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NEW JERSEY ON ILLEGAL IMMIGRANT POLICY

Public says no to driver's licenses and in-state tuition

After more than a year of hearings and deliberations, the Governor's Blue Ribbon Advisory Panel on Immigrant Policy delivered its final report to Jon Corzine's desk last month. The report has not yet been made public, but the panel is reported to have considered recommendations to offer limited driver's licenses and in-state college tuition to undocumented immigrants living in New Jersey. While the final status of those recommendations is unknown, the latest *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll* finds little public support for either proposal.

More than 6-in-10 New Jersey residents (62%) oppose offering illegal immigrants some type of limited driver's license. Just 33% favor this proposal. The poll also found that proponents' arguments for offering such licenses would probably have little impact on moving public opinion.

Poll respondents who registered initial opposition were told that "some people say issuing limited licenses to illegal immigrants would allow them to keep jobs that legal citizens don't want to do and would make the state safer by bringing them into the system." Only 1-in-10 (11%) opponents say these arguments would make them any more likely to favor the driver's license proposal.

Similarly, few New Jerseyans would favor extending in-state college tuition rates to undocumented immigrants living in the state. Only 20% favor this proposal, compared to 37% who say illegal immigrants should pay higher out-of-state rates. However, a sizable number (39%) say that illegal immigrants should not even be allowed to attend New Jersey's public colleges and universities at all.

The children of illegal immigrants fare a little better in public opinion on this policy. Just 32% of New Jerseyans would extend in-state tuition to the children of undocumented immigrants living in the state, 39% would charge them out-of-state rates and 22% would bar them from attending state colleges altogether.

“These results suggest there is a sizable uphill battle to win support for these ideas. The general public, which has not really been engaged in the debate on these proposals, is inclined to reject them out of hand,” said Patrick Murray, director of the Monmouth University Polling Institute.

The poll also found that 51% of state residents consider illegal immigration to be a very serious problem in New Jersey and another 28% call it somewhat serious. Only 18% say the issue is not serious for the state. The number calling the issue very serious is up by a few percentage points from a poll taken in September 2007 (47%).

Republicans (64%) are among those most likely to say the issue is a very serious problem in New Jersey. This compares to 52% of independents and 44% of Democrats who hold the same opinion.

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.)

1. How serious a problem do you think the issue of illegal immigration is for New Jersey right now – very, somewhat, not too, or not at all serious?

	TOTAL	Reg.	PARTY ID			AGE		
		Voter	Dem	Ind	Rep	18-34	35-54	55+
Very serious	51%	53%	44%	52%	64%	43%	48%	62%
Somewhat serious	28%	27%	29%	25%	26%	28%	30%	24%
Not too serious	10%	10%	15%	8%	5%	11%	12%	7%
Not at all serious	8%	6%	8%	10%	5%	16%	5%	4%
(VOL) Don't know	4%	3%	3%	6%	1%	2%	4%	4%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	803	721	261	309	178	106	312	368

TREND:	Feb. 09	Sept. '07	July '07
Very serious	51%	47%	46%
Somewhat serious	28%	33%	30%
Not too serious	10%	11%	16%
Not at all serious	8%	6%	6%
(VOL) Don't know	4%	3%	2%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	803	801	408

[Questions 2 and 3 were asked of separate random half-samples: moe = ± 4.9%]

Do you think that [READ ITEM] should be allowed to attend a state college at the same reduced tuition rate as other New Jersey residents, should they pay the higher out-of-state tuition rate, or should they not be allowed to attend state colleges at all?

2. Illegal immigrants living in New Jersey

	TOTAL	Reg. Voter	Dem	Ind	Rep
Reduced in-state tuition	20%	20%	25%	15%	18%
Higher out-of-state	37%	38%	47%	36%	23%
Not allowed to attend	39%	39%	27%	45%	54%
(VOL) Don't know	4%	3%	1%	4%	5%
Unwtd N	401	363	131	157	87

3. The children of illegal immigrants in New Jersey

	TOTAL	Reg. Voter	Dem	Ind	Rep
Reduced in-state tuition	32%	33%	41%	31%	20%
Higher out-of-state	39%	40%	39%	38%	43%
Not allowed to attend	22%	23%	15%	24%	34%
(VOL) Don't know	6%	5%	5%	8%	3%
Unwtd N	402	358	130	152	91

4. Do you favor or oppose allowing illegal immigrants to get some type of limited driver's license?

	TOTAL	Reg. Voter	PARTY ID			AGE		
			Dem	Ind	Rep	18-34	35-54	55+
Favor	33%	33%	39%	29%	27%	36%	34%	31%
Oppose	62%	62%	59%	64%	69%	61%	60%	65%
(VOL) Don't know	5%	5%	3%	7%	4%	3%	6%	4%
Unwtd N	803	721	261	309	178	106	312	368

[The following question was asked of those who said "Oppose" to Q4, moe = ± 4.4%]

5. Some people say that issuing limited licenses to illegal immigrants would allow them to keep jobs that legal citizens don't want to do and would make the state safer by bringing them into the system. Does hearing this argument make you more likely to favor allowing illegal immigrants to get a limited driver's license, or doesn't it really change your mind?

Among those opposed:	TOTAL	Reg. Voter	PARTY ID			AGE		
			Dem	Ind	Rep	18-34	35-54	55+
More likely to favor	11%	11%	18%	8%	6%	13%	11%	8%
Doesn't change mind	81%	82%	76%	82%	87%	82%	80%	83%
(VOL) Even LESS likely	7%	6%	4%	9%	6%	5%	6%	8%
(VOL) Don't know	2%	2%	2%	1%	2%	0%	3%	1%
Unwtd N	507	458	145	198	131	66	194	234

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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