

# The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll

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CONTACT: JANICE BALLOU (908)828-2210, Ext. 240

## RELEASE INFORMATION

A story based on the survey findings presented in this release and background memo will appear in Sunday's *Star-Ledger*. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to "*The Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll*."

## POSITIVE WHITMAN LEGISLATIVE RATINGS STABLE

### NEITHER PARTY HAS AN EARLY ADVANTAGE IN 1995 ASSEMBLY RACES

Governor Christie Whitman's positive job performance ratings remain stable at just above 50 percent. And positive ratings for the New Jersey State Legislature are consistent with a year ago with about 1-in-3 state residents giving excellent or good evaluations.

Looking ahead to the November 1995 elections for the New Jersey Assembly, at this time state residents do not show a preference for the candidates of either party; however, about 4-in-10 residents are undecided about who to vote for.

The *Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll* conducted with 802 New Jerseyans by telephone from May 25 to June 1, 1995 found a low level of awareness of the partisan composition of the New Jersey Assembly. Less than half of the state's residents correctly identify the Republicans as having the most members in the New Jersey Assembly. In comparison, about 7-in-10 correctly identify Christie Whitman as being a Republican Governor.

"At this time there appears to be a sense of status quo in New Jersey politics," commented Janice Ballou, Director of the Poll. "The consistency of the assessments of both the Governor and the state legislature's job performance reflect this political mood."

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***GUBERNATORIAL JOB PERFORMANCE RATINGS***

There has not been much change in Christie Whitman's positive job performance rating since September 1994. Currently 53 percent of New Jerseyans rate her job as Governor as excellent (11%) or good (42%). This is similar to 56 percent in February 1995 and the 52 percent in September 1994. Whitman receives negative ratings of only fair (29%) or poor (11%) from 40 percent of the state's residents, and 7 percent have no opinion. As would be expected, more Republicans (73%) than independents (49%) or Democrats (43%) give the Governor positive job performance ratings.

In comparison, at a similar time in his administration Governor Jim Florio had positive ratings of 24 percent leading into the November 1991 legislative elections which resulted in a dramatic change in the partisan composition of the New Jersey Legislature.

***NEW JERSEY STATE LEGISLATURE JOB PERFORMANCE RATINGS***

In the past year there has been little change in New Jerseyans' evaluation of the state legislature. Thirty-two percent of New Jerseyans give the state legislature positive job performance ratings of excellent (2%) or good (30%) compared to 55 percent who rate the legislature as only fair (43%) or poor (12%). Thirteen percent report that they do not know how to rate the legislature. In September 1994, 29 percent of New Jerseyans gave the New Jersey state legislature positive job performance ratings, compared to 57 percent who rated the legislature as only fair or poor. Positive ratings for the New Jersey state legislature were at their lowest in September 1991 (22%) and April 1992 (19%) when residents were discontent with the increases in the New Jersey income tax.

There are partisan differences in the positive ratings of the state legislature. More Republicans (44%) give positive ratings than independents (28%) or Democrats (27%).

***THE 1995 STATE ASSEMBLY ELECTION***

At this time there are more New Jerseyans undecided about who they will vote for in the November New Jersey Assembly races than have made a decision about a candidate. While 38 percent of the state's residents say they have not yet decided on a candidate, 31 percent say they will vote for Democratic candidates and 27 report they will pick Republican candidates. Residents who are currently registered to vote have similar preferences to all state residents with 32 percent selecting Democratic candidates and 28 percent saying that they would vote for Republicans. Support for the Assembly candidates is partisan with more Democrats (73%) saying that they will vote for Democratic candidates, and more Republicans (74%) supporting their party's candidates. Independents are divided between Republicans (19%) and Democrats (17%). While similar percentages of Democrats (22%) and Republicans (22%) have not selected a candidate, 56 percent of independents do not have a candidate preference.

Looking at these candidate choices by the past party voting preferences in the districts, 32 percent of those in past Republican districts support the Republican candidates compared to 23 percent who support Democratic candidates, while 44 percent in past Democratic districts support the Democratic candidates compared to 18 percent who support Republican candidates. "Swing" districts that have split on their partisan choices for legislative races are somewhat more likely to prefer Democratic (34%) than Republican (27%) candidates at this time.

In an October 1993 pre-election poll the voters were divided on the partisan affiliation of candidates they selected with 40 percent favoring Republican candidates and 38 percent supporting Democrats. In that election, the Republicans took control of both houses of the legislature.

State residents are also divided on their preference for which party they would like to see in control of the New Jersey Assembly. Thirty-five percent would like to see Democrats in control of the Assembly, 35 percent would like to see Republicans, 19 percent say that they do not want

candidates from either party or it makes no difference, and 11 percent don't have an opinion. As might be expected, preferences are partisan with more Democrats (79%) saying they would like to see Democratic control in the Assembly, and more Republicans supporting their party (89%). Those who are independent are divided between Democratic (23%) and Republican (28%) control of the Assembly.

### ***KNOWLEDGE OF PARTISAN COMPOSITION OF STATE GOVERNMENT***

The Governor's partisan affiliation is correctly identified by 68 percent of New Jersey residents who know she is a Republican. However, 17 percent think she is a Democrat and 15 percent do not know her party affiliation. More Republicans (82%) than independents (61%) or Democrats (69%) correctly name the Governor's party affiliation.

More than half of the state's residents either don't know or incorrectly identify the political party that currently has the most members in the Assembly. While 47 percent of the state's residents do not know which political party currently has more members in the State Assembly, 10 percent incorrectly say there are more Democrats than Republicans. Forty-three percent correctly identify the Republicans as having the most Assembly representatives.

**BACKGROUND MEMO — RELEASE SL/EP53-1 (EP103-1), SUNDAY, JUNE 4, 1995**

The latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton* Poll was conducted between May 25 and June 1, 1995, when a random sample of 802 New Jerseyans, 18 years and older, was interviewed by telephone. Figures based on this sample size are subject to a sampling error of about  $\pm 3.5$  percent at a 95 percent confidence interval. Sampling error is the probable difference in results between interviewing everyone in the population versus a scientific sample taken from that population. Sampling error does not take into account other possible sources of error inherent in any study of public opinion. The questions and figures referred to in this release are presented below. The location of each question on the actual questionnaire is in brackets.

"How would you rate the job Christie Whitman is doing as Governor -- excellent, good, only fair or poor?" [Q.2]

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>May, 1995</b>							
--Total	11%	42%	29%	11%	7%	100%	(802)
--Registered Voters	11	41	31	12	6	101	(658)
<u>Party ID</u>							
--Democrat	7	36	35	18	5	101	(247)
--Independent	10	39	31	11	9	100	(326)
--Republican	17	56	18	5	5	101	(203)
<u>Race</u>							
--White	12	44	28	9	8	101	(642)
--Non-white	8	34	33	21	4	100	(146)
<b><u>PAST SURVEYS</u></b>							
February, 1995	13	43	28	12	4	100	(801)
<u>Party ID</u>							
--Democrat	7	34	36	18	5	100	(220)
--Independent	10	41	32	12	5	100	(323)
--Republican	22	55	14	6	4	101	(231)
September, 1994	12	40	33	9	6	100	(801)
June, 1994	11	39	29	7	14	100	(801)
February, 1994	9	28	28	5	31	101	(801)

"As far as you know, is the Governor of New Jersey a Democrat or a Republican?" [Q.3]

	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>May, 1995</b>					
--Total	<b>17%</b>	<b>68%*</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(802)</b>
--Registered Voters	<b>15</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>(658)</b>
<i>Party ID</i>					
--Democrat	24	69	7	100	(247)
--Independent	16	61	23	100	(326)
--Republican	10	82	9	101	(203)
<i>Education</i>					
--Less than high school	18	54	28	100	(72)
--High school graduate	18	67	15	100	(247)
--More than high school	15	76	9	100	(483)
<i>Age</i>					
--18 - 29	26	52	22	100	(135)
--30 - 49	18	67	15	100	(331)
--50 - 64	11	75	13	99	(166)
--65 and older	9	84	7	100	(155)
<i>Race</i>					
--White	14	72	14	100	(642)
--Non-white	26	56	18	100	(146)
<i>Past District Vote</i>					
--Republican	13	73	15	101	(478)
--Swing	23	70	7	100	(114)
--Democrat	22	59	19	100	(210)
<b><u>PAST SURVEYS</u></b>					
November, 1991	70*	13	17	100	(800)
<i>Party ID</i>					
--Democrat	71	16	13	100	(225)
--Independent	67	11	22	100	(303)
--Republican	75	13	12	100	(242)
November, 1971	20	68*	12	100	(1208)

\* Correct answer

"How would you rate the job the New Jersey state legislature is doing -- excellent, good, only fair, or poor?" [Q.4]

	Only				Don't	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Know</u>		
<b>May, 1995</b>							
<b>--Total</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(802)</b>
<b>--Registered Voters</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>(658)</b>
<u>Party ID</u>							
--Democrat	2	25	49	12	12	100	(247)
--Independent	1	27	41	15	16	100	(326)
--Republican	2	42	40	7	9	100	(203)
<u>Past District Vote</u>							
--Republican	1	31	45	10	13	100	(478)
--Swing	3	31	39	11	15	99	(114)
--Democrat	1	29	41	16	13	100	(210)
<b><u>PAST SURVEYS</u></b>							
September, 1994	2	27	49	8	14	100	(801)
<u>Party ID</u>							
--Democrat	3	25	49	7	16	100	(245)
--Independent	2	24	50	8	15	99	(323)
--Republican	3	33	51	6	8	101	(203)
February, 1993	1	27	51	13	8	100	(801)
April, 1992	--	19	50	23	8	100	(800)
September, 1991	2	20	46	17	15	100	(800)
July, 1990	4	28	42	16	11	101	(800)
March, 1989	2	34	41	12	10	99	(800)
October, 1987	3	41	38	4	14	100	(1000)
October, 1986	3	39	34	6	18	100	(800)
August, 1985	5	40	37	6	13	101	(800)

"There will be an election for the State Assembly this November. Do you think you will vote for the Democratic or Republican candidates from your district?" [Q.5]

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>May, 1995</b>						
<b>--Total</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(802)</b>
<b>--Registered Voters</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>(658)</b>
<u>Party ID</u>						
--Democrat	73	5	--	22	100	(247)
--Independent	17	19	8	56	100	(326)
--Republican	3	74	1	22	100	(203)
<u>Region</u>						
--North	32	29	2	38	101	(383)
--Central	36	24	6	34	100	(212)
--South	24	27	5	44	100	(207)
<u>Past District Vote</u>						
--Republican	23	32	5	40	100	(478)
--Swing	34	27	4	36	101	(114)
--Democrat	44	18	1	37	100	(210)
<b><u>PAST SURVEYS</u></b>						
October, 1993*	38	40	1	22	101	(801)
November, 1991*	34	40	5	22	101	(539)
June, 1989	37	27	5	31	100	(647)
October, 1987*	41	31	2	25	99	(722)

October, 1983*	42	30	3	24	99	(568)
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\* For these polls, the following question was asked, "If the election were held today, would you vote for the Democratic or Republican candidates for State Assembly." The results are also based on likely voters.

"Do you happen to know what party currently has more members in the State Assembly -- the Democrats or the Republicans?" [Q.6]

	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>May, 1995</b>					
--Total	<b>10%</b>	<b>43%*</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(802)</b>
--Registered Voters	<b>11</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>(658)</b>
<u>Party ID</u>					
--Democrat	10	47	42	99	(247)
--Independent	9	39	52	100	(326)
--Republican	14	44	43	101	(203)
<u>Age</u>					
--18 - 29	10	31	59	100	(135)
--30 - 49	11	45	44	100	(331)
--50 - 64	11	49	40	100	(166)
--65 and older	8	46	46	100	(155)
<u>Education</u>					
--Less than high school	9	31	59	99	(72)
--High school graduate	10	37	53	100	(247)
--More than high school	11	52	38	101	(483)

### PAST SURVEYS

June, 1989	37*	18	45	100	(647)
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"Which party would you rather see in control of the State Assembly, the Democrats or the Republicans?" [Q.7]

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>	<u>Neither/ No Difference</u>	<u>No Opinion</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>May, 1995</b>						
--Total	<b>35%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(802)</b>
--Registered Voter	<b>35</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>(658)</b>
<u>Party ID</u>						
--Democrat	79	5	9	7	100	(247)
--Independent	23	28	32	17	100	(326)
--Republican	3	89	4	4	100	(203)
<u>Past District Vote</u>						
--Republican	28	40	22	9	99	(478)
--Swing	40	34	13	13	100	(114)
--Democrat	47	24	16	14	101	(210)

### PAST SURVEYS

June, 1989	42	36	11	11	100	(647)
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Party ID



--Democrat	80	5	8	7	100	(233)
--Independent	25	38	21	17	100	(212)
--Republican	5	87	5	3	100	(179)

\* Correct answer

<sup>1</sup> Type of Place Respondent Lives In: All municipalities in the state have been classified into one of four groups, based on location, settlement patterns, population density and growth.

**Central Cities:** New Jersey's largest cities: Newark, Jersey City, Paterson, Elizabeth, Trenton and Camden.

**Older Cities and Suburban Areas:** This category is generally based on the cities of the state over 25,000 in 1980 with the following exceptions: balance of Hudson and Union counties, included because of their high density. Long Branch and Vineland were excluded because of the rapid growth and their small proportion of their county's population. Woodbridge, South Amboy and Carteret were included because of their similarity to nearby high density areas of Union County.

**New Suburbs:** These are primarily "outside central city" proportions of the Census Bureau's Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas, with the addition of Somerset and parts of Middlesex, Ocean and Monmouth because of their settlement patterns.

**Rural Areas:** Includes communities not in any of the three categories above. Salem, Warren and sections of Gloucester, Burlington, Middlesex and Monmouth are not classified as rural by the Census Bureau, but they are included here either because of the minor central cities toward which they are directed or because of their development patterns. Atlantic County outside of Atlantic City is included here because of its development pattern and similarity to surrounding rural areas.

<sup>2</sup> Region of State Respondent Lives In:

**North Jersey:** Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Morris, Passaic, Sussex, Union and Warren counties;

**Central Jersey:** Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth and Somerset counties;

**South Jersey:** Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester, Ocean and Salem counties.

<sup>3</sup> Past District Vote: All districts have been classified into one of three groups based on the voting results of the last Assembly election.

**Republican:** Districts in which voters elected two Republican Assembly members with 55 percent or more of the vote.

**Swing:** Districts in which the two candidates received on average less than 55 percent of the vote (Districts 2,4,15,19, and 20).

**Democrat:** Districts in which voters elected two Democratic Assembly members with 55 percent or more of the vote.