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GAS PRICES HURT GARDEN STATE

Majority support drilling off the Jersey Shore

With prices at the pump near the \$4.00 mark, New Jerseyans report cutting back on driving and other expenses similar to levels seen in the summer of 2008 – the last time gas prices were this high. The latest ***Monmouth University/NJ Press Media Poll*** also found that a majority of the public continues to be open to the prospect of drilling for oil off the state’s coast.

Fully 4-in-10 (42%) New Jerseyans say they are experiencing a lot of financial hardship due to rising gasoline prices. Another 29% are feeling a little hardship and 28% say that they are feeling no financial pinch from gas prices. These results are nearly identical to a national poll conducted by ABC News/Washington Post last month. And they are also similar to a New Jersey poll from July 2008 – the first time gas topped \$4.00 a gallon – when 38% of New Jerseyans said fuel costs caused them a lot of financial hardship, 29% a little and 32% none.

As may be expected, rising gas prices are more likely to hurt low and middle income families. More than half (55%) of those earning under \$50,000 feel a lot of hardship and about half (49%) of those earning \$50,000 to \$100,000 are feeling a lot of hardship, compared to just 21% of those earning more than \$100,000.

“With gas prices nearing the highs we saw three years ago, New Jerseyans are turning to some familiar strategies to cope with the financial burden,” said Patrick Murray, director of the Monmouth University Polling Institute.

Overall, 61% of the state’s drivers say they have cut back on weekend or vacation driving and an identical 61% have reduced household spending in general. The July 2008 poll found similar although slightly lower results, when 58% cut back on driving and 56% cut back on other spending.

In the current poll, 25% of New Jersey drivers say they have actively shopped for a more fuel efficient vehicle, compared to 30% in July 2008, and 18% have carpooled to work, similar to the 20% reported in 2008.

The poll also gauged residents' support for six potential energy strategies. More than 8-in-10 residents favor requiring that new cars get higher gas mileage (85%) and placing electricity-generating windmills off the New Jersey coast (84%). Two-in-three residents support placing a windfall profits tax on oil companies (66%). These support levels are similar to public opinion in July 2008.

Only one-third of the public support lowering the maximum highway speed limit to 55 miles per hour (34%) or building another nuclear power plant in New Jersey (31%). Support levels for these proposals are significantly lower than they were three years ago, when 48% favored lowering the speed limit and 41% were okay with another nuclear power plant in the state.

Perhaps the most contentious political issue today is drilling for oil in the Atlantic Ocean. Nearly the entire New Jersey Congressional delegation has come out against a proposal to allow drilling off the state's coast. Most New Jerseyans disagree. A majority of 52% say they support drilling for oil or gas off the Garden State's coast. This support level is only slightly lower than the 56% measured in 2008. However, opinion is more divided than it was three years ago. Currently, 45% oppose the idea, which is up from 36% in 2008. The remainder have no opinion.

The *Monmouth University/NJ Press Media Poll* was conducted by telephone with 807 New Jersey adults from May 12 to 16, 2011. 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 New Jersey Press Media 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. Have recent increases in gasoline prices caused any financial hardship for you or your household? [*IF YES, ASK: Would you say a lot or a little hardship?*]

	TOTAL	INCOME		
		< \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	> \$100K
Yes, a LOT of hardship	42%	55%	49%	21%
Yes, a LITTLE hardship	29%	18%	29%	42%
No hardship	28%	27%	21%	38%
(VOL) Don't know	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	807	198	253	257

TREND:	May 2011	July 2008	April 2008
A LOT of hardship	42%	38%	40%
A LITTLE hardship	29%	29%	27%
No hardship	28%	32%	32%
(VOL) Don't know	0%	1%	1%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	807	1004	803

[The following question was asked only of people who have a car: moe= +/-3.6%]

2. Has the price of gasoline caused you to do any of the following recently: [ITEMS WERE ROTATED]

	TOTAL	INCOME			GAS PRICE HARDSHIP			TREND: July 2008
		Under \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	\$100K+	Lot	Little	None	
Cut down weekend or vacation travel by car	61%	74%	63%	47%	88%	58%	17%	58%
Actively look for a car or truck that gets higher gas mileage	25%	20%	29%	28%	27%	31%	16%	30%
Cut back household spending on other things	61%	75%	63%	49%	85%	66%	16%	56%
Carpool with others to work or school	18%	23%	19%	15%	27%	16%	6%	20%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	741	160	241	249	280	235	225	915

3. Would you favor or oppose the following – ? [ITEMS WERE ROTATED]

Placing electricity-generating windmills off the coast of New Jersey

	TOTAL	INCOME			GAS PRICE HARDSHIP			TREND: July 2008
		Under \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	\$100K+	Lot	Little	None	
Favor	84%	79%	87%	86%	84%	88%	80%	82%
Oppose	10%	13%	9%	10%	9%	9%	14%	12%
(VOL) Don't know	6%	8%	3%	4%	6%	4%	6%	6%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	807	198	253	257	299	244	262	496

Building another nuclear power plant in New Jersey

	TOTAL	INCOME			GAS PRICE HARDSHIP			TREND: July 2008
		Under \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	\$100K+	Lot	Little	None	
Favor	31%	27%	28%	38%	25%	31%	38%	41%
Oppose	65%	66%	69%	58%	70%	66%	56%	51%
(VOL) Don't know	4%	6%	3%	4%	5%	2%	6%	8%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	807	198	253	257	299	244	262	496

Requiring that new cars get higher gas mileage

	TOTAL	INCOME			GAS PRICE HARDSHIP			TREND: July 2008
		Under \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	\$100K+	Lot	Little	None	
Favor	85%	85%	87%	82%	84%	89%	82%	83%
Oppose	13%	14%	12%	16%	16%	10%	13%	14%
(VOL) Don't know	2%	1%	1%	2%	0%	0%	5%	3%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	807	198	253	257	299	244	262	496

Drilling for oil or gas off the coast of New Jersey

	TOTAL	INCOME			GAS PRICE HARDSHIP			TREND: July 2008
		Under \$50K	\$50 to \$100K	\$100K+	Lot	Little	None	
Favor	52%	54%	54%	54%	54%	53%	50%	56%
Oppose	45%	43%	43%	44%	45%	43%	46%	36%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	3%	3%	3%	1%	5%	4%	7%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	807	198	253	257	299	244	262	508

Putting a windfall profits tax on oil companies

	TOTAL	Under \$50K	INCOME \$50 to \$100K	\$100K+	GAS PRICE HARDSHIP			TREND:
					Lot	Little	None	July 2008
Favor	66%	67%	69%	63%	64%	70%	64%	60%
Oppose	25%	23%	22%	29%	26%	22%	27%	28%
(VOL) Don't know	9%	10%	9%	8%	10%	9%	9%	12%
Unwtd N	807	198	253	257	299	244	262	508

Lowering the speed limit to 55 on all highways

	TOTAL	Under \$50K	INCOME \$50 to \$100K	\$100K+	GAS PRICE HARDSHIP			TREND:
					Lot	Little	None	July 2008
Favor	34%	38%	38%	25%	35%	33%	32%	48%
Oppose	65%	61%	60%	73%	64%	65%	67%	47%
(VOL) Don't know	2%	1%	1%	2%	1%	2%	1%	5%
Unwtd N	807	198	253	257	299	244	262	508

The *Monmouth University/NJ Press Media Poll* was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute on May 12 to 16, 2011 with a statewide random sample of 807 adult residents. Sampling and live telephone interviewing 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)			
35% Dem	48% Male	27% 18-34	66% White
21% Rep	52% Female	40% 35-54	12% Black
44% Ind		33% 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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