



Contact:
Patrick Murray
732-263-5858
pdmurray@monmouth.edu

Embargoed to:
October 2, 2005

We ask users to properly attribute
this copyrighted information to:
“Monmouth University/Gannett NJ Poll”

Monmouth University Polling Institute
400 Cedar Avenue
West Long Branch, NJ 07764
www.monmouth.edu/polling

“PAY-TO-PLAY” MUST GO AWAY

New Jerseyans say the cost of corruption is too high

An overwhelming majority of New Jerseyans say the state pays a high price for the amount of corruption that occurs in the state. Few feel the current ban on “pay-to-play” is strong enough to have any impact on the overall problem. And they’d like to see independently elected officials who can keep the system in check.

Fully 62 percent of residents say that corruption is a major problem in the Garden State. Another 26 percent say it is a minor problem and only 5 percent “see no evil” in the way the state operates. And the price of corruption is high. Three-in-four residents (74%) say that corruption and fraud in government costs the New Jersey taxpayer a lot. Another 20 percent tab the cost as a little and only 1 percent believes corruption to be cost-free.

One group of culprits for the current state of affairs are un-elected party bosses. About half (49%) of New Jerseyans say that these figures have too much say about what goes on in the state, compared to 34 percent who believe the state’s political process is able to keep their power in check.

Comparing corruption in New Jersey to what they think goes on in other states, 41 percent of residents say the Garden State variety of public fraud is more prevalent. Another 42 percent say there is probably about the same amount of corruption in New Jersey as elsewhere. And 7 percent believe New Jersey to have less corruption than other states.

“To those who closely follow the transgressions of our state and local officials, the 41 percent who say that there is more corruption in New Jersey may seem low,” observed Patrick

Murray, director of the Monmouth University Polling Institute. “But put it in context. Can you imagine 4-in-10 Pennsylvanians, or even New Yorkers, saying their state is more corrupt than others?”

Despite some recent legislation designed to clean up government bidding practices and post-public life employment, few New Jerseyans have seen any real progress. Only 8 percent say that there is less corruption in the state than there was five years ago. In fact, on the heels of many recent indictments, it’s not surprising that 34 percent believe corruption has become even worse. Another 48 percent have seen no change in corruption over the past few years.

In this environment, a very large majority of residents (85%) believe that politicians are more talk than action when it comes to tackling this issue. Even the recent ban on political contributors getting state contracts – what is known as “pay-to-play” – only receives modest marks from the public. Just 10 percent of New Jerseyans would describe the current law as exactly what the state needs to clean up corruption. The majority (55%) see it as a good start, but that more needs to be done. It is also worth noting, though, that a sizable minority of 30 percent see the current ban as a whitewash, describing it as a political move that will have little or no impact.

So what do New Jerseyans think should be done to clean up government? One step would be to extend the pay-to-play ban to all levels of government – 64 percent agree with this proposal compared to 28 percent who feel we should keep it at the state level for now. However, the public puts some qualifications on the local government ban. Many do not believe it should be absolute. Nearly half (48%) of those supporting a local level pay-to-play ban say that giving contributions to candidates and organizations in one town should not bar a company from doing business with another town. On the other hand, 37 percent of this group feel that there should be a blanket ban on a political contributor getting work from any county or local government in the state.

Other proposals to clean up government that have been floated recently include creating the position of an elected Auditor General to oversee the state’s spending practices and changing the constitutional office of Attorney General to an elected office rather than one appointed by the governor. New Jerseyans are overwhelmingly in favor of both these proposals, with 74 percent supporting having an elected Auditor General and an almost identical 75 percent favoring the idea of being able to elect the state’s Attorney General. In fact, even when New Jerseyans take

into account the fact that an elected Attorney General will need to raise money from contributors to run for office, they still feel that an elected A.G. would be more independent than a gubernatorial appointee, by a margin of 54 to 34 percent.

“New Jerseyans are becoming fed up with the political status quo,” said Murray. “They don’t trust politicians to clean up the system, which is why they give broad support to proposals that make these officials more directly accountable to the public.”

Residents also have some very clear ideas about curbing the activities of their elected officials that could lead to corruption. An overwhelming majority (82%) would ban dual office-holding and 74 percent say that high level officials should not be able to leave office one day and on the next day go to work for a lobbyist or company that they once regulated. Current New Jersey practice bars cabinet level officers and some other officials from taking work with a lobbyist for one year after leaving public life. However, most New Jerseyans would extend the length of this waiting period: 37 percent feel the wait should be at least 3 years, 17 percent say that two years is adequate and 2 percent believe there should be a lifetime ban on such post-public life activity.

On the issue of pension eligibility for public officials who misuse their office, the voice of New Jersey is also clear. Fully 81 percent of the public say that state pension eligibility should be withdrawn for anyone convicted of an abuse of their office, regardless of how serious the infraction. And 62 percent would extend this revocation to any public pension the official may be eligible for. Even if they were a teacher or police officer prior to serving in public office, Garden State residents say that they should receive nothing from any state-run pension fund.

Partisan Differences

For most independent observers of the state of corruption in New Jersey, there is enough blame – and indictments – to go around for both parties. However, in the living rooms of the general public there is a decided partisan split, with Republican residents seeing corruption as more of a problem than their Democratic neighbors.

Republican partisans are 17 points more likely than Democrats to see corruption as a major problem (71-54%), 14 points more likely to say New Jersey has more corruption than other states (48-34%) and 13 points more likely to revoke all pensions from politicians convicted of official misconduct (72-59%). Republicans are also 9 to 10 points more likely than

Corruption: The Partisan's Tale				
	Democrats	Independents	Republicans	<i>Dem/Rep difference</i>
Corruption is a major problem in NJ	54%	67%	71%	-17
More corruption in NJ than other states	34%	47%	48%	-14
If corrupt, revoke pensions for all jobs	59%	65%	72%	-13
Unelected bosses have too much say	45%	55%	55%	-10
More corruption today than 5 years ago	28%	41%	37%	-9
Ban dual office holding	79%	88%	86%	-7
If corrupt, always revoke pension	77%	85%	82%	-5
Extend "pay to play" ban to local level	59%	75%	64%	-5
Corruption costs taxpayers a lot	71%	77%	75%	-4

Democrats to feel that party bosses have too much say (55-45%) and there is more corruption in New Jersey today than there was five years ago (37-28%). Interestingly, when it comes to extending the "play-to-pay" ban to the local level, political independents (75%) are even more supportive than either Republicans (64%) or Democrats (59%).

Murray noted "These partisan differences may be a function of which party is in charge statewide and therefore has a higher profile. Because of the Democratic majority in Trenton, residents with Republican leanings may be more likely to see a wolf in their midst."

A poll of New Jersey registered voters released last week showed that most voters are unimpressed with either of the two main gubernatorial candidates when it comes to cleaning political house. While Republican Doug Forrester has a slight edge over Democrat Jon Corzine on this account – by a margin of 29 to 20 percent – more voters say that neither man is up to the job (33%) or that they don't know enough about the two candidates to determine what they would do about corruption (19%).

This recent *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll* was conducted by telephone with 800 New Jersey adults from September 21 to 26, 2005. This sample has a margin of error of ± 3.5 percent.

TABLES – MUP01-3 / October 2, 2005

The questions referred to in this release are as follows:

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

E1. Is political corruption a major problem in New Jersey, a minor problem, or not really a problem?

	<u>Major Problem</u>	<u>Minor Problem</u>	<u>Not a Problem</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2005 New Jersey Adults	62%	26%	5%	7%	(800)
<u>Registered Voter</u>					
--Yes	65	25	4	6	(649)
--No	53	28	9	11	(151)
<u>Party ID</u>					
--Democrat	54	32	8	6	(256)
--Independent	67	26	3	4	(237)
--Republican	71	19	3	8	(206)

E2A. Compared to five years ago, is there now more corruption in the state, less, or is it about the same? [*QUESTION ASKED OF HALF THE SAMPLE*]

	<u>More now</u>	<u>Less now</u>	<u>About the Same</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2005 New Jersey Adults	34%	8%	48%	10%	(396)

E2B. Compared to other states, is there more corruption in New Jersey, less, or is it about the same? [*QUESTION ASKED OF HALF THE SAMPLE*]

	<u>More in NJ</u>	<u>Less in NJ</u>	<u>About the Same</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2005 New Jersey Adults	41%	7%	42%	10%	(404)

E3. How much do you think corruption and fraud in government costs New Jersey taxpayers every year – a lot, a little, or nothing at all?

	<u>A lot</u>	<u>A little</u>	<u>Nothing</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2005 New Jersey Adults	74%	20%	1%	5%	(800)
<u>Registered Voter</u>					
--Yes	77	17	1	5	(649)
--No	65	28	1	6	(151)
<u>Party ID</u>					
--Democrat	71	25	0	4	(256)
--Independent	77	17	1	5	(237)
--Republican	75	18	2	4	(206)

- E4. Do you think the state's politicians are serious about tackling this issue or do you think that there is more talk than action?

	<u>Politicians are serious</u>	<u>More talk than action</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2005 New Jersey Adult	12%	85%	4%	(800)
<u>Registered Voter</u>				
--Yes	14	83	3	(649)
--No	6	90	4	(151)
<u>Party ID</u>				
--Democrat	13	85	2	(256)
--Independent	12	85	3	(237)
--Republican	12	84	4	(206)

- E5. Do un-elected party bosses in New Jersey have too much say about what goes on in the state or are they generally kept in check by the political process?

	<u>Too much say</u>	<u>Kept in check</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2005 New Jersey Adult	49%	34%	17%	(800)
<u>Registered Voter</u>				
--Yes	53	31	16	(649)
--No	37	45	18	(151)
<u>Party ID</u>				
--Democrat	45	41	14	(256)
--Independent	55	30	16	(237)
--Republican	55	29	16	(206)

- E6. Recently, the state enacted a ban on the practice called "pay to play" – which basically means that most companies who do work for the state cannot make political contributions. Based on what you know or have heard, how would you describe this ban? Would you say it is: Exactly what New Jersey needs to clean up corruption, a good start but more needs to be done, or just a political move that will have little or no impact?

	<u>Exactly what NJ needs</u>	<u>More needs to be done</u>	<u>Political move</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2005 New Jersey Adults	10%	55%	30%	6%	(800)
<u>Registered Voter</u>					
--Yes	10	59	27	4	(649)
--No	9	46	36	9	(151)
<u>Party ID</u>					
--Democrat	10	53	32	6	(256)
--Independent	5	65	27	3	(237)
--Republican	11	55	28	6	(206)

E7. Currently, the “pay to play” ban only applies to companies working for state government. Should this ban be extended to county and local governments or just kept at the state government level for now?

	<u>Extended to county/local</u>	<u>Kept at state level</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2005 New Jersey Adults	64%	28%	8%	(800)
<u>Registered Voter</u>				
--Yes	68	25	7	(649)
--No	53	36	11	(151)
<u>Party ID</u>				
--Democrat	59	37	4	(256)
--Independent	75	19	6	(237)
--Republican	64	27	9	(206)

[ASKED ONLY OF THOSE WHO SAY BAN SHOULD BE EXTENDED TO LOCAL LEVEL:]

E7A. If a company gives contributions to candidates in one town should they still be able to get contracts from another town or should contributors not be able to get work from any municipality in the state?

	<u>Should be able to contract in another town</u>	<u>Not be able to contract in any municipality</u>	<u>Depends/DK</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2005 Those who say “pay to play” should be banned at local level	48%	37%	16%	(549)

E8. Do you support or oppose the idea of having an elected state Auditor General in New Jersey who oversees and investigates the spending practices of all state agencies?

[QUESTION ASKED OF HALF THE SAMPLE]

	<u>Support</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Depends/DK</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2005 New Jersey Adults	74%	18%	7%	(396)
<u>Registered Voter</u>				
--Yes	77	17	7	(318)
--No	69	23	8	(78)
<u>Party ID</u>				
--Democrat	77	14	9	(131)
--Independent	82	15	3	(119)
--Republican	72	25	3	(105)

- E9. And another state position is the New Jersey Attorney General. Which do you think would be more independent – an Attorney General appointed by the governor or an Attorney General who has to raise money from contributors to run for election? [*QUESTION ASKED OF HALF THE SAMPLE*]

	<u>Appointed more independent</u>	<u>Elected more independent</u>	<u>Depends/ DK</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2005 New Jersey Adults	34%	54%	13%	(396)
<u>Registered Voter</u>				
--Yes	39	49	12	(318)
--No	22	65	13	(78)
<u>Party ID</u>				
--Democrat	38	50	12	(131)
--Independent	24	65	11	(119)
--Republican	42	45	13	(105)

- E10. Do you support or oppose the idea of changing the State Attorney General position from one appointed by the governor to one elected by the voters? [*QUESTION ASKED OF HALF THE SAMPLE*]

	<u>Support</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Depends/ DK</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2005 New Jersey Adults	75%	16%	9%	(404)
<u>Registered Voter</u>				
--Yes	74	17	9	(331)
--No	77	11	11	(73)
<u>Party ID</u>				
--Democrat	76	13	10	(125)
--Independent	78	17	6	(118)
--Republican	78	18	5	(101)

- E11. Should elected officials in New Jersey be allowed or not allowed to hold more than one elected office, such as state legislator and mayor, at the same time?

	<u>Allowed</u>	<u>Not allowed</u>	<u>Depends/ DK</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September 2005 New Jersey Adults	14%	82%	5%	(800)
<u>Registered Voter</u>				
--Yes	12	84	4	(649)
--No	19	74	8	(151)
<u>Party ID</u>				
--Democrat	18	79	3	(256)
--Independent	8	88	5	(237)
--Republican	13	86	2	(206)

