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## **NO JERSEY BOUNCE FOR OBAMA**

*Garden State split on health insurance reforms*

New Jersey's opinion of President Barack Obama remains pretty much the same after passage of landmark health insurance legislation than it was before. Despite this, the latest ***Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll*** finds the Garden State is divided over the presidents' policy victory, with many expecting to see their own health care costs increase because of it.

Overall, nearly half (47%) of New Jersey residents describe themselves as being either satisfied (35%) or enthusiastic (12%) about the health care system reforms, while nearly the same number (48%) say they are either dissatisfied (28%) or downright angry (20%) about it. These findings are almost identical to a national Washington Post poll conducted two weeks prior to this poll. Among registered voters in New Jersey, 45% give the new health care law positive ratings, compared to 50% who view it negatively.

"Public sentiment is divided on the president's accomplishment. But it's also worth noting that among those who have strong feelings about the reforms, twice as many people are really angry about it compared to the number who are actually enthusiastic," said Patrick Murray, director of the Monmouth University Polling Institute.

The public are even more skeptical when they consider what these changes may mean in the long run. Just 39% of residents think that these reforms will improve the overall health care system. Another 37% say they will actually make the system worse and 19% say they will have no effect.

A majority (54%) of New Jerseyans expect that their own health care costs will go up as a result of the new legislative plan. Only 11% believe what they pay for health care will go down, and 31% anticipate no changes to their own health care costs.

Nearly half (47%) of all Garden State residents feel that these changes create too much government involvement in the health care system. Another 39% say the level of government involvement is about right and 10% feel the government should get involved even more.

These findings on government involvement, expected changes in quality, and expected changes in cost are nearly identical to the national poll results from the Washington Post. There are also some clear partisan differences in opinion towards these health care system changes. Most New Jersey Democrats give the new policy a thumbs up (69% positive to 23% negative) while Republicans are overwhelmingly disapproving (77% negative to 19% positive). Independents tend to be more negative (55%) than positive (41%) about the new law.

Despite public anxiety about the recently enacted package, New Jersey's rating of President Obama's job performance has remained steady and continues to be more positive than the national average. Specifically, 55% of New Jersey residents approve of the job President Obama is doing while 39% disapprove. This compares to the national average of 48% approve to 48% disapprove as tracked by the *Pollster.com* website. The president garners approval from 85% of Democrats, 46% of independents, and just 18% of Republicans in the Garden State.

Among registered voters in the state, Obama gets a 54% approve to 41% disapprove rating. This is very similar to the 53% to 38% rating he received in February, before health care reform was passed by Congress. However, it's also worth noting that while his job approval rating has remained steady at 53% to 54% over the past six months, his disapproval number among the state's voters has climbed from 33% in October to 41% today.

The health system reform package represents the president's first major victory on a signature campaign issue. However, his handling of the matter has left the New Jersey public divided on his ability to tackle other important national issues. About one third each say that the way Obama handled the health care debate has made them either more confident (32%), less confident (34%) or about as confident as before (32%) in his ability to deal with other issues.

"It's still early days, but President Obama seems to have emerged from the health care battle basically unscathed as far as New Jersey public opinion is concerned. He has not gained any ground after his hard fought win, but he hasn't lost ground either," said Murray.

The poll also found that most (56%) New Jersey voters are dissatisfied with the way things are going in Washington right now, compared to 37% who are satisfied. While negative overall, this finding marks an improvement from February, when 64% were dissatisfied to only 29% satisfied.

The *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll* was conducted by telephone with 804 New Jersey adults from April 7 to 11, 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.)

1. Do you approve or disapprove of the job Barack Obama is doing as president?

|                  | TOTAL      | REGISTERED VOTER |     | PARTY ID |     |     | RACE  |              | AGE   |       |     |
|------------------|------------|------------------|-----|----------|-----|-----|-------|--------------|-------|-------|-----|
|                  |            | Yes              | No  | Dem      | Ind | Rep | White | Black & Hisp | 18-34 | 35-54 | 55+ |
| Approve          | <b>55%</b> | 54%              | 65% | 85%      | 46% | 18% | 43%   | 76%          | 58%   | 57%   | 50% |
| Disapprove       | <b>39%</b> | 41%              | 24% | 11%      | 45% | 76% | 50%   | 22%          | 35%   | 38%   | 44% |
| (VOL) Don't know | <b>6%</b>  | 5%               | 11% | 3%       | 9%  | 5%  | 7%    | 2%           | 7%    | 5%    | 5%  |
| Unwtd N          | <b>804</b> | 719              | 85  | 269      | 316 | 199 | 642   | 116          | 139   | 349   | 301 |

| TREND: Registered voters only | April 2010 | February 2010 | October 2009 | July 2009 |
|-------------------------------|------------|---------------|--------------|-----------|
| Approve                       | 54%        | 53%           | 54%          | 59%       |
| Disapprove                    | 41%        | 38%           | 33%          | 29%       |
| (VOL) Don't know              | 5%         | 9%            | 14%          | 12%       |
| Unwtd N                       | 719        | 716           | 785          | 792       |

2. Overall, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way things are currently going in Washington?

|                  | TOTAL      | REGISTERED VOTER |     | PARTY ID |     |     | RACE  |              | AGE   |       |     |
|------------------|------------|------------------|-----|----------|-----|-----|-------|--------------|-------|-------|-----|
|                  |            | Yes              | No  | Dem      | Ind | Rep | White | Black & Hisp | 18-34 | 35-54 | 55+ |
| Satisfied        | <b>38%</b> | 37%              | 45% | 59%      | 32% | 12% | 27%   | 59%          | 47%   | 36%   | 32% |
| Dissatisfied     | <b>55%</b> | 56%              | 45% | 32%      | 62% | 82% | 67%   | 34%          | 46%   | 56%   | 61% |
| (VOL) Both       | <b>4%</b>  | 4%               | 5%  | 4%       | 3%  | 5%  | 4%    | 3%           | 3%    | 4%    | 4%  |
| (VOL) Don't know | <b>3%</b>  | 3%               | 6%  | 5%       | 3%  | 1%  | 3%    | 4%           | 4%    | 3%    | 3%  |
| Unwtd N          | <b>804</b> | 719              | 85  | 269      | 316 | 199 | 642   | 116          | 139   | 349   | 301 |

| TREND: Registered voters only | April 2010 | February 2010 | July 2009 |
|-------------------------------|------------|---------------|-----------|
| Satisfied                     | 37%        | 29%           | 41%       |
| Dissatisfied                  | 56%        | 64%           | 48%       |
| (VOL) Both                    | 4%         | 3%            | 6%        |
| (VOL) Don't know              | 3%         | 4%            | 5%        |
| Unwtd N                       | 719        | 716           | 792       |

3. How would you describe your feelings about the changes to the health care system that have been enacted by Congress and the Obama Administration? Would you say you are enthusiastic about them, satisfied but not enthusiastic, dissatisfied but not angry, or angry about them?

|                                | TOTAL      | REGISTERED VOTER |     | PARTY ID |     |     | RACE  |              | AGE   |       |     |
|--------------------------------|------------|------------------|-----|----------|-----|-----|-------|--------------|-------|-------|-----|
|                                |            | Yes              | No  | Dem      | Ind | Rep | White | Black & Hisp | 18-34 | 35-54 | 55+ |
| Enthusiastic                   | <b>12%</b> | 11%              | 18% | 24%      | 7%  | 0%  | 7%    | 15%          | 14%   | 14%   | 7%  |
| Satisfied but not enthusiastic | <b>35%</b> | 34%              | 35% | 45%      | 34% | 19% | 28%   | 47%          | 35%   | 37%   | 30% |
| Dissatisfied but not angry     | <b>28%</b> | 28%              | 28% | 19%      | 30% | 37% | 32%   | 24%          | 28%   | 23%   | 35% |
| Angry                          | <b>20%</b> | 22%              | 10% | 4%       | 25% | 40% | 27%   | 9%           | 19%   | 21%   | 21% |
| (VOL) Don't know               | <b>6%</b>  | 5%               | 9%  | 8%       | 4%  | 4%  | 6%    | 6%           | 4%    | 5%    | 7%  |
| Unwtd N                        | <b>804</b> | 719              | 85  | 269      | 316 | 199 | 642   | 116          | 139   | 349   | 301 |

4. In the long run, do you think the overall health care system in this country will get better as a result of these changes to the health care system, get worse, or remain about the same?

|                  | TOTAL      | REGISTERED VOTER |     | PARTY ID |     |     | RACE  |              | AGE   |       |     |
|------------------|------------|------------------|-----|----------|-----|-----|-------|--------------|-------|-------|-----|
|                  |            | Yes              | No  | Dem      | Ind | Rep | White | Black & Hisp | 18-34 | 35-54 | 55+ |
| Better           | <b>39%</b> | 37%              | 51% | 62%      | 32% | 12% | 27%   | 56%          | 43%   | 40%   | 33% |
| Worse            | <b>37%</b> | 39%              | 28% | 14%      | 46% | 66% | 49%   | 19%          | 31%   | 37%   | 44% |
| Same             | <b>19%</b> | 20%              | 16% | 19%      | 20% | 19% | 21%   | 18%          | 22%   | 20%   | 17% |
| (VOL) Don't know | <b>4%</b>  | 4%               | 6%  | 6%       | 3%  | 3%  | 3%    | 8%           | 4%    | 3%    | 6%  |
| Unwtd N          | <b>804</b> | 719              | 85  | 269      | 316 | 199 | 642   | 116          | 139   | 349   | 301 |

5. In the long run, do you think your health care costs will increase as a result of these changes to the health care system, decrease, or remain about the same?

|                  | TOTAL      | REGISTERED VOTER |     | PARTY ID |     |     | RACE  |              | AGE   |       |     |
|------------------|------------|------------------|-----|----------|-----|-----|-------|--------------|-------|-------|-----|
|                  |            | Yes              | No  | Dem      | Ind | Rep | White | Black & Hisp | 18-34 | 35-54 | 55+ |
| Increase         | <b>54%</b> | 56%              | 41% | 34%      | 62% | 75% | 64%   | 39%          | 45%   | 56%   | 59% |
| Decrease         | <b>11%</b> | 10%              | 18% | 19%      | 7%  | 4%  | 7%    | 18%          | 16%   | 7%    | 11% |
| Same             | <b>31%</b> | 30%              | 37% | 41%      | 28% | 18% | 25%   | 38%          | 37%   | 32%   | 23% |
| (VOL) Don't know | <b>5%</b>  | 5%               | 4%  | 6%       | 3%  | 3%  | 4%    | 5%           | 2%    | 4%    | 7%  |
| Unwtd N          | <b>804</b> | 719              | 85  | 269      | 316 | 199 | 642   | 116          | 139   | 349   | 301 |

6. Do you think the health care plan creates too much government involvement in the nation's health care system, not enough government involvement or about the right amount?

|                  | TOTAL      | REGISTERED VOTER |     | PARTY ID |     |     | RACE  |              | AGE   |       |     |
|------------------|------------|------------------|-----|----------|-----|-----|-------|--------------|-------|-------|-----|
|                  |            | Yes              | No  | Dem      | Ind | Rep | White | Black & Hisp | 18-34 | 35-54 | 55+ |
| Too much         | <b>47%</b> | 49%              | 35% | 24%      | 53% | 77% | 58%   | 30%          | 42%   | 44%   | 55% |
| Not enough       | <b>10%</b> | 10%              | 11% | 15%      | 11% | 1%  | 10%   | 13%          | 10%   | 13%   | 7%  |
| About right      | <b>39%</b> | 38%              | 50% | 58%      | 33% | 20% | 28%   | 55%          | 46%   | 40%   | 33% |
| (VOL) Don't know | <b>3%</b>  | 3%               | 3%  | 4%       | 3%  | 2%  | 4%    | 1%           | 1%    | 2%    | 5%  |
| Unwtd N          | <b>804</b> | 719              | 85  | 269      | 316 | 199 | 642   | 116          | 139   | 349   | 301 |

7. Has President Obama's handling of health care made you feel more confident or less confident in his ability to deal with other important issues, or has it had no effect on your confidence?

|                  | TOTAL      | REGISTERED VOTER |     | PARTY ID |     |     | RACE  |              | AGE   |       |     |
|------------------|------------|------------------|-----|----------|-----|-----|-------|--------------|-------|-------|-----|
|                  |            | Yes              | No  | Dem      | Ind | Rep | White | Black & Hisp | 18-34 | 35-54 | 55+ |
| More confident   | <b>32%</b> | 32%              | 33% | 53%      | 24% | 9%  | 21%   | 48%          | 34%   | 30%   | 32% |
| Less confident   | <b>34%</b> | 36%              | 23% | 10%      | 41% | 65% | 46%   | 14%          | 27%   | 33%   | 44% |
| No effect        | <b>32%</b> | 29%              | 44% | 35%      | 33% | 24% | 31%   | 35%          | 38%   | 35%   | 21% |
| (VOL) Don't know | <b>2%</b>  | 2%               | 1%  | 2%       | 2%  | 2%  | 2%    | 3%           | 0%    | 3%    | 3%  |
| Unwtd N          | <b>804</b> | 719              | 85  | 269      | 316 | 199 | 642   | 116          | 139   | 349   | 301 |

The Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute on April 7-11, 2010 with a statewide random sample of 804 adult residents. Sampling and data collection 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.

| POLL DEMOGRAPHICS (weighted) |            |           |                |
|------------------------------|------------|-----------|----------------|
| 40% Dem                      | 48% Male   | 28% 18-34 | 65% White      |
| 38% Ind                      | 52% Female | 42% 35-54 | 13% Black      |
| 22% Rep                      |            | 30% 55+   | 14% Hispanic   |
|                              |            |           | 8% Asian/Other |

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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