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Released:

Wednesday, February 9, 2011

*Please attribute this information to:
**Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey
Press Media Poll***

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CHRISTIE'S POSITIVE RATINGS CONTINUE

Governor can claim accomplishments in his first year

More New Jerseyans approve than disapprove of the job Governor Chris Christie is doing and most say he has made some real accomplishments during his first year in office. But the latest *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Press Media Poll* also suggests that these positive views could change if property taxes don't come down in the near future.

Governor Christie's job rating currently stands at 47% approve to 40% disapprove among all state residents, and 49% to 41% among registered voters. Christie receives positive ratings from 80% of Republicans, 49% of independents, and 27% of Democrats. These findings are somewhat higher than the previous *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Press Media Poll* taken back in September.

The governor generates intense opinions from most of his constituents. A majority of New Jerseyans hold strong opinions on Christie's job performance. This group is evenly divided between strong approval (26%) and strong disapproval (26%).

The poll also asked Garden State residents to grade the governor in three areas: cost-cutting, schools, and property taxes. In the area of controlling costs and cutting waste, 4-in-10 New Jerseyans give Christie an above average grade of A (18%) or B (23%), 27% give him a C, and 1-in-4 give him a poor grade of D (13%) or F (14%). When it comes to improving schools, 1-in-3 hand out good grades (10% A and 22% B), 22% give Christie a C, and 4-in-10 say his work in this area needs improvement (15% D and 26% F). His grades for cost-cutting are about the same as they were in July, while the governor's grades on schools are slightly higher than they were six months ago.

The governor gets lower grades in the area of providing property tax relief. Just 1-in-4 say Christie has earned a high grade of A (5%) or B (19%), 24% give him a C, and more than 4-in-10 say he

has some way to go on this pressing issue (18% D and 27% F). This marks a slight worsening of his grade on property taxes from July, when 31% of residents gave him an A or B in this area.

“New Jersey’s highest in the nation property tax burden continues to shadow the governor. He’s built a reputation for getting things done, so he may suffer the most if relief doesn’t come soon,” said Patrick Murray, director of the Monmouth University Polling Institute.

Nearly half of New Jerseyans (48%) say they will blame the governor “a lot” if property taxes are not significantly lowered in the next few years. This is slightly lower than the number who will assign a lot of blame to the legislature (51%) and slightly lower than those who will similarly blame their local town governments (45%). However, when asked who they will blame the most if property taxes don’t go down, 35% tab the governor, compared to 19% for the legislature and 10% for local government.

Among other possible culprits causing an impasse on property taxes, 10% will lay most of the blame on the teachers union, 5% will single out other public workers unions, and just 3% say they will hold their school district most accountable for a lack of property tax relief.

Overall, about 3-in-10 say the teachers union (32%) and 1-in-4 say the public workers union (27%) will carry a lot of blame if the property tax problem is not remedied. Just 1-in-4 (25%) will assign a lot of blame to their school district if property taxes don’t go down. It’s worth noting that funding school budgets makes up the lion’s share of most New Jersey homeowners’ property tax bills.

In the opinion of Garden State Democrats, the one left holding the bag on property taxes will be, unsurprisingly, the governor (52%), followed far behind by the state legislature (13%) and local government (10%). For independents, the top three culprits will be the governor (29%), the state legislature (23%), and the teachers union (13%). Republicans come to even less of a consensus on who would be most responsible if property taxes don’t go down: 24% would blame the legislature most, 18% the governor, and 16% the teachers union.

One positive sign for the governor is that optimism about the likelihood of property tax relief has improved from the low point measured back in September. Currently, 4-in-10 New Jerseyans say that they are likely (8% very and 32% somewhat) to see significantly lower property taxes in the next few years, compared to 24% who say they are not too likely and 31% who say they are not at all likely. In September, only 22% said they were at least somewhat likely to see real relief, while a majority of 53% said they were not at all likely. The current findings of 40% who feel they are likely to see property tax relief is similar to public opinion registered twelve months ago (42%) when Christie first took office. However, it is still below the 49% high point this poll registered back in July, just before the property tax cap was passed.

Regardless of what the future may hold, New Jerseyans feel that Chris Christie already has some achievements under his belt. Nearly 2-in-3 say that the governor can claim some real accomplishments in

his short time as governor. This includes 25% who say he has major accomplishments and 39% who say he has minor accomplishments. Another 34% say he has no real accomplishments so far.

On this measure, Governor Christie has been more successful in his first year than either of his two immediate elected predecessors were in their entire terms. A *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Press Media Poll* taken in the summer of 2009 found that only 13% of state residents thought Jon Corzine had achieved any major accomplishments. An Eagleton-Rutgers Poll in 2004 found that Jim McGreevey left office with only 16% saying he had achieved anything major (and that number stood at just 11% in prior polls). Moreover, Governor Christie’s current numbers are not much different from where the state’s last Republican governor, Christie Whitman, stood well into her second term (25% major accomplishments and 48% minor accomplishments in a March 2000 Eagleton-Rutgers poll).

The current poll also finds that the state legislature’s job rating continues to be more negative than positive. Just 30% of New Jerseyans approve and 44% disapprove of the job their legislators are doing, with another 26% holding no opinion. These results are nominally higher than polls taken in the past 18 months.

The contrasting opinions of the governor and the legislature may explain why overall opinion of Trenton has not improved. Just 26% of state residents say that the quality of state government has gotten better in the past year, while more – 33% – say that it has gotten worse. Another 38% say there has been no change in the past year. Republicans are more likely to say Trenton has improved (47%), Democrats to say it has worsened (45%), and independents are split (29% better, 30% worse, 38% no change).

The *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Press Media Poll* was conducted by telephone with 801 New Jersey adults from February 2 to 7, 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. 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	26%	28%	14%	6%	28%	56%	20%	27%
Somewhat approve	21%	21%	23%	21%	21%	24%	18%	23%
Somewhat disapprove	14%	14%	16%	14%	18%	7%	12%	15%
Strongly disapprove	26%	27%	20%	47%	20%	7%	40%	23%
(VOL) Don't know	12%	9%	27%	13%	13%	6%	9%	13%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	801	718	83	257	316	197	206	585

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

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

2. 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	30%	29%	31%	28%	28%	35%	25%	31%
Disapprove	44%	45%	40%	48%	44%	41%	57%	41%
(VOL) Don't know	26%	26%	29%	24%	28%	25%	19%	28%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	801	718	83	257	316	197	206	585

TREND: <i>All Adults</i>	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	30%	24%	20%	26%	30%	25%	29%	27%	29%	28%	33%	35%
Disapprove	44%	49%	56%	46%	47%	52%	47%	45%	53%	50%	41%	40%
(VOL) Don't know	26%	27%	24%	28%	23%	23%	23%	28%	18%	22%	26%	25%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	801	801	804	803	923	803	808	1004	803	805	801	801

TREND: <i>Registered Voters</i>	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	29%	25%	19%	24%	31%	23%	29%	27%	28%	25%	32%	34%
Disapprove	45%	49%	57%	49%	48%	55%	50%	47%	55%	53%	43%	42%
(VOL) Don't know	26%	26%	24%	27%	22%	22%	21%	26%	17%	22%	25%	23%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	718	747	719	716	792	721	709	889	720	719	688	681

3. Do you think that the overall quality of government in Trenton has gotten better, gotten worse, or stayed about the same compared to a year ago?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No
Better	26%	27%	24%	12%	29%	47%	25%	27%
Worse	33%	32%	40%	45%	30%	16%	42%	30%
Same	38%	38%	34%	41%	38%	33%	29%	40%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	3%	2%	3%	4%	4%	4%	3%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	801	718	83	257	316	197	206	585

TREND:	February 2011	April 2010
Better	26%	21%
Worse	33%	31%
Same	38%	42%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	6%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	801	804

4. 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			STATE WORKER / TEACHER HOUSEHOLD	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No
A - Highest grade	18%	19%	14%	5%	18%	42%	15%	19%
B	23%	22%	30%	18%	30%	20%	23%	23%
C	27%	27%	27%	31%	27%	21%	28%	27%
D	13%	14%	10%	19%	12%	7%	14%	13%
F - Failing grade	14%	13%	16%	22%	11%	6%	15%	13%
(VOL) Don't know	4%	4%	4%	4%	3%	5%	4%	4%
Unwtd N	801	718	83	257	316	197	206	585

TREND:	February 2011	July 2010
A - Highest grade	18%	21%
B	23%	22%
C	27%	24%
D	13%	12%
F - Failing grade	14%	15%
(VOL) Don't know	4%	6%
Unwtd N	801	801

Providing property tax relief

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			STATE WORKER / TEACHER HOUSEHOLD	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No
A - Highest grade	5%	6%	1%	1%	5%	13%	4%	5%
B	19%	19%	18%	11%	19%	29%	16%	20%
C	24%	23%	32%	23%	29%	20%	21%	25%
D	18%	18%	13%	17%	17%	18%	20%	17%
F - Failing grade	27%	27%	23%	38%	23%	14%	31%	25%
(VOL) Don't know	8%	7%	13%	9%	7%	6%	9%	7%
Unwtd N	801	718	83	257	316	197	206	585

TREND:	February 2011	July 2010
A - Highest grade	5%	10%
B	19%	21%
C	24%	24%
D	18%	15%
F - Failing grade	27%	23%
(VOL) Don't know	8%	6%
Unwtd N	801	801

Improving our schools

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			STATE WORKER / TEACHER HOUSEHOLD	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No
A - Highest grade	10%	10%	12%	4%	9%	21%	9%	11%
B	22%	20%	31%	13%	26%	31%	12%	25%
C	22%	22%	22%	17%	24%	25%	21%	22%
D	15%	15%	13%	17%	16%	7%	14%	14%
F - Failing grade	26%	27%	19%	43%	20%	13%	39%	23%
(VOL) Don't know	5%	5%	3%	5%	4%	3%	3%	5%
Unwtd N	801	718	83	257	316	197	206	585

TREND:	February 2011	July 2010
A - Highest grade	10%	12%
B	22%	17%
C	22%	22%
D	15%	12%
F - Failing grade	26%	32%
(VOL) Don't know	5%	5%
Unwtd N	801	801

5. 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	25%	27%	11%	10%	23%	54%	26%	25%	
Minor accomplishments	39%	38%	44%	34%	45%	32%	34%	41%	
No real accomplishments	34%	33%	40%	51%	31%	14%	39%	33%	
(VOL) Don't know	2%	1%	5%	4%	0%	0%	1%	2%	
Unwtd N	801	718	83	257	316	197	206	585	

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			PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No	
Very likely	8%	8%	13%	8%	7%	11%	9%	8%	
Somewhat likely	32%	32%	34%	22%	38%	42%	30%	33%	
Not too likely	24%	25%	23%	28%	23%	21%	28%	24%	
Not at all likely	31%	33%	24%	38%	30%	22%	30%	32%	
(VOL) Don't know	3%	3%	6%	4%	2%	5%	3%	4%	
Unwtd N	801	718	83	257	316	197	206	585	

TREND:	February 2011	September 2010	July 2010	February 2010	April 2006
Very likely	8%	3%	10%	8%	6%
Somewhat likely	32%	19%	39%	34%	20%
Not too likely	24%	22%	18%	29%	17%
Not at all likely	31%	53%	30%	27%	51%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	2%	3%	2%	5%
Unwtd N	801	801	801	803	803

7. If property taxes are not significantly lowered in the next few years, how much will you blame [READ ITEM] – a lot, a little, or not at all?
[ITEMS WERE ROTATED]

The governor

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER			PARTY ID			PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No	
A lot	48%	48%	48%	58%	48%	31%	49%	48%	
A little	35%	35%	39%	32%	36%	44%	35%	36%	
Not at all	14%	15%	10%	8%	14%	23%	14%	14%	
(VOL) Don't know	2%	2%	3%	2%	2%	2%	1%	2%	
Unwtd N	801	718	83	257	316	197	206	585	

The state legislature

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER			PARTY ID			PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No	
A lot	51%	50%	55%	48%	52%	51%	51%	51%	
A little	39%	40%	34%	41%	40%	37%	43%	38%	
Not at all	6%	7%	4%	6%	6%	8%	5%	7%	
(VOL) Don't know	4%	3%	7%	4%	2%	4%	0%	5%	
Unwtd N	801	718	83	257	316	197	206	585	

Your local government

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No
A lot	45%	43%	56%	48%	43%	43%	35%	48%
A little	40%	42%	31%	38%	42%	44%	49%	38%
Not at all	11%	13%	4%	12%	12%	11%	14%	11%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	2%	9%	2%	4%	2%	2%	3%
Unwtd N	801	718	83	257	316	197	206	585

Your school district

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No
A lot	25%	27%	15%	19%	29%	30%	23%	25%
A little	37%	36%	45%	29%	44%	39%	43%	36%
Not at all	33%	33%	37%	48%	23%	29%	31%	34%
(VOL) Don't know	4%	5%	3%	5%	5%	2%	3%	5%
Unwtd N	801	718	83	257	316	197	206	585

The public workers union

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No
A lot	27%	27%	25%	17%	27%	41%	17%	29%
A little	34%	33%	40%	34%	38%	31%	33%	35%
Not at all	31%	32%	23%	40%	30%	22%	41%	28%
(VOL) Don't know	8%	7%	12%	10%	6%	7%	9%	7%
Unwtd N	801	718	83	257	316	197	206	585

The teachers union

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No
A lot	32%	33%	21%	18%	36%	44%	29%	32%
A little	29%	28%	31%	28%	26%	34%	27%	29%
Not at all	35%	34%	42%	48%	33%	20%	41%	33%
(VOL) Don't know	5%	5%	6%	6%	4%	3%	3%	6%
Unwtd N	801	718	83	257	316	197	206	585

8. And who will you blame the most?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No
The governor	35%	35%	37%	52%	29%	18%	41%	33%
The state legislature	19%	20%	14%	13%	23%	24%	21%	19%
Your local government	10%	11%	9%	10%	9%	13%	7%	11%
Your school district	3%	3%	5%	4%	4%	2%	5%	3%
The public workers union	5%	6%	4%	1%	7%	10%	4%	6%
The teachers union	10%	11%	8%	4%	13%	16%	9%	11%
(VOL) Can't choose	13%	12%	15%	12%	13%	13%	12%	13%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	3%	7%	4%	3%	3%	1%	4%
Unwtd N	801	718	83	257	316	197	206	585

The *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Press Media Poll* was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute on February 2 to 7, 2011 with a statewide random sample of 801 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.

<i>POLL DEMOGRAPHICS (weighted)</i>			
<i>35% Dem</i>	<i>49% Male</i>	<i>28% 18-34</i>	<i>65% White</i>
<i>22% Rep</i>	<i>51% Female</i>	<i>40% 35-54</i>	<i>12% Black</i>
<i>43% Ind</i>		<i>32% 55+</i>	<i>15% Hispanic</i>
			<i>8% Asian/Other</i>

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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