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NJ GOVERNOR'S JOB RATING POSITIVE BUT CHRISTIE GETS BLAME FOR RACE TO TOP

New Jersey's rating of Obama drops again

More New Jerseyans approve than disapprove of the job Governor Chris Christie is doing, but the Race to the Top application blunder has raised some doubts. The latest *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Press Media Poll* also finds a continuing erosion in Garden State opinion of President Barack Obama.

Governor Christie's job rating currently stands at 45% approve to 38% disapprove among all state residents, and 44% to 40% among registered voters. Christie receives positive ratings from 71% of Republicans, 49% of independents, and 22% of Democrats.

The governor's job rating had been tracking at an almost even positive to negative split from the time he announced his initial budget cuts in March until just before he signed the 2 percent property tax cap in July. Other organizations' polls taken after the tax cap – but before the state lost the Race to the Top grant competition – showed the governor with positive ratings above the 50% mark.

“While the property tax cap improved the governor's standing among state residents, mistakes made in the Race to the Top application seem to have raised doubts about the administration,” said Patrick Murray, director of the Monmouth University Polling Institute.

About 2-in-3 (66%) New Jerseyans are aware that the state lost out on \$400 million in federal Race to the Top education funds. Among this group of aware residents, more place the ultimate responsibility for this loss with the governor (38%) rather than with former Education Commissioner Bret Schundler (20%). Others blame New Jersey bureaucrats (9%), federal government officials (3%), and the teachers union (2%), among others.

A majority (52%) of those who have heard about this incident say it makes them less confident in the Christie administration, compared to 37% who say Race to the Top has no effect on their opinion and

just 8% who say it has given them more confidence. Furthermore, most aware residents (53%) feel that the loss of these funds will severely hamper the governor’s efforts to reform the state’s education system. Another 32% say it hurts those efforts a little and just 12% say the loss of these funds won’t hurt those efforts at all.

The General Assembly has already held a hearing on this issue and the state Senate is scheduled to do so this week. While some have accused the Democratic leadership of making political hay, residents who are aware of the issue are somewhat more likely to see the legislature’s reaction as appropriate (53%) rather than overblown (36%).

Turning to the national picture, New Jersey residents give more positive than negative reviews to President Obama, but just barely. Currently, 48% of all New Jerseyans approve of the president’s job performance while 43% disapprove. Among registered voters in the state, opinion stands at 47% positive to 44% negative. New Jersey’s rating for the president continues to be higher than the national average of 46% approve to 50% disapprove recorded by *Real Clear Politics* on September 19. However, the current state rating marks yet another decline from the 30 point net positive rating Obama enjoyed in the Garden State in July 2009.

The president’s declining approval rating among New Jerseyans does not seem to have translated into increased support for a Republican takeover of Congress. When asked which party they would like to see in control on Capitol Hill, Garden State voters split 23% for the GOP to 27% for the Democrats. More than 4-in-10 (42%) say that the country would be the same regardless of which party controls Congress. Compared to a poll taken in July, the Democrats have gained six points on this question.

The *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Press Media Poll* was conducted by telephone with 801 New Jersey adults from September 15 to 19, 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		Dem	PARTY ID		PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No		Ind	Rep	Yes	No
Approve	45%	44%	50%	22%	49%	71%	41%	46%
Disapprove	38%	40%	24%	58%	31%	22%	48%	36%
(VOL) Don't know	17%	16%	26%	19%	20%	7%	11%	19%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	801	726	75	223	382	177	203	581

TREND: All adults	September 2010	July 2010	April 2010	February 2010
Approve	45%	44%	41%	33%
Disapprove	38%	44%	44%	15%
(VOL) Don't know	17%	12%	15%	52%
Unwtd N	801	801	804	803

TREND: Registered voters	September 2010	July 2010	April 2010	February 2010
Approve	44%	45%	42%	31%
Disapprove	40%	43%	44%	15%
(VOL) Don't know	16%	12%	13%	53%
Unwtd N	726	747	719	716

2. Do you approve or disapprove of the job Barack Obama is doing as president?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No
Approve	48%	47%	59%	79%	40%	16%	50%	48%
Disapprove	43%	44%	33%	13%	48%	79%	42%	43%
(VOL) Don't know	9%	9%	9%	7%	12%	5%	8%	9%
Unwtd N	801	726	75	223	382	177	203	581

TREND: Registered voters only	September 2010	July 2010	April 2010	February 2010	October 2009	July 2009
Approve	47%	51%	54%	53%	54%	59%
Disapprove	44%	42%	41%	38%	33%	29%
(VOL) Don't know	9%	6%	5%	9%	14%	12%
Unwtd N	726	747	719	716	785	792

3. Do you think the country would be better off if the Republicans controlled Congress, if the Democrats controlled Congress, or would the country be the same regardless of which party controlled Congress?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No
Republicans	22%	23%	12%	2%	16%	62%	14%	24%
Democrats	27%	27%	27%	60%	14%	3%	30%	27%
Same	44%	42%	53%	33%	60%	30%	46%	43%
(VOL) Don't know	7%	7%	7%	5%	10%	4%	9%	6%
Unwtd N	801	726	75	223	382	177	203	581

TREND: Registered voters only	September 2010	July 2010
Republicans	23%	23%
Democrats	27%	21%
Same	42%	51%
(VOL) Don't know	7%	5%
Unwtd N	726	747

4. Would you say things in New Jersey are going in the right direction, or have they gotten off on the wrong track?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No
Right direction	37%	36%	43%	19%	46%	52%	33%	39%
Wrong track	51%	52%	45%	69%	45%	38%	59%	49%
(VOL) Depends	6%	7%	4%	8%	4%	6%	5%	7%
(VOL) Don't know	5%	5%	8%	4%	5%	5%	3%	5%
Unwtd N	801	726	75	223	382	177	203	581

TREND: All adults	September 2010	April 2010	February 2010	February 2009	September 2008	July 2007	April 2007	February 2007	September 2006	July 2006	April 2006	September 2005
Right direction	37%	37%	29%	21%	26%	39%	33%	34%	29%	27%	30%	31%
Wrong track	51%	55%	56%	72%	64%	50%	51%	55%	58%	62%	55%	54%
(VOL) Depends	6%	5%	5%	3%	4%	6%	8%	6%	6%	4%	9%	5%
(VOL) Don't know	5%	4%	9%	4%	6%	6%	8%	6%	7%	7%	6%	10%
Unwtd N	801	804	803	803	808	800	804	801	800	802	803	800

5. Did you read or hear anything about New Jersey not getting 400 million dollars in federal Race to the Top education funds, or not?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No
Yes	66%	71%	38%	63%	65%	73%	76%	63%
No	32%	28%	58%	36%	32%	26%	24%	35%
(VOL) Don't know	2%	1%	3%	1%	3%	1%	0%	2%
Unwtd N	801	726	75	223	382	177	203	581

[The following questions were asked only of those who said "Yes" to Q5, moe= ± 4%]

6. Who is most to blame for not getting these federal funds? [List was NOT read]

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No
Governor Chris Christie	38%	39%	29%	56%	31%	26%	45%	36%
Former Education Commissioner Bret Schundler	20%	21%	12%	15%	21%	25%	18%	21%
New Jersey state government bureaucrats (not specific)	9%	9%	10%	8%	9%	10%	9%	9%
Federal government education department	3%	3%	5%	2%	3%	5%	2%	3%
Teachers' union	2%	2%	0%	1%	2%	3%	1%	2%
The consultants	1%	1%	4%	0%	2%	0%	3%	0%
President Barack Obama	1%	2%	0%	1%	0%	5%	0%	2%
Everyone	2%	2%	3%	0%	3%	1%	2%	2%
Other	9%	8%	17%	6%	11%	10%	8%	9%
No one is to blame	1%	1%	2%	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%
(VOL) Don't know	14%	14%	17%	11%	15%	15%	11%	15%
Unwtd N	595	556	39	160	288	135	172	412

7. Did this incident make you more confident, less confident, or have no effect on your opinion of the Christie administration?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No
More confident	8%	8%	9%	3%	7%	12%	4%	9%
Less confident	52%	53%	40%	71%	47%	38%	62%	49%
No effect	37%	37%	45%	24%	43%	45%	33%	39%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	3%	6%	2%	3%	4%	1%	4%
Unwtd N	595	556	39	160	288	135	172	412

8. The legislature has held public hearings to look into this. Do you think the legislature's reaction has been appropriate or overblown?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No
Appropriate	53%	53%	61%	66%	50%	42%	59%	51%
Overblown	36%	37%	25%	26%	36%	48%	33%	38%
(VOL) Both	1%	1%	0%	0%	2%	0%	1%	1%
(VOL) Don't know	10%	9%	14%	7%	12%	10%	8%	11%
Unwtd N	595	556	39	160	288	135	172	412

9. How much will the loss of these funds hurt the governor's efforts to reform the state education system – a lot, a little, or not at all?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			PUBLIC WORKER	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No
A lot	53%	54%	49%	59%	54%	45%	61%	51%
A little	32%	32%	34%	33%	30%	37%	23%	36%
Not at all	12%	11%	13%	8%	14%	13%	14%	11%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	3%	4%	1%	3%	5%	2%	3%
Unwtd N	595	556	39	160	288	135	172	412

The *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Press Media Poll* was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute on September 15-19, 2010 with a statewide random sample of 801 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.

<i>POLL DEMOGRAPHICS (weighted)</i>			
<i>35% Dem</i>	<i>48% Male</i>	<i>27% 18-34</i>	<i>68% White</i>
<i>43% Ind</i>	<i>52% Female</i>	<i>40% 35-54</i>	<i>13% Black</i>
<i>22% Rep</i>		<i>33% 55+</i>	<i>12% Hispanic</i>
			<i>7% Asian/Other</i>

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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