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NEW JERSEY: VOTERS SPLIT ON CASINO EXPANSION

Majority says state government should stay out of Atlantic City

West Long Branch, NJ – New Jersey voters are split right down the middle on whether to allow casino gambling in the northern part of the state. The latest **Monmouth University Poll** also finds that most state residents continue to feel that state government should stay out of Atlantic City while the public is divided on whether a potential state takeover would help or hurt city residents.

New Jersey voters will be faced with a question on November's ballot that would amend the state constitution to allow for two new casinos to be built in the northern part of the state. These casinos would be the first in the state to be located outside of Atlantic City. The poll finds that registered voters are evenly divided on what they will do – 48% say they would vote for this proposed change and 48% say they would vote against it. Democrats tend to be in favor (53% for and 42% against), while the opposite is true for Republicans (44% for and 51% against) and independents (45% for and 52% against).

There is also a regional divide in how the Garden State intends to vote on this measure. North Jersey voters approve of casino expansion by a 52% to 43% margin, while voters elsewhere are opposed – 45% to 52% in Central Jersey and 42% to 54% in South Jersey. In North Jersey, Republicans (49% for and 51% against) and independents (48% for and 47% against) are split, but they are clearly opposed in Central/South Jersey – 41% for and 51% against among Republicans and 42% for and 56% against among independents in the northern part of the state. Democrats exhibit the widest regional variation in how they will vote. North Jersey Democrats broadly support casino expansion (59% for and 34% against) while Central/South Jersey Democrats narrowly oppose it (47% for and 51% against).

“The fate of the casino expansion measure is anyone's guess,” said Patrick Murray, director of the independent Monmouth University Polling Institute. “The public does not express overwhelming

confidence that adding North Jersey casinos will be an economic boon and there is widespread concern that this would hurt an already precarious Atlantic City.”

The poll found that 6-in-10 residents (59%) believe that casino expansion will hurt Atlantic City. Only 5% think that it will help Atlantic City and 33% feel it will not have a significant impact either way. Among voters who support the ballot question, 49% say expansion will hurt Atlantic City, 7% say it will help, and 43% say it will have no impact. Among those who oppose the amendment, 74% say casino expansion will hurt Atlantic City, 2% say it will help, and 21% say it will have no impact.

Most state residents expect that expanding casino gambling to the northern part of the state will bring some economic benefits to the state overall. However, only 12% say it will help the state’s economy a great deal while 42% say it will help just somewhat. On the other hand, more than 4-in-10 residents say that casino expansion would boost New Jersey’s economy either not much (21%) or not at all (22%). Among voters who support the ballot question, 20% say expansion will help the state’s economy a great deal and 60% say it will help somewhat. Among opponents, just 4% say expansion will help the state’s economy a great deal and 23% say it will help somewhat. Otherwise, there is little partisan or regional variation in opinion on the potential economic impact of casino expansion.

“It doesn’t help proponents of casino expansion that this question is being posed at a time when public opinion on the benefits of casino gambling is less positive than it has been in recent years,” said Murray.

Currently, 54% of New Jersey residents say that casino gambling has been good for the state while 30% say it has been bad for the state. While positive opinion is in the majority, back in 1999 nearly 3-in-4 state residents (72%) said that gambling had been good for New Jersey. As recently as three years ago, 64% felt this way. In fact, the current level of positive opinion on the impact of casino gambling is even lower than it was when the first Atlantic City casinos had just opened. Back in 1980, 58% of state residents said gambling was good for the state.

The *Monmouth University Poll* also examined public opinion on the situation in Atlantic City itself. Currently, New Jersey residents are divided on whether nearly 40 years of casino gambling has had a positive impact on the resort town – 38% say A.C. is actually worse off today than it would have been if gambling had never been allowed compared to 31% who say that A.C. is better off than it would have been without casinos. Another 24% feel that casino gambling has had no impact. New Jerseyans were more optimistic just a few years ago. In 2013, 46% said gambling had improved Atlantic City’s fortunes and just 18% said it had made things there worse.

Despite the downturn in Atlantic City’s prospects, a majority of state residents (51%) disagree that state government should get involved in improving the city’s economy, compared with 42% who agree with having the state involved. These results are basically unchanged from three years ago (52%

disagree and 42% agree). Only 1-in-5 have heard a lot (19%) about the proposal by the state legislature and governor – signed into law last week – that would allow for a state takeover if Atlantic City does not get its finances in order. Another 38% have heard a little about this, while just under half (44%) have not heard anything at all.

New Jerseyans are divided on whether a state takeover would help (43%) or hurt (41%) the people who live and work in Atlantic City. Questions have also been raised about how development rights would be handled in the event of a state takeover. About one-third of New Jersey residents (32%) feel that a state takeover would make it easier for political bosses and connected developers to get special deals on land development in Atlantic City while 26% say a state takeover would make this harder. Another 33% say a state takeover would make no difference on whether political insiders got development rights.

“There might be more public opposition to an Atlantic City takeover deal if it becomes a reality and the public actually starts paying attention to it,” said Murray.

The *Monmouth University Poll* was conducted by telephone with 806 New Jersey adults, including 703 registered voters, from May 23 to 27, 2016. The total sample has a margin of error of ± 3.5 percent and the registered voter sample has a margin of error of ± 3.7 percent. The poll was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute in West Long Branch, NJ.

DATA TABLES

The questions referred to in this release are as follows:

(* Some columns may not add to 100% due to rounding.)

[Q1 & 6-18 held for future release. Q2-5 previously released.]

[Results for Question 19 shown for registered voters only, (n=703) moe = $\pm 3.7\%$]

19. Currently, casino gambling is only allowed in Atlantic City. Would you vote for or against a constitutional amendment to allow for two casinos to be built in the northern part of New Jersey?

	REGISTERED VOTER	PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			REGION		
		Rep	Ind	Dem	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	North	Central	South
For	48%	44%	45%	53%	53%	43%	56%	51%	39%	52%	45%	42%
Against	48%	51%	52%	42%	43%	52%	41%	46%	54%	43%	52%	54%
(VOL) Will not vote	1%	2%	1%	0%	2%	0%	1%	1%	1%	0%	2%	1%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	3%	2%	4%	2%	4%	2%	3%	5%	4%	1%	3%

20. Overall, do you think casino gambling has been good or bad for the state?

	TOTAL	REG VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			REGION		
		Yes	No	Rep	Ind	Dem	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	North	Central	South
Good	54%	53%	60%	60%	50%	57%	57%	51%	59%	58%	46%	50%	55%	56%
Bad	30%	31%	27%	23%	34%	30%	29%	31%	29%	25%	37%	32%	30%	30%
(VOL) Both, no difference	8%	7%	11%	7%	9%	8%	7%	9%	7%	9%	7%	8%	8%	8%
(VOL) Don't know	8%	9%	3%	10%	8%	5%	8%	8%	5%	8%	10%	9%	7%	6%

TREND:	May 2016	April 2013	January 1999*	July 1986*	December 1984*	March 1982*	September 1980*
Good	54%	64%	72%	66%	68%	58%	58%
Bad	30%	25%	12%	14%	12%	20%	23%
(VOL) Both, no difference	8%	5%	7%	11%	9%	13%	11%
(VOL) Don't know	8%	7%	9%	9%	11%	9%	8%
Unwtd N	806	806	399	800	499	603	601

* Source: Eagleton-Rutgers Poll

21. Atlantic City's first casino opened nearly 40 years ago. Do you think Atlantic City is now better off, worse off, or about the same as it would have been if gambling had not been allowed?

	TOTAL	REG VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			REGION		
		Yes	No	Rep	Ind	Dem	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	North	Central	South
Better off	31%	27%	45%	32%	35%	26%	30%	31%	34%	33%	25%	30%	34%	29%
Worse off	38%	39%	33%	37%	35%	39%	37%	38%	33%	39%	40%	38%	37%	38%
About the same	24%	27%	14%	21%	25%	27%	27%	22%	27%	19%	28%	25%	21%	27%
(VOL) Don't know	7%	7%	8%	10%	5%	9%	6%	8%	6%	9%	7%	7%	8%	6%

TREND:	May 2016	April 2013
Better off	31%	46%
Worse off	38%	18%
About the same	24%	29%
(VOL) Don't know	7%	6%
Unwtd N	806	806

22. Do you think expanding casino gambling to North Jersey would help or hurt Atlantic City, or would it not have a significant impact either way?

	TOTAL	REG VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			REGION		
		Yes	No	Rep	Ind	Dem	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	North	Central	South
Help	5%	4%	7%	4%	2%	8%	5%	5%	6%	5%	4%	4%	6%	4%
Hurt	59%	61%	50%	64%	65%	51%	60%	58%	54%	56%	66%	55%	56%	68%
Not have a significant impact	33%	32%	39%	31%	29%	36%	31%	35%	37%	36%	26%	37%	34%	25%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	3%	4%	2%	3%	4%	4%	3%	3%	3%	4%	4%	4%	3%

23. And how much would expanding casino gambling to North Jersey help the overall state economy – a great deal, some, not much, or not at all?

	TOTAL	REG VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			REGION		
		Yes	No	Rep	Ind	Dem	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	North	Central	South
Great deal	12%	12%	10%	12%	10%	13%	14%	9%	6%	17%	9%	13%	11%	10%
Some	42%	41%	45%	39%	40%	46%	39%	44%	47%	42%	36%	45%	44%	34%
Not much	21%	20%	21%	25%	21%	17%	20%	21%	24%	15%	25%	19%	19%	26%
Not at all	22%	23%	22%	20%	28%	18%	23%	22%	20%	21%	25%	20%	21%	27%
(VOL) Don't know	4%	4%	2%	4%	2%	5%	3%	4%	2%	4%	5%	3%	5%	4%

24. Do you agree or disagree that state government should be involved in improving the Atlantic City casino economy?

	TOTAL	REG VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			REGION		
		Yes	No	Rep	Ind	Dem	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	North	Central	South
Agree	42%	43%	40%	44%	40%	46%	45%	39%	44%	43%	41%	38%	35%	53%
Disagree	51%	51%	53%	48%	55%	47%	49%	53%	52%	51%	51%	56%	57%	41%
(VOL) Depends	1%	1%	2%	2%	2%	1%	2%	1%	0%	2%	2%	1%	3%	2%
(VOL) Don't know	5%	5%	5%	5%	3%	6%	4%	6%	5%	4%	6%	5%	5%	4%

TREND:	May 2016	April 2013
Agree	42%	42%
Disagree	51%	52%
(VOL) Depends	1%	2%
(VOL) Don't know	5%	4%
Unwtd N	806	806

25. A proposal supported by the governor and legislature would allow for a state takeover of Atlantic City if local government there does not get its finances in order. Have you heard a lot, a little, or nothing at all about this?

	TOTAL	REG VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			REGION		
		Yes	No	Rep	Ind	Dem	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	North	Central	South
A lot	19%	21%	8%	27%	19%	13%	24%	13%	10%	15%	29%	15%	17%	25%
A little	38%	42%	20%	42%	36%	38%	38%	38%	24%	40%	46%	39%	42%	35%
Nothing at all	44%	37%	72%	30%	45%	48%	38%	49%	66%	44%	24%	46%	41%	39%
(VOL) Don't know	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

26. Do you think a state takeover would help or hurt the people who live and work in Atlantic City?

	TOTAL	REG VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			REGION		
		Yes	No	Rep	Ind	Dem	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	North	Central	South
Help	43%	44%	37%	43%	42%	46%	49%	37%	45%	42%	43%	41%	46%	42%
Hurt	41%	41%	42%	38%	40%	43%	38%	44%	39%	43%	40%	43%	34%	45%
(VOL) Depends	5%	5%	8%	6%	6%	3%	6%	5%	4%	5%	6%	6%	8%	1%
(VOL) Don't know	11%	10%	13%	13%	13%	8%	7%	14%	11%	10%	12%	10%	12%	11%

27. Do you think a state takeover would make it easier or harder for political bosses and connected developers to get special deals on land development rights in Atlantic City, or would a takeover make no difference?

	TOTAL	REG VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			REGION		
		Yes	No	Rep	Ind	Dem	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	North	Central	South
Easier	32%	32%	30%	29%	32%	32%	30%	33%	38%	27%	32%	33%	38%	26%
Harder	26%	26%	26%	29%	29%	23%	26%	27%	30%	29%	21%	26%	24%	31%
No difference	33%	33%	34%	36%	31%	34%	38%	28%	28%	34%	36%	34%	30%	33%
(VOL) Don't know	9%	9%	10%	7%	8%	10%	6%	12%	5%	10%	11%	8%	8%	10%

The *Monmouth University Poll* was sponsored and conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute from May 23 to 27, 2016 with a statewide random sample of 806 adult residents, including 566 contacted via live interview on a landline telephone and 240 via live interview on a cell phone, in English. Monmouth is responsible for all aspects of the survey questionnaire design, data weighting and analysis. Final sample is weighted for region, age, education, gender and race based on US Census information. Data collection support provided by Braun Research (field) and SSI (RDD sample). For results based on this 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 (unadjusted for sample design). Sampling error can be larger for sub-groups (see table below). 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.

<i>POLL DEMOGRAPHICS (weighted)</i>			
21% Rep	49% Male	28% 18-34	62% White
42% Ind	51% Female	40% 35-54	13% Black
37% Dem		33% 55+	16% Hispanic
			9% Asian/Other
<i>Registered Voter Sample (weighted)</i>			
22% Rep	47% Male	23% 18-34	66% White
40% Ind	53% Female	40% 35-54	13% Black
38% Dem		37% 55+	12% Hispanic
			8% Asian/Other

	TOTAL	REG VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			REGION		
		Yes	No	Rep	Ind	Dem	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	North	Central	South
<i>Unweighted N</i>	806	703	103	184	334	266	394	412	150	274	377	364	208	222
<i>moe</i>	3.5%	3.7%	9.7%	7.2%	5.4%	6.0%	4.9%	4.8%	8.0%	5.9%	5.1%	5.1%	6.8%	6.6%

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