

Contact:

PATRICK MURRAY

732-263-5858 (office)

732-979-6769 (cell)

pdmurray@monmouth.edu

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For more information:

Monmouth University Polling Institute

West Long Branch, NJ 07764

www.monmouth.edu/polling

GOV. CHRISTIE JOB RATING UP

But property tax concerns still simmering

New Jersey Governor Chris Christie's job rating has improved since the state budget was signed, sealed, and line-item vetoed. The latest *Monmouth University/NJ Press Media Poll* found most state residents are okay with the governor's controversial cuts. However, there has been a decline in the grades he gets for controlling costs and property tax relief.

Governor Christie currently earns a 48% approve to 42% disapprove job rating among all Garden State residents. Among registered voters, his rating stands at 50% approve to 41% disapprove. This is the first time he has hit the 50% mark in the *Monmouth University/NJ Press Media Poll* since taking office. It is also the first time since early April that he broke 50% approval in any non-partisan New Jersey poll.

Polls during this past spring showed opinion of the governor declining after he unveiled his budget plan. In fact, the last *Monmouth University/NJ Press Media Poll* in May had the governor's rating in net negative territory –46% to 49% among registered voters. Christie's job approval rating among voters has since increased by 4 points while his disapproval number has gone down by 8 points.

The governor's decision to veto more than \$1 billion in spending from the legislature's budget may have caused an uproar among Democrats, but most New Jerseyans appear to accept his decision even if they may not like it. Among residents who followed the budget debate, 33% say they were dissatisfied with the governor's line-item cuts compared to fewer (22%) who say they were satisfied by his veto choices. Another 42% say they can live the cuts he made even though they are not particularly satisfied with them.

While the governor's job rating has gone up, the legislature's has remained flat – 35% approve to 47% disapprove. Most Garden State residents (63%) continue to feel that the Republican governor and the Democratic legislative leadership have not been working together well, although more are now likely to blame both sides equally (61%) than were a few months ago (54%). Among the remainder, 19% blame Christie more and 16% blame the Democrats more.

“Overall, the public has never been particularly happy with the size of the cuts Governor Christie has made in either of his budgets. However, they recognize New Jersey is in dire economic straits and continue to give the governor positive marks for leadership,” said Patrick Murray, director of the Monmouth University Polling Institute. “How he performs on the individual issues important to state residents is still very much up in the air.”

New Jerseyans were asked to grade their governor in the areas of education, controlling costs, and property taxes. Just over 18 months into his term, Christie's grades on improving the state's schools have remained stable, although not stellar: 28% give him an above average grade of A or B, 26% grade him a C and 40% give him a low grade of D or F. These results are very similar to polls taken at the governor's 6 month and one year marks.

Christie's grades on controlling costs and cutting waste have slipped in the past six months. He currently earns an A or B in this area from 34% of residents, a C from 34%, and a D or F from 28%. The proportion of residents giving him an above average grade has slipped from 41% in February and 43% in July of last year. Most of that drop has shifted to an average C grade, while the percentage of poor D and F grades remained stable over the past year and a half.

The governor's grades on providing property tax relief have also experienced a drop. Currently, just 20% of New Jerseyans give him an A or B in this area, 30% give him a C, and 43% say he's only earned a D or F. Christie's grades in this area have steadily declined. Six months ago, 24% of the public gave him an above average grade and just over one year ago, 31% gave him an A or B.

Currently, 35% of New Jerseyans say it is at least somewhat likely that they will see significant property tax relief in the next few years, compared to 61% who say it is not really likely. While the current level of optimism is five points lower than in February (40%), it is higher than it was in September 2010 (22%). The high point for optimism about property taxes during Christie's term so far occurred just over a year ago in July 2010 (49%).

“The public's outlook on property taxes has been on a roller coaster ride since Governor Christie took office,” said Murray. “Pessimism over property taxes has not been a noticeable drag on the governor's overall job rating, but it's difficult to shake the sense that it hangs over him like a Sword of Damocles. The big question is whether opinion will shift in a year or two as voters start to consider whether Christie deserves a second term.”

Almost no residents think that state government has made a lot of progress on the property tax issue, although a majority of 52% say it has made at least a little progress (which includes 3% who say a “lot” and another 49% who say a “little”). This compares to a sizable 43% who feel the state has made no progress on property taxes. There are no significant partisan differences in this opinion – 57% of Republicans, 52% of Democrats and 51% of independents say the state has made at least a little progress.

Turning locally – where property tax rates are actually set – the outlook is similar. Less than 1-in-10 say that either their town or local school district has made a lot of progress on property taxes in the past few years. In total, just under half (48%) say that their municipal government has made at least a little progress on this issue compared to 46% who say it has made no progress. Opinion about how school districts have performed on property taxes is similar – 45% say at least a little progress to 45% no progress.

While much of the media attention about property taxes has focused on reforms proposed at the state level, it is at the local level where New Jerseyans really make their opinions known. When asked who they would contact first with a general complaint about property taxes, half of state residents identify a local official while only 1-in-5 name a state office holder. Specifically, 27% would contact their town hall or town council directly, 17% would call the mayor, and 6% would seek out their local tax collector or tax assessor. At the state level, 11% would contact the governor and 10% would contact a state legislator.

Interestingly, while the largest portion of New Jersey homeowners’ tax bills are school taxes, only 1% say their first call would be to their school district. This is lower even than the number who would try to contact someone at the county level (3%), which contributes a smaller share to property tax bills.

The *Monmouth University/NJ Press Media Poll* was conducted by telephone with 802 New Jersey adults from August 3 to 8, 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. Do you approve or disapprove of the job Chris Christie is doing as governor? [*PROBE: Do you approve/disapprove strongly or somewhat?*]

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	Yes	No
Strongly approve	21%	23%	11%	6%	22%	46%	27%	16%	12%	24%
Somewhat approve	27%	27%	24%	30%	22%	32%	25%	29%	16%	29%
Somewhat disapprove	16%	14%	27%	19%	18%	5%	14%	18%	14%	17%
Strongly disapprove	26%	27%	21%	36%	28%	10%	23%	30%	53%	20%
(VOL) Don't know	9%	8%	17%	8%	10%	7%	11%	7%	4%	11%
Unwtd N	802	730	72	237	363	168	412	390	185	611

TREND: All adults	August 2011	May 2011	February 2011	September 2010	July 2010	April 2010	February 2010
Approve	48%	47%	47%	45%	44%	41%	33%
Disapprove	42%	49%	40%	38%	44%	44%	15%
(VOL) Don't know	9%	5%	12%	17%	12%	15%	52%
Unwtd N	802	807	801	801	801	804	803

TREND: Registered voters	August 2011	May 2011	February 2011	September 2010	July 2010	April 2010	February 2010
Approve	50%	46%	49%	44%	45%	42%	31%
Disapprove	41%	49%	41%	40%	43%	44%	15%
(VOL) Don't know	8%	5%	9%	16%	12%	13%	53%
Unwtd N	730	725	718	726	747	719	716

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

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	Yes	No
Approve	35%	35%	33%	38%	28%	45%	34%	36%	26%	37%
Disapprove	47%	48%	38%	45%	50%	41%	47%	46%	55%	44%
(VOL) Don't know	19%	17%	29%	17%	22%	14%	19%	19%	18%	19%
Unwtd N	802	730	72	237	363	168	412	390	185	611

TREND: All Adults	August 2011	May 2011	February 2011	July 2010	April 2010	February 2010	July 2009	February 2009	September 2008	July 2008	April 2008	March 2008	October 2007	February 2007
Approve	35%	33%	30%	24%	20%	26%	30%	25%	29%	27%	29%	28%	33%	35%
Disapprove	47%	47%	44%	49%	56%	46%	47%	52%	47%	45%	53%	50%	41%	40%
(VOL) Don't know	19%	20%	26%	27%	24%	28%	23%	23%	23%	28%	18%	22%	26%	25%
Unwtd N	802	807	801	801	804	803	923	803	808	1004	803	805	801	801

TREND: Registered Voters	August 2011	May 2011	February 2011	July 2010	April 2010	February 2010	July 2009	February 2009	September 2008	July 2008	April 2008	March 2008	October 2007	February 2007
Approve	35%	32%	29%	25%	19%	24%	31%	23%	29%	27%	28%	25%	32%	34%
Disapprove	48%	48%	45%	49%	57%	49%	48%	55%	50%	47%	55%	53%	43%	42%
(VOL) Don't know	17%	20%	26%	26%	24%	27%	22%	22%	21%	26%	17%	22%	25%	23%
Unwtd N	730	725	718	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 year. 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			GENDER		PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	Yes	No
A - Highest grade	12%	12%	10%	5%	11%	27%	15%	9%	5%	14%
B	22%	22%	21%	20%	21%	25%	21%	22%	16%	23%
C	34%	33%	42%	39%	32%	30%	36%	33%	31%	35%
D	14%	15%	9%	19%	16%	5%	11%	17%	19%	13%
F - Failing grade	14%	14%	12%	12%	18%	10%	14%	13%	25%	11%
(VOL) Don't know	4%	4%	6%	6%	2%	3%	4%	5%	4%	4%
Unwtd N	802	730	72	237	363	168	412	390	185	611

TREND:	August 2011	February 2011	July 2010
A - Highest grade	12%	18%	21%
B	22%	23%	22%
C	34%	27%	24%
D	14%	13%	12%
F - Failing grade	14%	14%	15%
(VOL) Don't know	4%	4%	6%
Unwtd N	802	801	801

Providing property tax relief

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	Yes	No
A - Highest grade	4%	5%	3%	2%	5%	9%	5%	4%	1%	5%
B	16%	16%	18%	14%	16%	19%	18%	14%	11%	17%
C	30%	31%	28%	34%	28%	29%	30%	30%	24%	32%
D	17%	18%	10%	17%	14%	20%	15%	18%	16%	17%
F - Failing grade	26%	26%	27%	26%	32%	17%	24%	28%	43%	22%
(VOL) Don't know	6%	5%	14%	6%	5%	7%	8%	5%	4%	7%
Unwtd N	802	730	72	237	363	168	412	390	185	611

TREND:	August 2011	February 2011	July 2010
A - Highest grade	4%	5%	10%
B	16%	19%	21%
C	30%	24%	24%
D	17%	18%	15%
F - Failing grade	26%	27%	23%
(VOL) Don't know	6%	8%	6%
Unwtd N	802	801	801

Improving our schools

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	Yes	No
A - Highest grade	8%	7%	13%	3%	11%	12%	11%	6%	1%	10%
B	20%	21%	19%	19%	16%	33%	23%	17%	7%	24%
C	26%	27%	22%	23%	27%	30%	25%	27%	24%	26%
D	17%	16%	18%	21%	15%	10%	16%	17%	19%	16%
F - Failing grade	23%	23%	24%	30%	27%	8%	19%	28%	44%	19%
(VOL) Don't know	5%	5%	5%	4%	5%	6%	6%	5%	5%	5%
Unwtd N	802	730	72	237	363	168	412	390	185	611

TREND:	August 2011	February 2011	July 2010
A - Highest grade	8%	10%	12%
B	20%	22%	17%
C	26%	22%	22%
D	17%	15%	12%
F - Failing grade	23%	26%	32%
(VOL) Don't know	5%	5%	5%
Unwtd N	802	801	801

4. Thinking about Chris Christie's term as governor so far, would you say that he has major accomplishments, minor accomplishments, or no real accomplishments to point to?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	Yes	No
Major accomplishments	24%	26%	9%	15%	23%	43%	28%	19%	19%	25%
Minor accomplishments	40%	40%	41%	42%	38%	40%	43%	37%	34%	41%
No real accomplishments	34%	32%	42%	41%	36%	16%	24%	43%	45%	31%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	2%	7%	2%	3%	0%	4%	1%	1%	3%
Unwtd N	802	730	72	237	363	168	412	390	185	611

TREND:	August 2011	May 2011	February 2011
Major accomplishments	24%	23%	25%
Minor accomplishments	40%	40%	39%
No real accomplishments	34%	34%	34%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	2%	2%
Unwtd N	802	807	801

5. The legislature passed the state budget a few weeks ago. Before signing it, Governor Christie vetoed more than one billion dollars in programs and other spending. How much did you hear or read about the governor's veto decision – a lot, a little, or nothing at all?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	Yes	No
A lot	22%	24%	12%	23%	25%	19%	25%	19%	35%	19%
A little	49%	51%	36%	52%	43%	56%	44%	54%	49%	49%
Nothing at all	27%	23%	50%	25%	30%	25%	29%	25%	16%	30%
(VOL) Don't know	1%	1%	3%	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%	2%
Unwtd N	802	730	72	237	363	168	412	390	185	611

[The following question was asked only of people who were aware of the veto decision: moe=+/-4.0%]

6. How would you describe your reaction to the governor's veto decision – would you say you are satisfied with his veto choices, not particularly satisfied but you can live with it, or you are definitely dissatisfied with his veto choices?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	Yes	No
Satisfied	22%	23%	14%	7%	22%	45%	28%	17%	13%	25%
Can live with it	42%	41%	50%	45%	39%	42%	46%	38%	31%	45%
Dissatisfied	33%	33%	31%	44%	36%	11%	25%	41%	54%	27%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	3%	5%	4%	2%	2%	2%	4%	2%	3%
Unwtd N	608	570	38	184	272	130	311	297	156	448

7. In general, have Governor Christie and Democratic leaders in the legislature been working together well or not so well?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	Yes	No
Well	18%	18%	19%	20%	16%	25%	20%	17%	13%	20%
Not so well	63%	64%	58%	61%	67%	59%	60%	65%	74%	60%
(VOL) Mixed/Depends	9%	11%	1%	12%	8%	11%	11%	8%	4%	11%
(VOL) Don't know	9%	7%	22%	8%	10%	6%	9%	10%	9%	9%
Unwtd N	802	730	72	237	363	168	412	390	185	611

	August 2011	May 2011	September 2010
Well	18%	22%	21%
Not so well	63%	66%	61%
(VOL) Mixed/Depends	9%	3%	4%
(VOL) Don't know	9%	9%	14%
Unwtd N	802	807	801

[The following question was asked only of those who said "Not so well" to Q7, moe= ±4.0%]

8. Who is more to blame for this – Christie, the Democrats, or both equally?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	Yes	No
Christie	19%	20%	17%	26%	19%	8%	16%	22%	31%	16%
Democrats	16%	16%	18%	4%	15%	39%	21%	11%	8%	18%
Both equally	61%	61%	64%	64%	64%	51%	60%	62%	60%	62%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	4%	1%	6%	2%	2%	2%	5%	1%	4%
Unwtd N	590	547	43	180	270	118	295	295	147	437

	August 2011	May 2011	September 2010
Christie	19%	25%	26%
Democrats	16%	20%	17%
Both equally	61%	54%	54%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	1%	3%
Unwtd N	590	563	510

9. How likely is it that the state will enact reforms in the next few years to significantly lower property taxes – very, somewhat, not too, or not at all likely?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	Yes	No
Very likely	4%	5%	4%	2%	6%	6%	5%	4%	4%	5%
Somewhat likely	31%	30%	33%	34%	27%	35%	33%	28%	26%	32%
Not too likely	28%	28%	25%	32%	25%	23%	24%	31%	29%	27%
Not at all likely	33%	33%	32%	28%	38%	34%	34%	32%	36%	32%
(VOL) Don't know	4%	4%	6%	4%	5%	2%	3%	5%	5%	4%
Unwtd N	802	730	72	237	363	168	412	390	185	611

TREND:	August 2011	February 2011	September 2010	July 2010	February 2010	April 2006
Very likely	4%	8%	3%	10%	8%	6%
Somewhat likely	31%	32%	19%	39%	34%	20%
Not too likely	28%	24%	22%	18%	29%	17%
Not at all likely	33%	31%	53%	30%	27%	51%
(VOL) Don't know	4%	3%	2%	3%	2%	5%
Unwtd N	802	801	801	801	803	803

[QUESTIONS 10, 11, AND 12 WERE ROTATED]

10. Has state government made a lot of progress, a little progress, or no progress on property taxes in the past few years?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	Yes	No
Lot of progress	3%	3%	1%	3%	2%	5%	4%	2%	1%	3%
Little progress	49%	48%	56%	49%	49%	52%	48%	51%	44%	50%
No progress	43%	46%	30%	42%	46%	41%	44%	43%	50%	42%
(VOL) Don't know	5%	3%	13%	7%	3%	2%	5%	5%	6%	5%
Unwtd N	802	730	72	237	363	168	412	390	185	611

11. Has your local town government made a lot of progress, a little progress, or no progress on property taxes in the past few years?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	Yes	No
Lot of progress	7%	7%	5%	9%	4%	9%	9%	6%	6%	7%
Little progress	41%	42%	37%	43%	37%	47%	39%	43%	35%	43%
No progress	46%	46%	47%	42%	52%	40%	46%	46%	52%	44%
(VOL) Don't know	6%	5%	11%	6%	6%	4%	6%	5%	7%	5%
Unwtd N	802	730	72	237	363	168	412	390	185	611

12. Has your local school district made a lot of progress, a little progress, or no progress on property taxes in the past few years?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	Yes	No
Lot of progress	7%	7%	5%	6%	6%	10%	8%	6%	9%	7%
Little progress	38%	36%	50%	39%	39%	36%	37%	39%	33%	39%
No progress	45%	47%	31%	44%	45%	44%	45%	44%	49%	43%
(VOL) Don't know	11%	10%	15%	11%	10%	10%	11%	11%	10%	11%
Unwtd N	802	730	72	237	363	168	412	390	185	611

13. If you had a general complaint about property taxes, who would you contact FIRST?
 [LIST WAS NOT READ]

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	Yes	No
Mayor	17%	17%	20%	25%	15%	9%	17%	17%	12%	18%
Town, town council	27%	28%	20%	24%	27%	32%	24%	31%	27%	27%
Tax collector/assessor	6%	7%	1%	7%	5%	7%	5%	8%	7%	6%
School, school district	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	3%	1%	0%	2%	1%
County	3%	3%	3%	3%	4%	1%	4%	2%	7%	2%
Governor	11%	11%	13%	10%	12%	14%	12%	11%	12%	12%
State legislator	10%	11%	3%	10%	11%	10%	10%	10%	14%	9%
Congressman	2%	2%	1%	1%	2%	1%	2%	1%	2%	1%
Other	1%	1%	3%	0%	2%	1%	2%	1%	2%	1%
No one (do not pay taxes)	8%	8%	8%	7%	7%	9%	9%	6%	7%	8%
Don't know	14%	12%	27%	11%	14%	14%	15%	13%	8%	15%
Unwtd N	802	730	72	237	363	168	412	390	185	611

The Monmouth University/NJ Press Media Poll was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute on August 3 to 8, 2011 with a statewide random sample of 802 adult residents, including 640 contacted on a landline telephone and 162 on a cell phone. Sampling and 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)			
34% Dem	49% Male	30% 18-34	64% White
21% Rep	51% Female	39% 35-54	13% Black
45% Ind		31% 55+	15% Hispanic
			8% Asian/Other
Registered Voter Sample (weighted)			
35% Dem	47% Male	25% 18-34	68% White
22% Rep	53% Female	42% 35-54	14% Black
43% Ind		33% 55+	13% Hispanic
			6% 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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