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## NEW JERSEY'S CAVALCADE OF GOVERNORS 2010

*Kean remains on top; Florio moves up; Christie premieres high*

Mirror, mirror on the wall, who's the most popular governor of them all? According to a *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll* of Garden State residents, it's Tom Kean by a mile. New Jerseyans were asked their opinion of the nine people in the state who can call themselves "Governor." As in an identical survey taken in 2006, Kean is on top of the heap while James McGreevey continues to dwell in the cellar. But the current survey also found some shifts in the opinion of other governors, as well as a solid premiere by the state's newest incumbent.

Tom Kean (R; 1982-90) is viewed favorably by 46% of the public and unfavorably by 9%, with 44% having no opinion. Four years ago, more than half (55%) had a positive opinion and 11% held a negative view. As time passes, it appears that more opinion shifts into the "don't know" column. Still, his current +37 point net positive rating puts the former governor and 9/11 Commission chairman on top.

"Nine living New Jerseyans can lay claim to the title of governor, but Tom Kean is clearly in a league of his own," said Patrick Murray, director of the Monmouth University Polling Institute.

	NJ Gubernatorial Leader Board	Net Favorability		Among those age 55+
		Sept. '06	Feb. '10	
↔	Tom Kean (R)	+44	<b>+37</b>	+56
↓	Dick Codey (D)	+34	<b>+14</b>	+24
<b>new</b>	Chris Christie (R)	n/a	<b>+14</b>	+16
↔	Brendan Byrne (D)	+18	<b>+13</b>	+26
↑	Jim Florio (D)	-8	<b>+2</b>	-0-
↔	Christie Whitman (R)	-2	<b>-3</b>	-16
↓	Donald DiFrancesco (R)	+1	<b>-8</b>	-7
↓	Jon Corzine (D)	+16	<b>-24</b>	-28
↔	James McGreevey (D)	-22	<b>-28</b>	-48

Opinion on Dick Codey (D; 2004-06) stands at 34% favorable to 20% unfavorable, with 46% undecided. This net +14 point positive rating is enough for him to maintain second place in the standings, but marks a decline from the 50% to 16% rating he held shortly after ending his fourteen month run as governor after James McGreevey's resignation.

Chris Christie's (R; 2010-?) initial appearance on the list finds him in a virtual tie with Codey and Brendan Byrne. Just weeks into his term, the current incumbent holds a 31% favorable to 17% unfavorable rating, with 52% undecided.

While most New Jerseyans (63%) don't recall Byrne's (D; 1974-82) tenure well enough to evaluate him, those that do are more likely to view our most senior ex-governor positively – 25% favorable to 12% unfavorable, for a +13 point net positive score.

Making a surprise appearance in fifth place is one-term governor Jim Florio (D; 1990-94). Florio, who narrowly lost his re-election bid due to voter anger over tax increases, now garners favorable ratings from 29% of the public and unfavorable ones from 27%, with another 45% having no opinion. This +2 point net positive rating marks an improvement from the -8 point negative rating (29% to 37%) he received in 2006.

“Until James McGreevey's resignation in 2004, Jim Florio was universally viewed as the state's least popular governor. It appears that some voters are now reappraising Florio's pay-as-you-go approach in light of the ballooning debt and budget gimmickry that followed his tenure,” said Murray.

In fact, Florio has now pulled ahead of Christie Whitman (R; 1994-2001), the person who defeated him in 1994. Whitman, who left office early to become EPA Commissioner in the Bush Administration, garners favorable ratings from 35% of the public and unfavorable ratings from 38%, with another 27% holding no opinion. Whitman's -3 point net negative opinion is similar to the 42% to 44% rating she received in 2006.

Florio has also moved past Donald DiFrancesco (2001-02), the man who filled out the final eleven months of Whitman's term. DiFrancesco garners a -8 point net negative rating, 10% favorable to 18% unfavorable, while most New Jerseyans (72%) do not have an opinion of the state's briefest serving ex-governor. Four years ago, though, DiFrancesco was able to muster a slightly positive 18% favorable to 17% unfavorable rating. *[Despite never having been elected to the office, both DiFrancesco and Codey are statutorily permitted to use the title “Governor.”]*

Jon Corzine (D; 2006-10), who lost his bid for re-election last year, is largely viewed negatively by the public who turned him out of office. He receives a favorable rating from 31% of Garden State residents and an unfavorable one from 55%, with 14% undecided. Corzine's -24 point net negative rating is a precipitous decline from the positive +16 point rating (45% to 29%) he held during the first year of his term.

Even though the most recent member of New Jersey's "Ex-Governor's Club" holds an overwhelmingly negative rating, it is still not low enough to displace James McGreevey (D; 2002-04) from the bottom of the chart. McGreevey, who resigned in disgrace in 2004, garners favorable views from 24% of state residents and unfavorable ratings from 52%, with another 24% having no opinion. This -28 point net negative rating is even worse than the poor 31% positive to 53% negative rating he received four years ago.

It's worth noting that a number of current New Jersey voters were not born during the Kean or Byrne administrations, which may account for the growing size of the "no opinion" contingent for those two governors. Because of this, it's interesting to examine the opinions of residents age 55 and older – in other words, those who could conceivably have cast a vote in every election for these nine governors, starting with Byrne's first victory in 1973.

Among New Jerseyans who were around to witness each of these administrations, Kean scores an overwhelming +56 point rating, while the greatest ire is reserved for McGreevey at a net negative -48. Byrne (+26) and Codey (+24) do somewhat better among the 55-and-over crowd than among their younger cohorts, while Whitman (-16) scores somewhat lower. Christie (+16), Florio (*even*), DiFrancesco (-7), and Corzine (-28) fare about as well with the state's oldest residents as they do with others.

Partisanship plays a role in the public's opinion of some governors, but not for others. Kean and Byrne attain similar net positive ratings from Democrats, Republicans, and independents alike. DiFrancesco scores fairly similar negative ratings with all three partisan groups. Codey gets positive ratings from all three groups, but performs most strongly among his fellow Democrats. McGreevey, scores negatively among all three partisan groups, but his fellow Democrats are somewhat more forgiving than Republicans and independents. Corzine, Whitman, and Florio score positively with their own partisans but negatively with residents who identify either with the other party or as independents. Christie gets net positive ratings from Republicans and independents, but is viewed negatively by Democrats.

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.)

We'd like to get your overall impression of the individuals who have served as governor over the past few years. As I read each name, please tell me if your opinion is favorable or unfavorable, or you don't really have an opinion.

**Chris Christie**

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER			PARTY ID			AGE		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	18-34	35-54	55+	
Favorable	<b>31%</b>	31%	35%	17%	29%	63%	33%	31%	32%	
Unfavorable	<b>17%</b>	18%	12%	27%	14%	5%	15%	19%	16%	
No opinion/Not heard enough	<b>52%</b>	52%	54%	56%	57%	32%	53%	51%	52%	
<i>Unwtd N</i>	<b>803</b>	716	87	251	329	195	127	307	361	

[THE FOLLOWING NAMES WERE ROTATED]

**Jon Corzine**

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER			PARTY ID			AGE		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	18-34	35-54	55+	
Favorable	<b>31%</b>	30%	37%	52%	26%	7%	33%	30%	30%	
Unfavorable	<b>55%</b>	59%	39%	36%	60%	83%	49%	58%	58%	
No opinion/Not heard enough	<b>14%</b>	12%	24%	13%	14%	10%	18%	12%	12%	
<i>Unwtd N</i>	<b>803</b>	716	87	251	329	195	127	307	361	

**Dick Codey**

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER			PARTY ID			AGE		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	18-34	35-54	55+	
Favorable	<b>34%</b>	38%	14%	38%	34%	29%	19%	37%	45%	
Unfavorable	<b>20%</b>	19%	22%	12%	23%	27%	18%	20%	21%	
No opinion/Not heard enough	<b>46%</b>	43%	64%	50%	43%	44%	64%	43%	34%	
<i>Unwtd N</i>	<b>803</b>	716	87	251	329	195	127	307	361	

**James McGreevey**

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER			PARTY ID			AGE		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	18-34	35-54	55+	
Favorable	<b>24%</b>	22%	36%	35%	19%	14%	25%	30%	17%	
Unfavorable	<b>52%</b>	55%	34%	40%	55%	66%	38%	51%	65%	
No opinion/Not heard enough	<b>24%</b>	23%	30%	25%	26%	20%	37%	19%	18%	
<i>Unwtd N</i>	<b>803</b>	716	87	251	329	195	127	307	361	

**Donald DiFrancesco**

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER			PARTY ID			AGE		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	18-34	35-54	55+	
Favorable	<b>10%</b>	11%	7%	12%	8%	11%	5%	10%	15%	
Unfavorable	<b>18%</b>	19%	13%	15%	18%	22%	14%	18%	22%	
No opinion/Not heard enough	<b>72%</b>	71%	80%	73%	73%	67%	81%	73%	63%	
<i>Unwtd N</i>	<b>803</b>	716	87	251	329	195	127	307	361	

**Christie Whitman**

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER			PARTY ID			AGE		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	18-34	35-54	55+	
Favorable	<b>35%</b>	36%	30%	27%	32%	54%	34%	37%	32%	
Unfavorable	<b>38%</b>	40%	27%	44%	44%	22%	25%	40%	48%	
No opinion/Not heard enough	<b>27%</b>	24%	43%	29%	24%	23%	40%	22%	20%	
<i>Unwtd N</i>	<b>803</b>	716	87	251	329	195	127	307	361	

Jim Florio

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER			PARTY ID			AGE		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	18-34	35-54	55+	
Favorable	<b>29%</b>	31%	19%	36%	24%	23%	18%	30%	37%	
Unfavorable	<b>27%</b>	29%	16%	14%	34%	38%	10%	30%	37%	
No opinion/Not heard enough	<b>45%</b>	41%	66%	51%	42%	39%	72%	40%	26%	
<i>Unwtd N</i>	<b>803</b>	716	87	251	329	195	127	307	361	

Tom Kean

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER			PARTY ID			AGE		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	18-34	35-54	55+	
Favorable	<b>46%</b>	48%	39%	42%	48%	54%	17%	51%	68%	
Unfavorable	<b>9%</b>	11%	4%	8%	10%	13%	8%	9%	12%	
No opinion/Not heard enough	<b>44%</b>	42%	57%	50%	42%	34%	75%	41%	20%	
<i>Unwtd N</i>	<b>803</b>	716	87	251	329	195	127	307	361	

Brendan Byrne

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER			PARTY ID			AGE		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	18-34	35-54	55+	
Favorable	<b>25%</b>	27%	13%	23%	26%	25%	11%	22%	42%	
Unfavorable	<b>12%</b>	13%	7%	7%	13%	20%	8%	12%	16%	
No opinion/Not heard enough	<b>63%</b>	59%	80%	69%	60%	55%	81%	66%	41%	
<i>Unwtd N</i>	<b>803</b>	716	87	251	329	195	127	307	361	

TREND:

SEPTEMBER 2006		<u>Favorable</u>	<u>Unfavorable</u>	<u>No Opinion</u>	<u>Unwtd N</u>
<b>Jon Corzine</b>	All Adults	<b>45%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>27%</b>	800
	Registered Voters	46%	30%	24%	630
<b>Dick Codey</b>	All Adults	<b>50%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>34%</b>	389
	Registered Voters	53%	17%	30%	330
<b>James McGreevey</b>	All Adults	<b>31%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>15%</b>	411
	Registered Voters	29%	56%	15%	333
<b>Donald DiFrancesco</b>	All Adults	<b>18%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>65%</b>	411
	Registered Voters	20%	20%	60%	333
<b>Christie Whitman</b>	All Adults	<b>42%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>14%</b>	389
	Registered Voters	41%	47%	11%	330
<b>Jim Florio</b>	All Adults	<b>29%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>34%</b>	389
	Registered Voters	28%	40%	31%	330
<b>Tom Kean</b>	All Adults	<b>55%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>34%</b>	411
	Registered Voters	58%	12%	30%	333
<b>Brendan Byrne</b>	All Adults	<b>31%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>56%</b>	411
	Registered Voters	33%	15%	52%	333

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.

*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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