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LITTLE LOVE FOR NEW JERSEY BUDGET PLAN

Public opinion mixed on state worker concessions

New Jersey residents hold a dim view of the proposed state budget, opposing many of the proposed cuts while saying the overall budget hasn't been cut enough. The latest *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll* also found that many New Jerseyans side with state worker union opposition to furloughs, but are divided on a wage freeze.

Governor Corzine stated in his February budget address that New Jersey is well-positioned to weather the current economic downturn because of his administration's management of prior budgets. Garden State residents take a decidedly different view of that.

Just 31% agree that New Jersey's state government is in a good position to deal with the current fiscal crisis compared to 58% who disagree. Even fewer – 23% – agree that the state has managed its finances well over the past three years, while more than 2-in-3 (69%) disagree with this assertion. Most Democrats (58%) join Republicans (86%) and independents (70%) in saying that state finances have not been well-managed during Corzine's term.

“A key component of the governor's budget roll-out was that his management decisions over the first years of his term have put the state on solid ground. That view is not shared by most New Jerseyans,” said Patrick Murray, director of the Monmouth University Polling Institute.

Over 8-in-10 residents have heard about the governor's proposed budget, including 22% who have heard a lot and 60% who have heard a little. Among those aware of the plan, nearly 2-in-3 (65%) would describe the proposal as “more of the same old political dealings” while just 25% say it is the “product of tough, thoughtful choices.” These results are almost identical to the

public's views of Governor Corzine's budget proposals in both 2008 (62%-27%) and 2006 (60%-32%).

Nearly half (48%) of those aware of the budget plan say it does too little to cut spending. Another 17% say it cuts spending too much and 19% say it cuts spending just enough.

Despite this mixed view, many New Jerseyans oppose some of the specific cuts in the current plan, but they do support two tax increases. The vast majority of state residents approve raising income taxes on those earning over \$500,000 (75%) and raising excise taxes on cigarettes and liquor (69%).

However, about 2-in-3 residents disapprove of reducing state aid to municipalities (68%) and cutting funding for the arts (63%). Most residents (53%) also disapprove of eliminating property tax rebates for those earning over \$75,000, compared to 45% who approve of this proposal.

“As we've heard before in tough times, the public wants cuts as long as they aren't personally affected. So-called 'sin taxes' and taxes on the wealthy continue to be popular ways to avoid having to make any further cuts,” said Murray.

Governor Corzine has also sought concessions from state workers to help balance the budget, specifically in terms of furloughs and a wage freeze. About 4-in-10 (39%) New Jerseyans approve of plans to require state workers to take 12 days off next year without pay, compared to a majority of 57% who disapprove of this idea. The public is split on a proposed freeze of state worker salaries which include increases due in union contracts – 49% approve of this freeze while 48% disapprove.

State worker unions have registered strong opposition to both of these proposals. Most New Jerseyans (62%) have no opinion on whether the unions have been reacting appropriately to the budget, while 27% disapprove and 11% approve of the unions' response so far.

Governor Corzine said that he may have to lay off thousands of state workers if the unions do not agree to furloughs and a wage freeze. Just 41% of the public would support the governor if he took this action, while 52% would be opposed. Among New Jerseyans who live in households with a unionized state worker, 25% would support the governor in this action compared to 67% who would be opposed. Among non-state union households, opinion is more divided – 44% would support layoffs if the unions did not agree to furloughs and a wage freeze while 49% would oppose this action.

“Governor Corzine is in a stand-off with one of his friendliest constituencies, and it doesn’t appear as if the unions need to budge, according to public opinion. The unions have apparently not overplayed their hand with the public, mainly because most New Jerseyans are paying little attention to the unfolding drama,” said Murray.

The poll also found that 90% of New Jerseyans believe the state budget is in a serious fiscal crisis, basically identical to the 89% who held the same view during 2008’s budget process. Only 7% say that New Jersey’s budget situation is better than other states, while 43% say it is about the same. However, a sizable 40% say that New Jersey’s budget is in worse shape than other states.

The *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll* was conducted by telephone with 803 New Jersey adults from April 23 to 27, 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. Do you agree or disagree that the New Jersey state budget is currently in a serious fiscal crisis?

| | TOTAL | REG VOTER | | PARTY ID | | | INCOME | | |
|------------------|------------|-----------|-----|----------|-----|-----|---------|----------------|---------|
| | | Yes | No | Dem | Ind | Rep | < \$50K | \$50 to \$100K | >\$100K |
| Agree | 90% | 92% | 82% | 92% | 86% | 93% | 91% | 91% | 90% |
| Disagree | 6% | 5% | 9% | 4% | 8% | 5% | 6% | 6% | 6% |
| (VOL) Don't know | 4% | 3% | 9% | 4% | 6% | 2% | 3% | 3% | 4% |
| <i>Unwtd N</i> | 803 | 690 | 113 | 299 | 287 | 193 | 237 | 261 | 203 |

| TREND: | May 2009 | March 2008 | January 2008 |
|------------------|----------|------------|--------------|
| Agree | 90% | 89% | 89% |
| Disagree | 6% | 8% | 6% |
| (VOL) Don't know | 4% | 3% | 6% |
| <i>Unwtd N</i> | 803 | 805 | 804 |

2. Compared to other states, is New Jersey’s budget situation better, worse, or about the same?

| | TOTAL | REG VOTER | | PARTY ID | | | INCOME | | |
|------------------|------------|-----------|-----|----------|-----|-----|---------|----------------|---------|
| | | Yes | No | Dem | Ind | Rep | < \$50K | \$50 to \$100K | >\$100K |
| Better | 7% | 5% | 12% | 7% | 7% | 5% | 9% | 3% | 9% |
| Worse | 40% | 40% | 37% | 30% | 46% | 47% | 35% | 44% | 39% |
| About the same | 43% | 45% | 36% | 49% | 38% | 40% | 47% | 42% | 45% |
| (VOL) Don't know | 11% | 10% | 15% | 14% | 8% | 8% | 9% | 11% | 7% |
| <i>Unwtd N</i> | 803 | 690 | 113 | 299 | 287 | 193 | 237 | 261 | 203 |

[Question 3 was asked of a random half-sample: moe = ± 5.0%]

3. Do you agree or disagree that the state government has managed its finances well over the past three years?

| | TOTAL | REG VOTER | | PARTY ID | | | INCOME | | |
|------------------|------------|-----------|-----|----------|-----|-----|---------|----------------|---------|
| | | Yes | No | Dem | Ind | Rep | < \$50K | \$50 to \$100K | >\$100K |
| Agree | 23% | 23% | 24% | 34% | 21% | 11% | 28% | 22% | 21% |
| Disagree | 69% | 70% | 64% | 58% | 70% | 86% | 64% | 74% | 69% |
| (VOL) Don't know | 8% | 7% | 12% | 9% | 9% | 3% | 8% | 4% | 10% |
| Unwtd N | 391 | 329 | 62 | 136 | 142 | 103 | 114 | 130 | 103 |

[Question 4 was asked of a random half-sample: moe = ± 5.0%]

4. Do you agree or disagree that the state government is in a good position to deal with the current financial crisis?

| | TOTAL | REG VOTER | | PARTY ID | | | INCOME | | |
|------------------|------------|-----------|-----|----------|-----|-----|---------|----------------|---------|
| | | Yes | No | Dem | Ind | Rep | < \$50K | \$50 to \$100K | >\$100K |
| Agree | 31% | 29% | 39% | 39% | 28% | 17% | 33% | 30% | 29% |
| Disagree | 58% | 60% | 49% | 50% | 62% | 71% | 56% | 58% | 61% |
| (VOL) Don't know | 11% | 11% | 12% | 11% | 9% | 12% | 12% | 12% | 10% |
| Unwtd N | 412 | 361 | 51 | 163 | 145 | 90 | 123 | 131 | 100 |

5. How much have you read or heard about Governor Corzine's state budget plan – a lot, a little, or nothing at all?

| | TOTAL | REG VOTER | | PARTY ID | | | INCOME | | |
|------------------|------------|-----------|-----|----------|-----|-----|---------|----------------|---------|
| | | Yes | No | Dem | Ind | Rep | < \$50K | \$50 to \$100K | >\$100K |
| A lot | 22% | 24% | 11% | 17% | 27% | 25% | 16% | 26% | 23% |
| A little | 60% | 61% | 54% | 62% | 56% | 59% | 64% | 54% | 63% |
| Nothing at all | 18% | 14% | 33% | 21% | 17% | 15% | 20% | 19% | 14% |
| (VOL) Don't know | 0% | 0% | 1% | 0% | 1% | 1% | 0% | 1% | 0% |
| Unwtd N | 803 | 690 | 113 | 299 | 287 | 193 | 237 | 261 | 203 |

| TREND: | May 2009 | March 2008 | April 2006* |
|------------------|----------|------------|-------------|
| A lot | 22% | 33% | 25% |
| A little | 60% | 50% | 49% |
| Nothing at all | 18% | 16% | 27% |
| (VOL) Don't know | 0% | 1% | n/a |
| Unwtd N | 803 | 805 | 803 |

* Note: April 2006 question wording: "How much have you heard or read about Governor Corzine's budget proposals to deal with this deficit?"

[NOTE: QUESTIONS 6 AND 7 WERE ASKED ONLY OF THOSE WHO HEARD "A LOT" OR "A LITTLE" ABOUT THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET PLAN: moe = ± 3.8%]

6. In general, would you describe the budget plan as: the product of tough, thoughtful choices - or - more of the same old political dealings? [ITEMS WERE ROTATED]

| | TOTAL | REG VOTER | | PARTY ID | | | INCOME | | |
|---|------------|-----------|-----|----------|-----|-----|---------|----------------|---------|
| | | Yes | No | Dem | Ind | Rep | < \$50K | \$50 to \$100K | >\$100K |
| Product of tough, thoughtful choices | 25% | 27% | 14% | 33% | 26% | 15% | 21% | 24% | 31% |
| More of the same old political dealings | 65% | 63% | 74% | 55% | 65% | 78% | 69% | 66% | 61% |
| (VOL) Some of both | 3% | 3% | 4% | 5% | 3% | 2% | 2% | 3% | 4% |
| (VOL) Don't know | 7% | 6% | 9% | 8% | 7% | 5% | 8% | 7% | 4% |
| Unwtd N | 680 | 602 | 78 | 250 | 244 | 166 | 192 | 218 | 182 |

| | | | |
|---|-------------|---------------|---------------|
| TREND: | May 2009 | March 2008 | April 2006 |
| Product of tough, thoughtful choices | 25% | 27% | 32% |
| More of the same old political dealings | 65% | 62% | 60% |
| (VOL) Some of both | 3% | 5% | n/a |
| (VOL) Don't Know | 7% | 6% | 7% |
| Unwtd N | 680 | 695 | 613 |

7. Do you think the proposed budget reduces state spending too much, too little, or just enough?

| | TOTAL | REG VOTER | | PARTY ID | | | INCOME | | |
|------------------|-------|-----------|-----|----------|-----|-----|---------|----------------|---------|
| | | Yes | No | Dem | Ind | Rep | < \$50K | \$50 to \$100K | >\$100K |
| Too much | 17% | 16% | 26% | 21% | 12% | 19% | 26% | 15% | 8% |
| Too little | 48% | 50% | 38% | 39% | 52% | 58% | 40% | 49% | 59% |
| Just enough | 19% | 18% | 26% | 26% | 19% | 8% | 22% | 20% | 19% |
| (VOL) Don't know | 15% | 16% | 10% | 14% | 16% | 15% | 12% | 16% | 15% |
| Unwtd N | 680 | 602 | 78 | 250 | 244 | 166 | 192 | 218 | 182 |

| | | |
|------------------|-------------|---------------|
| TREND: | May 2009 | March 2008 |
| Too much | 17% | 26% |
| Too little | 48% | 44% |
| Just enough | 19% | 18% |
| (VOL) Don't know | 15% | 13% |
| Unwtd N | 680 | 425 |

[NOTE: The following questions were asked of a random half-sample: moe=+/-5.0%]

8. I'm going to read you a few proposals to cut the state budget. Please tell me whether you approve or disapprove of each. [ITEMS WERE ROTATED]

| | Approve | Disapprove | (VOL) Don't know | (n) |
|--|---------|------------|---------------------|-----|
| Eliminating property tax rebate checks for families earning more than \$75,000 | 45% | 53% | 2% | 391 |
| Requiring state workers to take 12 days off next year without pay | 39% | 57% | 3% | 391 |
| Raising taxes on cigarettes and liquor | 69% | 30% | 1% | 391 |
| Cutting funding for the arts | 34% | 63% | 4% | 391 |
| Freezing all state worker salaries, including increases due in the union contracts | 49% | 48% | 4% | 412 |
| Raising income taxes on those earning more than \$500,000 | 75% | 23% | 2% | 412 |
| Reducing state aid to municipalities | 25% | 68% | 7% | 412 |

9. Do you approve or disapprove of how the state workers unions have been responding to the proposed budget, or don't you have an opinion about this?

| | TOTAL | REG VOTER | | PARTY ID | | | STATE UNION HOUSEHOLD | |
|------------------|-------|-----------|-----|----------|-----|-----|-----------------------|-----|
| | | Yes | No | Dem | Ind | Rep | Yes | No |
| Approve | 11% | 10% | 14% | 14% | 10% | 8% | 12% | 11% |
| Disapprove | 27% | 28% | 23% | 19% | 31% | 34% | 24% | 28% |
| (VOL) Don't know | 62% | 62% | 64% | 68% | 59% | 58% | 63% | 62% |
| Unwtd N | 803 | 690 | 113 | 299 | 287 | 193 | 98 | 698 |

10. Governor Corzine has said that he may have to lay off thousands of state workers if the unions do not agree to furloughs and wage freezes. Would you support or oppose the governor if he laid off state workers?

| | TOTAL | REG VOTER | | PARTY ID | | | STATE UNION HOUSEHOLD | |
|------------------|------------|-----------|-----|----------|-----|-----|-----------------------|-----|
| | | Yes | No | Dem | Ind | Rep | Yes | No |
| Support | 41% | 44% | 27% | 31% | 49% | 48% | 25% | 44% |
| Oppose | 52% | 49% | 64% | 61% | 44% | 47% | 67% | 49% |
| (VOL) Depends | 4% | 4% | 2% | 4% | 3% | 3% | 5% | 3% |
| (VOL) Don't know | 4% | 3% | 7% | 4% | 4% | 3% | 3% | 4% |
| Unwtd N | 803 | 690 | 113 | 299 | 287 | 193 | 98 | 698 |

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 April 23-27, 2009 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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