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Released:

Thursday, July 15, 2010

*Please attribute this information to:
Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey
Press Media Poll*

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NEW JERSEY DIVIDED ON GOV. CHRISTIE

Cutting costs is good, but budget hurts many

Even though Governor Chris Christie now has his first budget under his belt and can claim a legislative victory on the state's top issue, Garden State residents remain divided on his job performance. According to the latest *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Press Media Poll*, the governor gets high marks for cutting costs, but the public is worried that these cuts may do harm.

Governor Christie's job rating currently stands at 44% approve to 44% disapprove among all state residents, and 45% to 43% among registered voters. This marks a nominal, but not significant, increase from his April rating after he first announced his budget plan (41% to 44% among all adults and 42% to 44% among voters). Christie receives plaudits from 80% of Republicans (up 15 points from April), 45% of independents (down 4 points), and 23% of Democrats (up 4 points).

The state legislature gets positive job ratings from 24% of the public (up from 20% in April) and negative ratings from 49% (down from 56%).

When asked to assign the governor a letter grade in five different areas, more than 4-in-10 residents give Christie either an A or B for controlling costs and cutting waste (43%) and bringing ethics and honesty back to state government (44%). Only 1-in-4 give him poor grades of D or F in these two areas (27% and 26%, respectively). A majority (52%) give the governor high grades of A or B for the level of effort he puts in, compared to 22% who give a poor grade of D or F.

The public is divided, though, on his performance in the area of property tax relief – 31% say he has earned an A or B compared to 38% who give him a D or F. [It should be noted that the poll was conducted after the property tax cap deal was reached last week, but before the governor signed it into law on Tuesday.]

The public is more negative on what the governor has done to “improve schools” – with just 29% granting him an A or B compared to 44% who say he deserves a D or F in this area.

Compared to Jon Corzine at a similar point in his term, the current incumbent earns higher marks on cost-cutting – 43% compared to 26% who gave above average grades to Corzine in September 2006. However, Christie earns lower grades for improving schools – 44% give Christie below average grades compared to 27% who did so for Corzine.

“The budget seems to be the main driver of public opinion about the governor right now. Few New Jerseyans were thrilled with the cuts when they were first announced, but more have come to terms with the budget now that it is done,” said Patrick Murray, director of the Monmouth University Polling Institute.

Overall, 16% of New Jerseyans say they are satisfied with the final budget compared to 30% who are dissatisfied. When the budget was first introduced, 22% were satisfied compared to 44% who were dissatisfied. Both of those numbers declined after the final deal was signed, and now the majority of New Jerseyans (51%) say they “can live with” the budget deal. These results are slightly more positive than public reaction after the final Corzine budget in June 2009, when just 6% were satisfied, 37% were dissatisfied, and 53% said they could live with it.

A major sticking point for the budget is that the public sees the cuts hurting almost every group of New Jerseyans. Only the wealthiest escape unscathed – 42% of the public says that wealthy residents will be helped by this budget and only 13% feel they will be hurt. Opinion is divided on the budget’s impact on the business community – 34% say New Jersey businesses will be helped while 38% say businesses will be hurt.

Other groups of New Jerseyans may not be so lucky. About half of the public believes that senior citizens (48%), property tax payers (51%), poor residents (52%), and middle class residents (54%) will feel pain from this budget, while only about 1-in-4 think that any of these groups will be helped. Transit riders are also more likely to be hurt (53%) than helped (9%) by this budget. The biggest victims of the state budget, though, are believed to be state workers (61% hurt to 13% helped) and teachers (71% hurt to 11% helped).

New Jersey Budget Impact			
<i>How it will impact...</i>	Help	Hurt	Net impact
Wealthy residents	42%	13%	+29
Businesses	34%	38%	-4
Property tax payers	27%	51%	-24
Senior citizens	21%	48%	-27
Middle class residents	25%	54%	-29
Poor residents	22%	52%	-30
Transit riders	9%	53%	-44
State workers	13%	61%	-48
Teachers	11%	71%	-60

The budget’s large cuts in state aid to local school districts and towns remain a concern for many New Jerseyans. Half (50%) call these cuts unfair compared to 35% who say they are fair in light of the other programmatic cuts. The number who call these cuts fair has increased from 28% who felt that way when the budget was first introduced, while the number who call them unfair has remained basically stable.

Furthermore, half (50%) of state residents expect that the quality of their public schools will get worse because of these cuts. Another 41% think that the cuts will have no impact on local school quality and just 8% think local school quality will actually improve.

The poll also found that 83% of the public followed news about the final budget deal, including 30% who heard a lot about it. This is down from the number who were paying attention when the governor first unveiled his plan four months ago (89% aware, including 45% “a lot”). However, attention to the budget process typically declines between introduction and final passage, and the current public awareness levels are still higher than normal.

The *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Press Media Poll* was conducted by telephone with 801 New Jersey adults from July 7 to 11, 2010. 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. Do you approve or disapprove of the job Chris Christie is doing as governor?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			STATE WORKER / TEACHER HOUSEHOLD	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No
Approve	44%	45%	37%	23%	45%	80%	31%	48%
Disapprove	44%	43%	51%	65%	41%	14%	57%	40%
(VOL) Don't know	12%	12%	12%	12%	15%	6%	12%	12%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	801	747	54	240	349	195	173	628

TREND: <i>All adults</i>	July 2010	April 2010	February 2010
Approve	44%	41%	33%
Disapprove	44%	44%	15%
(VOL) Don't know	12%	15%	52%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	801	804	803

TREND: <i>Registered voters</i>	July 2010	April 2010	February 2010
Approve	45%	42%	31%
Disapprove	43%	44%	15%
(VOL) Don't know	12%	13%	53%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	747	719	716

2. Do you approve or disapprove of the job the state legislature is doing?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			STATE WORKER / TEACHER HOUSEHOLD	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No
Approve	24%	25%	15%	22%	21%	29%	25%	23%
Disapprove	49%	49%	53%	50%	51%	47%	48%	50%
(VOL) Don't know	27%	26%	31%	27%	28%	24%	27%	27%
Unwtd N	801	747	54	240	349	195	173	628

TREND: All Adults	July 2010	April 2010	February 2010	July 2009	February 2009	September 2008	July 2008	April 2008	March 2008	October 2007	February 2007
Approve	24%	20%	26%	30%	25%	29%	27%	29%	28%	33%	35%
Disapprove	49%	56%	46%	47%	52%	47%	45%	53%	50%	41%	40%
(VOL) Don't know	27%	24%	28%	23%	23%	23%	28%	18%	22%	26%	25%
Unwtd N	801	804	803	923	803	808	1004	803	805	801	801

TREND: Registered Voters	July 2010	April 2010	February 2010	July 2009	February 2009	September 2008	July 2008	April 2008	March 2008	October 2007	February 2007
Approve	25%	19%	24%	31%	23%	29%	27%	28%	25%	32%	34%
Disapprove	49%	57%	49%	48%	55%	50%	47%	55%	53%	43%	42%
(VOL) Don't know	26%	24%	27%	22%	22%	21%	26%	17%	22%	25%	23%
Unwtd N	747	719	716	792	721	709	889	720	719	688	681

3. I'd like you to grade the Christie administration on how it has handled specific issues over the past few months. For each one I read, please give a letter grade of A, B, C, D or F for failing. What grade would you give the Christie administration for [READ ITEM]? [ITEMS WERE ROTATED]

Controlling costs and cutting waste

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			STATE WORKER / TEACHER HOUSEHOLD	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No
A - Highest grade	21%	21%	21%	9%	22%	43%	14%	23%
B	22%	21%	31%	17%	25%	26%	21%	23%
C	24%	24%	19%	28%	23%	17%	28%	23%
D	12%	12%	9%	17%	12%	3%	14%	11%
F - Failing grade	15%	16%	14%	23%	11%	9%	20%	14%
(VOL) Don't know	6%	5%	7%	6%	7%	2%	3%	6%
Unwtd N	801	747	54	240	349	195	173	628

Providing property tax relief

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			STATE WORKER / TEACHER HOUSEHOLD	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No
A - Highest grade	10%	11%	4%	4%	9%	24%	6%	11%
B	21%	20%	24%	15%	24%	26%	24%	20%
C	24%	25%	23%	28%	22%	21%	22%	25%
D	15%	12%	36%	13%	19%	10%	18%	14%
F - Failing grade	23%	25%	12%	32%	21%	14%	27%	23%
(VOL) Don't know	6%	7%	1%	8%	5%	5%	3%	7%
Unwtd N	801	747	54	240	349	195	173	628

Bringing ethics and honesty back to state government

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			STATE WORKER / TEACHER HOUSEHOLD	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No
A - Highest grade	23%	25%	10%	9%	21%	51%	15%	25%
B	21%	19%	34%	16%	25%	24%	20%	21%
C	25%	25%	25%	31%	25%	13%	30%	24%
D	10%	10%	13%	18%	9%	2%	11%	10%
F - Failing grade	16%	16%	11%	20%	15%	8%	20%	14%
(VOL) Don't know	5%	5%	6%	7%	5%	2%	3%	5%
Unwtd N	801	747	54	240	349	195	173	628

Improving our schools

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			STATE WORKER / TEACHER HOUSEHOLD	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No
		A - Highest grade	12%	12%	8%	4%	11%	24%
B	17%	17%	23%	10%	21%	25%	14%	18%
C	22%	22%	19%	23%	22%	20%	14%	24%
D	12%	11%	21%	14%	11%	7%	11%	12%
F - Failing grade	32%	33%	28%	48%	26%	15%	48%	28%
(VOL) Don't know	5%	6%	1%	1%	8%	9%	4%	6%
Unwtd N	801	747	54	240	349	195	173	628

4. What grade would you give the governor for the level of effort he puts into working for New Jersey?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			STATE WORKER / TEACHER HOUSEHOLD	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No
		A - Highest grade	33%	33%	30%	14%	34%	65%
B	19%	19%	23%	18%	20%	17%	20%	19%
C	23%	23%	22%	33%	22%	10%	21%	24%
D	10%	9%	14%	15%	10%	1%	16%	8%
F - Failing grade	12%	12%	11%	17%	9%	6%	19%	10%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	4%	0%	3%	5%	1%	1%	4%
Unwtd N	801	747	54	240	349	195	173	628

5. How much have you heard or read about the state budget that was passed last month – a lot, a little, or nothing at all?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			STATE WORKER / TEACHER HOUSEHOLD	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No
		A lot	30%	32%	16%	26%	34%	33%
A little	53%	52%	56%	56%	49%	54%	51%	53%
Nothing at all	17%	16%	28%	19%	17%	13%	11%	19%
Unwtd N	801	747	54	240	349	195	173	628

TREND:	July 2010	April 2010*
A lot	30%	45%
A little	53%	44%
Nothing at all	17%	11%
Unwtd N	801	804

* Question in April 2010 poll asked about "Governor Christie's state budget plan"

The following questions were asked only of those who heard at least a little about the budget: moe= ± 3.7%

6. How would you describe your reaction to the budget – would you say you are satisfied with it, not particularly satisfied but you can live with it, or you are definitely dissatisfied with it?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			STATE WORKER / TEACHER HOUSEHOLD	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No
		Satisfied	16%	16%	14%	7%	16%	34%
Can live with it	51%	50%	61%	49%	55%	50%	50%	52%
Dissatisfied	30%	30%	25%	44%	25%	13%	36%	28%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	3%	0%	1%	5%	4%	0%	4%
Unwtd N	706	665	41	204	314	174	159	547

TREND:	July 2010	April 2010*
Satisfied	16%	22%
Can live with it	51%	32%
Dissatisfied	30%	44%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	2%
Unwtd N	706	738

* Question in April 2010 poll asked about "reaction to the governor's budget plan"

7. I'd like to get your opinion on how the budget will affect different groups of New Jerseyans. Will this budget help, hurt, or have no impact on [READ ITEM]? [ITEMS WERE ROTATED]

Middle class residents

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			STATE WORKER / TEACHER HOUSEHOLD	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No
Help	25%	24%	34%	15%	23%	47%	19%	27%
Hurt	54%	54%	50%	64%	54%	32%	63%	51%
No impact	16%	16%	10%	17%	16%	15%	14%	16%
(VOL) Both help and hurt	2%	2%	0%	1%	2%	1%	1%	2%
(VOL) Don't know	4%	4%	5%	2%	5%	5%	3%	4%
Unwtd N	706	665	41	204	314	174	159	547

Poor residents

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			STATE WORKER / TEACHER HOUSEHOLD	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No
Help	22%	20%	34%	12%	20%	40%	15%	24%
Hurt	52%	53%	40%	76%	44%	24%	62%	49%
No impact	16%	18%	1%	5%	22%	27%	16%	17%
(VOL) Both help and hurt	1%	1%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	1%
(VOL) Don't know	9%	7%	25%	6%	12%	9%	8%	9%
Unwtd N	706	665	41	204	314	174	159	547

Wealthy residents

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			STATE WORKER / TEACHER HOUSEHOLD	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No
Help	42%	43%	39%	42%	44%	42%	51%	40%
Hurt	13%	13%	17%	17%	10%	13%	9%	15%
No impact	34%	35%	22%	31%	36%	34%	35%	34%
(VOL) Both help and hurt	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%
(VOL) Don't know	10%	9%	21%	9%	9%	9%	6%	11%
Unwtd N	706	665	41	204	314	174	159	547

Property tax payers

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			STATE WORKER / TEACHER HOUSEHOLD	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No
Help	27%	26%	40%	15%	29%	50%	20%	30%
Hurt	51%	52%	40%	65%	49%	30%	58%	49%
No impact	15%	16%	5%	13%	16%	13%	18%	14%
(VOL) Both help and hurt	1%	2%	0%	1%	2%	2%	0%	2%
(VOL) Don't know	6%	5%	15%	6%	5%	5%	3%	6%
Unwtd N	706	665	41	204	314	174	159	547

State workers

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			STATE WORKER / TEACHER HOUSEHOLD	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No
Help	13%	13%	9%	11%	12%	16%	7%	14%
Hurt	61%	61%	62%	66%	64%	52%	78%	56%
No impact	17%	18%	14%	17%	17%	19%	10%	19%
(VOL) Both help and hurt	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%
(VOL) Don't know	8%	7%	15%	5%	7%	12%	4%	9%
Unwtd N	706	665	41	204	314	174	159	547

Teachers

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER			PARTY ID			STATE WORKER / TEACHER HOUSEHOLD	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No	
Help	11%	12%	5%	7%	9%	24%	6%	13%	
Hurt	71%	71%	70%	84%	68%	52%	79%	68%	
No impact	13%	13%	8%	7%	15%	18%	8%	14%	
(VOL) Both help and hurt	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
(VOL) Don't know	5%	4%	18%	2%	7%	6%	6%	5%	
Unwtd N	706	665	41	204	314	174	159	547	

Transit riders

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER			PARTY ID			STATE WORKER / TEACHER HOUSEHOLD	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No	
Help	9%	8%	16%	10%	8%	13%	6%	10%	
Hurt	53%	53%	51%	60%	54%	40%	64%	50%	
No impact	17%	17%	9%	15%	16%	15%	13%	18%	
(VOL) Both help and hurt	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	
(VOL) Don't know	21%	21%	24%	16%	22%	31%	18%	22%	
Unwtd N	706	665	41	204	314	174	159	547	

Senior citizens

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER			PARTY ID			STATE WORKER / TEACHER HOUSEHOLD	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No	
Help	21%	21%	26%	9%	22%	39%	20%	22%	
Hurt	48%	49%	36%	60%	48%	29%	57%	45%	
No impact	18%	19%	8%	20%	16%	20%	11%	20%	
(VOL) Both help and hurt	1%	1%	1%	0%	2%	0%	0%	1%	
(VOL) Don't know	12%	10%	28%	12%	12%	11%	11%	12%	
Unwtd N	706	665	41	204	314	174	159	547	

Businesses

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER			PARTY ID			STATE WORKER / TEACHER HOUSEHOLD	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No	
Help	34%	33%	39%	23%	36%	50%	25%	36%	
Hurt	38%	38%	36%	48%	37%	24%	48%	34%	
No impact	17%	17%	15%	16%	14%	15%	16%	17%	
(VOL) Both help and hurt	2%	3%	0%	2%	3%	2%	0%	3%	
(VOL) Don't know	9%	9%	10%	11%	9%	8%	10%	9%	
Unwtd N	706	665	41	204	314	174	159	547	

8. This budget cuts aid to local school districts and towns. Compared to how much other programs and spending have been reduced in the state budget, do you think that the amount local aid has been cut is basically fair or unfair, or don't you have an opinion?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER			PARTY ID			STATE WORKER / TEACHER HOUSEHOLD	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No	
Fair	35%	35%	40%	20%	37%	64%	24%	39%	
Unfair	50%	51%	47%	68%	46%	26%	57%	48%	
No opinion	14%	14%	12%	12%	17%	10%	19%	13%	
Unwtd N	706	665	41	204	314	174	159	547	

TREND:	July 2010	April 2010
Fair	35%	28%
Unfair	50%	52%
No opinion	14%	20%
Unwtd N	706	738

9. Do you think the quality of public schools will get better, get worse or stay about the same because of this budget?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			STATE WORKER / TEACHER HOUSEHOLD	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No
Better	8%	8%	5%	2%	9%	17%	5%	9%
Worse	50%	49%	65%	68%	48%	22%	67%	46%
Stay about the same	41%	42%	30%	30%	42%	60%	28%	44%
(VOL) Don't know	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%
Unwtd N	706	665	41	204	314	174	159	547

The *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Press Media Poll* was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute on July 7-11, 2010 with a statewide random sample of 801 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)			
38% Dem	48% Male	28% 18-34	67% White
40% Ind	52% Female	41% 35-54	13% Black
22% Rep		31% 55+	12% 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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