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## **NEW JERSEY WANTS STIMULUS AND COST CUTTING**

*Residents more confident in Obama than Corzine*

New Jerseyans are confident in President Obama's ability to deal with the current financial crisis and most back his stimulus proposal, although they are uncertain of its impact. The latest *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll* finds a different story at the state level, though. Garden State residents express less confidence in their governor than their president, few say the state is doing enough to control costs, and many prefer laying off state workers to deferring current pension obligations.

The vast majority (78%) of New Jerseyans feel their state government is not doing enough to control costs during the current economic downturn. Only 13% say Trenton is keeping costs under control. Local governments and school districts fare better by comparison. About 4-in-10 state residents (40%) say their local municipal government is doing enough to control costs (50% say it is not), and a similar number say the same about their local school district (39% is doing enough to 42% is not).

Governor Jon Corzine has proposed allowing local governments to defer some of their pension obligations to make up for reductions in state aid. The governor has also said that layoffs may be necessary if the state employee unions do not accept a wage freeze. Critics have already called for state worker layoffs in order to avoid creating more debt. When asked to choose between these options, slightly more New Jersey residents prefer laying off state government workers in order to cut costs (44%) than putting off current pension payments and increasing future state debt in order to maintain the current level of government services (34%). Another 15% reject this tradeoff and 8% have no opinion.

Only Republicans are clearly in favor of layoffs – 52% support this option versus 32% who would defer pension payments to maintain services. Independents tend to prefer the layoffs (42%) to pension deferrals (29%), although 21% reject this as a necessary tradeoff. The governor’s fellow Democrats are divided – 39% favor layoffs to 43% who prefer pension deferrals.

“Jon Corzine is in a thorny situation. Ideally, these decisions would be based purely on the merits, but it’s hard to ignore the political ramifications in an election year. The governor can’t upset his base, but he must also build his standing among independents,” said Patrick Murray, director of the Monmouth University Polling Institute.

The governor laid out some specific plans to deal with the crisis in a speech to the legislature in October and again in his State of the State address last month. Just 32% of New Jerseyans say they have heard about the governor’s plan to help New Jersey deal with the financial crisis. Among those who are aware of his ideas, only 32% say the proposals will make things better for New Jersey families. Another 41% say the governor’s proposals will make no difference and 21% say his plan will make things worse for New Jersey families.

Overall, confidence in the state government’s ability to deal with the financial crisis is lukewarm. Just under half of New Jersey residents are either very (9%) or somewhat (39%) confident in Governor Corzine’s ability to handle the current situation. A similar number are generally confident – 5% very and 42% somewhat – in the state legislature. Confidence in the governor on this issue has slipped by about 6 points since October 2008, while the legislature’s rating is unchanged.

By comparison, fully 3-in-4 New Jerseyans say they are either very (40%) or somewhat (34%) confident in President Barack Obama’s ability to handle the current financial crisis. This represents a slight increase in the confidence that was expressed in the then-candidate in an October 2008 poll. Currently, 54% of Republicans and 65% of independents join 94% of Democrats in expressing at least some confidence in the new president’s ability to handle the situation. The poll also found that 55% of Garden State residents are generally confident in Congress’ ability to deal with the economy, although only 1-in-10 (10%) say they are *very* confident.

“President Obama’s leadership on the crisis is generating confidence, even though New Jerseyans are uncertain whether his stimulus package will really put the economy back on track,” said Murray.

Nearly two-thirds (64%) of the New Jersey public agree that some sort of economic stimulus package is necessary to improve the current state of the economy. A somewhat smaller majority (55%) approve of the president’s \$800+ billion stimulus proposal that includes tax cuts, aid to states, and spending on several infrastructure projects. Only 24% disapprove of the plan and another 21% say they do not know enough about it to form an opinion. Predictably, a large number of Democrats (73%) approve of the proposal. Nearly half (49%) of independents also approve, while Republicans are divided – 37% approve to 43% disapprove.

Overall, about 1-in-3 (31%) New Jerseyans feel that the current stimulus bill will have a major impact on improving the economy if enacted and another 45% say that any impact will be minor. Only 15% say that the plan will have no impact at all and 9% have no opinion. Expectations are mixed even among those who support the president’s proposal – 46% of those who approve of the plan say the economic impact will be major, while a similar 47% say it will probably be minor.

The poll also found that Garden State residents continue to be more somewhat optimistic about their own personal finances than they are about the nation’s. Specifically, 51% feel optimistic about their family’s financial situation over the next 12 months, while 44% are pessimistic. By comparison, fewer New Jerseyans – 37% – feel optimistic about the state of the national economy in the coming year, whereas 61% are pessimistic. These results are basically unchanged from the October 2008 poll.

The *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll* was conducted by telephone with 803 New Jersey adults February 2-8, 2009. 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 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.)*

[QUESTIONS 1 AND 2 WERE ROTATED]

- Thinking about the next 12 months, would you say you feel optimistic or pessimistic about your own family’s financial situation?

	TOTAL	Registered Voters	PARTY ID			INCOME		
			Dem	Ind	Rep	<\$50K	\$50-100K	>\$100K
Optimistic	51%	50%	55%	48%	48%	54%	49%	51%
Pessimistic	44%	45%	42%	45%	46%	42%	45%	46%
(VOL) Don't know	5%	4%	3%	6%	6%	4%	6%	3%
Unwtd N	803	721	261	309	178	199	260	225

2. Thinking about the next 12 months, would you say you feel optimistic or pessimistic about the state of the national economy?

	TOTAL	Registered Voters	PARTY ID			INCOME		
			Dem	Ind	Rep	<\$50K	\$50-100K	>\$100K
Optimistic	37%	36%	46%	27%	32%	43%	33%	33%
Pessimistic	61%	62%	51%	70%	66%	55%	61%	67%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	2%	3%	3%	2%	2%	6%	0%
Unwtd N	803	721	261	309	178	199	260	225

TRENDS: Registered voters only	Family's financial situation		State of national economy	
	February 2009	October 2008	February 2009	October 2008
Optimistic	50%	49%	36%	34%
Pessimistic	45%	42%	62%	59%
(VOL) Don't know	4%	9%	2%	7%
Unwtd N	721	900	721	900

3. How confident are you in the ability of each of the following to handle the current financial crisis: very confident, somewhat confident, not very confident, or not confident at all? [ITEMS WERE ROTATED]

Barack Obama

	TOTAL	Registered Voters	PARTY ID			INCOME		
			Dem	Ind	Rep	<\$50K	\$50-100K	>\$100K
Very confident	40%	39%	63%	27%	20%	51%	41%	27%
Somewhat confident	34%	35%	31%	38%	34%	30%	35%	43%
Not very confident	9%	10%	2%	13%	17%	6%	8%	12%
Not at all confident	12%	12%	3%	15%	23%	10%	11%	15%
(VOL) Don't know	5%	4%	2%	7%	6%	4%	5%	3%
Unwtd N	803	721	261	309	178	199	260	225

The U.S. Congress

	TOTAL	Registered Voters	PARTY ID			INCOME		
			Dem	Ind	Rep	<\$50K	\$50-100K	>\$100K
Very confident	10%	11%	17%	4%	9%	14%	8%	7%
Somewhat confident	45%	42%	60%	37%	34%	48%	49%	40%
Not very confident	24%	26%	15%	27%	32%	22%	23%	29%
Not at all confident	19%	19%	8%	27%	24%	16%	17%	23%
(VOL) Don't know	2%	2%	0%	4%	1%	1%	3%	2%
Unwtd N	803	721	261	309	178	199	260	225

Jon Corzine

	TOTAL	Registered Voters	PARTY ID			INCOME		
			Dem	Ind	Rep	<\$50K	\$50-100K	>\$100K
Very confident	9%	10%	14%	5%	4%	14%	7%	7%
Somewhat confident	39%	37%	50%	36%	27%	37%	45%	35%
Not very confident	25%	26%	20%	29%	32%	23%	23%	30%
Not at all confident	23%	24%	14%	27%	32%	23%	23%	26%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	2%	1%	3%	4%	3%	2%	1%
Unwtd N	803	721	261	309	178	199	260	225

The New Jersey state legislature

	TOTAL	Registered Voters	PARTY ID			INCOME		
			Dem	Ind	Rep	<\$50K	\$50-100K	>\$100K
Very confident	5%	5%	5%	1%	5%	9%	4%	3%
Somewhat confident	42%	41%	55%	36%	31%	40%	44%	40%
Not very confident	26%	27%	24%	27%	31%	28%	23%	27%
Not at all confident	21%	22%	9%	31%	27%	18%	20%	29%
(VOL) Don't know	6%	5%	6%	5%	6%	5%	9%	2%
Unwtd N	803	721	261	309	178	199	260	225

TRENDS: <i>Registered voters only</i>	Barack Obama		U.S. Congress		Jon Corzine		NJ state legislature	
	February 2009	October 2008	February 2009	October 2008	February 2009	October 2008	February 2009	October 2008
	Very confident	39%	35%	11%	7%	10%	14%	5%
Somewhat confident	35%	33%	42%	44%	37%	39%	41%	39%
Not very confident	10%	12%	26%	24%	26%	17%	27%	20%
Not at all confident	12%	15%	19%	19%	24%	24%	22%	21%
(VOL) Don't know	4%	5%	2%	6%	2%	7%	5%	13%
Unwtd N	721	900	721	900	721	900	721	900

4. Do you think that an economic stimulus package is necessary to improve the current state of the economy, or not?

	TOTAL	Registered Voters	PARTY ID			INCOME		
			Dem	Ind	Rep	<\$50K	\$50-100K	>\$100K
Is necessary	64%	64%	80%	55%	54%	62%	66%	66%
Is NOT necessary	27%	28%	13%	37%	36%	28%	25%	30%
(VOL) Don't know	9%	8%	7%	8%	10%	10%	9%	5%
Unwtd N	803	721	261	309	178	199	260	225

5. President Obama has proposed a more than 800 billion dollar plan that would include tax cuts, aid to states, and spending on several infrastructure projects. Do you approve or disapprove of this plan? If you do not know enough about this to have an opinion, please just say so.

	TOTAL	Registered Voters	PARTY ID			INCOME		
			Dem	Ind	Rep	<\$50K	\$50-100K	>\$100K
Approve	55%	55%	73%	49%	37%	60%	57%	53%
Disapprove	24%	24%	4%	33%	43%	18%	22%	32%
(VOL) Depends	3%	4%	3%	4%	4%	3%	3%	3%
No opinion/don't know	18%	17%	20%	14%	16%	19%	18%	12%
Unwtd N	803	721	261	309	178	199	260	225

6. Do you think this plan will have a major impact, minor impact, or no impact in improving the economy?

	TOTAL	Registered Voters	PARTY ID			INCOME		
			Dem	Ind	Rep	<\$50K	\$50-100K	>\$100K
Major impact	31%	30%	50%	20%	18%	35%	30%	26%
Minor impact	45%	45%	40%	49%	49%	43%	51%	47%
No impact	15%	16%	3%	23%	22%	13%	13%	18%
(VOL) Don't know	9%	9%	7%	8%	10%	9%	6%	9%
Unwtd N	803	721	261	309	178	199	260	225

7. Have you read or heard anything about Governor Corzine's plan to help New Jersey deal with the financial crisis?

	TOTAL	Registered Voters	PARTY ID			INCOME		
			Dem	Ind	Rep	<\$50K	\$50-100K	>\$100K
Yes	32%	34%	29%	37%	30%	26%	31%	41%
No	67%	65%	70%	63%	70%	74%	68%	58%
(VOL) Don't know	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%
Unwtd N	803	721	261	309	178	199	260	225

[The following question was asked only of those who said "Yes" to Q7, moe= ± 5.8%]

8. Do you think his plan will make things better or worse for New Jersey families, or will it make no difference?

	TOTAL	Registered Voters	PARTY ID			INCOME		
			Dem	Ind	Rep	<\$50K	\$50-100K	>\$100K
Better	32%	30%	53%	22%	16%	37%	34%	28%
Worse	21%	20%	9%	25%	36%	30%	18%	21%
No difference	41%	44%	28%	48%	47%	30%	42%	47%
(VOL) Don't know	6%	6%	9%	5%	1%	3%	6%	4%
Unwtd N	288	271	86	119	62	52	94	103

9. Which of the following would you favor more: laying off state government workers in order to cut costs - OR- putting off current pension payments and increasing future state debt in order to maintain the current level of government services?  
*[RESPONSE OPTIONS WERE ROTATED]*

	TOTAL	Registered Voters	PARTY ID			INCOME		
			Dem	Ind	Rep	<\$50K	\$50-100K	>\$100K
Laying off state workers	44%	45%	39%	42%	52%	34%	44%	56%
Putting off pension payments	34%	32%	43%	29%	32%	41%	32%	29%
(VOL) Neither	15%	15%	13%	21%	6%	18%	13%	12%
(VOL) Don't know	8%	8%	6%	8%	9%	8%	11%	2%
Unwtd N	803	721	261	309	178	199	260	225

10. Do you think the state government in Trenton IS or IS NOT doing enough to control costs during this time?

	TOTAL	Registered Voters	PARTY ID			INCOME		
			Dem	Ind	Rep	<\$50K	\$50-100K	>\$100K
IS doing enough	13%	12%	17%	11%	9%	18%	10%	14%
IS NOT doing enough	78%	79%	75%	79%	86%	73%	80%	81%
(VOL) Don't know	9%	9%	9%	10%	6%	9%	11%	6%
Unwtd N	803	721	261	309	178	199	260	225

*[Question 11 was asked of a random half-sample: moe= ± 4.9%]*

11. Do you think your local municipal government IS or IS NOT doing enough to control costs during this time?

	TOTAL	Registered Voters	PARTY ID			INCOME		
			Dem	Ind	Rep	<\$50K	\$50-100K	>\$100K
IS doing enough	40%	39%	47%	38%	34%	35%	45%	38%
IS NOT doing enough	50%	51%	45%	53%	61%	52%	47%	58%
(VOL) Don't know	9%	10%	8%	9%	5%	13%	8%	4%
Unwtd N	401	363	131	157	87	101	121	124

*[Question 12 was asked of a random half-sample: moe= ± 4.9%]*

12. Do you think your local school district IS or IS NOT doing enough to control costs during this time?

	TOTAL	Registered Voters	PARTY ID			INCOME		
			Dem	Ind	Rep	<\$50K	\$50-100K	>\$100K
IS doing enough	39%	38%	46%	38%	29%	38%	33%	48%
IS NOT doing enough	42%	42%	39%	45%	43%	43%	44%	39%
(VOL) Don't know	20%	20%	15%	18%	28%	19%	22%	12%
Unwtd N	402	358	130	152	91	98	139	101

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 February 2-8, 2009 with a statewide random sample of 803 New Jersey adults. For results based on this voter 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.

*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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