% Asian/Other
Registered Voter Sample (weighted)			
37% Dem	47% Male	24% 18-34	70% White
23% Rep	53% Female	39% 35-54	12% Black
40% Ind		37% 55+	10% Hispanic
			8% Asian/Other

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		MARGIN OF ERROR			GENDER		PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	Yes	No
Unweighted N	804	692	112	284	327	160	382	422	206	585
moe	3.5%	3.7%	9.3%	5.8%	5.4%	7.8%	5.0%	4.8%	6.8%	4.1%

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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