

The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll

EMBARGOED – NOT FOR RELEASE UNTIL: FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 1996

RELEASE: SL/EP 58-2 (EP 108-2)

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

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."

In this release *The Star-Ledger*/Eagleton Poll includes a classification of likely voters that is based on how firmly they support a candidate. A "firm voter" is one who selects a candidate and says they are "very sure" about their choice and will not change their mind before the election. "Not firm voters" are those who select a candidate and say they might change their mind or who are initially undecided. Traditionally, election studies have grouped voters who "lean" toward a candidate with those who are "undecided." Voters who are "firm" in their choice of candidate or those who say they "might change" have been allocated to a specific candidate. A 1993 Eagleton post-election study showed that this traditional classification under-represents the larger group of voters who might change their minds prior to, or even on, Election Day.

All of the percentages in this release are based on New Jersey residents who report they are currently registered to vote.

The *Star-Ledger*/Eagleton Poll web address: <http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~eaglepol>

1996 NEW JERSEY ELECTIONS

NEW JERSEY'S REACTION TO DOLE'S 15% TAX CUT

ISSUES AND THE MOOD OF THE ELECTORATE

The Dole 15% tax reduction plan is not appealing to a majority of New Jersey voters. Six-in-ten are not convinced that if Bob Dole is elected there would actually be a 15% tax reduction, and 6-in-10 don't think they would personally benefit from this plan. In addition, 6-in-10 New Jersey voters would rather reduce the federal budget deficit than have the 15% income tax cut.

"The Dole tax message may not work as well in New Jersey as it does nationwide. New Jersey voters, who have experienced a tax cut delivered by a candidate who kept her

- more -

promise, are skeptical about the 15% federal tax reduction," commented Janice Ballou, the Poll Director. "While national polls show a majority of voters favor the tax cut, New Jersey voters prefer reducing the budget deficit by a margin of 2-to-1."

The three issues that close to 9-in-10 voters say are very important to them in the 1996 election are: managing the economy and keeping the country prosperous, reducing crime and drug use, and improving the educational system. In comparison, providing social services and the abortion issue are the two issues that less than half of the voters say are very important in this election. The issue that most Dole supporters see as very important is managing the economy and keeping the country prosperous, while Clinton voters are most likely to report improving the educational system is very important to them. In the Senate race, the issue 9-in-10 Zimmer voters rate as very important is reducing crime and drug use. Providing jobs is the issue at the top of the list for 9-in-10 Torricelli voters.

The latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton* Poll that was conducted by telephone from September 5 to 12, 1996 with a random sample of 627 registered voters also found that New Jersey voters are much more optimistic than they were in 1992 when Bill Clinton ran against George Bush. Currently, voters are about equally divided in the percentage who say the country is on the wrong track (47%) and those who say things are going in the right direction (46%). In 1992, 81 percent of New Jersey voters felt the country was on the wrong track.

THE DOLE 15% FEDERAL TAX REDUCTION

Overall, 69 percent of New Jersey voters have read or heard a great deal (23%) or some (46%) about the Dole 15% tax reduction compared to 30 percent who have read or heard not much (23%) or nothing at all (7%).

New Jersey voters are skeptical about a tax reduction actually happening if Dole is elected. While 38 percent say it is very (10%) or somewhat likely (28%), 59 percent feel a tax cut is not too (34%) or not at all likely (25%). As would be expected, Dole supporters (70%) are more likely than Clinton voters (23%), or those who have not selected a candidate for President (34%) to say the tax cut is likely to happen. In addition, males (42%) are more likely than females (33%) to say the tax cut will happen if Dole is elected. Among those New Jerseyans who voted for Governor Whitman in 1993, when her main campaign pledge was to reduce taxes in the state by 30%, 51 percent say the Dole 15% tax cut is very (16%) or somewhat (35%) likely to happen.

Six-in-ten New Jersey voters do not expect to benefit much (31%) or at all (28%) from the Dole tax plan compared to 4-in-10 who think they will benefit a great deal (11%) or some (28%). Dole voters (70%) are more likely than Clinton supporters (23%) or those who have not decided on a candidate (38%) to feel they will benefit from the 15% tax cut. In February 1994, right after Governor Whitman was elected, 48 percent of New Jersey residents said they thought they would benefit a great deal (7%) or some (41%) from her 30% tax cut compared to 51 percent who did not think they would benefit much (34%) or not at all (17%).

If they have a choice, New Jersey voters prefer a reduction in the federal budget deficit (63%) to the 15% federal tax cut (31%). Dole voters are divided about equally in their preferences for the 15% tax cut (45%) or the federal budget reduction (48%). However, Clinton supporters (71%) and voters who have not yet decided on a candidate (63%) favor the federal budget reduction. A similar question asked in an August CBS News national poll, showed a majority of voters nationwide prefer the tax cut (55%) to a reduction in the federal

budget (39%). This suggests that voters in this state are less likely to be attracted to the tax theme in the Dole campaign.

1996 ELECTION ISSUES

Among a series of thirteen issues suggested to registered voters, three are selected by more than 8-in-10 voters as being very important in the 1996 elections: managing the economy and keeping the country prosperous (86%), reducing crime and drug use (86%), and improving the educational system (86%). Two issues -- providing jobs (81%) and controlling health care costs (79%) -- are named by 8-in-10 voters. Two-thirds of registered voters say that improving race relations (67%), cleaning up and protecting the environment (67%), and promoting family values (66%) are very important to them in the November elections. Six-in-ten or more rate reducing the budget deficit (64%), providing leadership in foreign policy (61%), and holding down taxes (60%) as very important. The two issues lowest in the list with less than half of the voters saying they are very important are providing social services such as welfare and aid to the needy (45%) and doing what you want done about abortion (40%).

There are some notable differences in the issues that are considered important among New Jersey voters who have selected a candidate for President or for the U.S. Senate.

Dole Supporters:

Among the thirteen issues, promoting family values (77%), providing leadership in foreign policy (76%), and holding down taxes (71%) are rated as very important by more Dole supporters than those who have selected Clinton or have not decided who to vote for.

Also, fewer Dole voters say providing social services (27%) and the abortion issue (32%) are very important.

Clinton Supporters:

There are eight issues that more Clinton supporters than Dole voters or those who are undecided say are very important: improving the educational system (91%), providing jobs (86%), controlling health care costs (84%), cleaning up and protecting the environment (78%), improving race relations (72%), reducing the budget deficit (67%), providing social services (61%), and the abortion issue (46%).

Voters Who Are Still Deciding:

Generally, the percentage of voters who are still deciding who to select for President are more like the Dole voters for the following four issues: improving the educational system (84%), controlling health care costs (77%), providing social services (39%), and abortion (37%). And they are more like Clinton supporters for the following five issues: managing the economy (85%), providing jobs (81%), improving race relations (68%), cleaning up and protecting the environment (71%), and holding down taxes (52%). For the other issues the percentages of these voters are about in-between the percentages of those who have selected either the Republican or Democratic candidate.

Reducing crime and drug use is the one issue in the list that similar percentages of Dole (88%), Clinton (86%), and undecided voters (84%) say is very important.

Overall New Jersey voters who select either Dick Zimmer or Bob Torricelli are similar in their opinion that managing the economy, reducing crime and drug use, and improving the educational system are the issues that they are most likely to say are very important in the

1996 election. However, there are also some differences in the issues that supporters for each of the candidates consider very important.

Zimmer Supporters:

Similar to the support for Dole among the thirteen issues, providing leadership in foreign policy (76%), promoting family values (73%), and holding down taxes (71%) are rated as very important by more people who say they will vote for Zimmer than those who have selected Torricelli or have not decided who to vote for. Also, fewer Zimmer voters say the environment (47%), providing social services (34%) and the abortion issue (30%) are very important.

Torricelli Supporters:

There are seven issues that more Torricelli supporters than Zimmer voters or those who are undecided say are very important: providing jobs (92%), controlling health care costs (87%), cleaning up and protecting the environment (82%), improving race relations (75%), reducing the budget deficit (70%), providing social services (61%), and the abortion issue (49%).

Voters Who Are Still Deciding:

Generally, the percentage of voters who are still deciding who to select for U.S. Senator are more like the Zimmer voters for the following five issues: providing jobs (79%), controlling health care costs (77%), improving race relations (66%), reducing the budget deficit (63%), and providing social services (43%). These voters who have not yet decided on a Senate candidate are more like Torricelli supporters for the following four issues: cleaning up and protecting the environment (68%), promoting family values (65%), providing leadership in foreign policy (58%), and holding down taxes (57%).

Improving the educational system is the one issue in the list that similar percentages of Zimmer (87%), Torricelli (87%), and undecided voters (86%) say is very important.

THE MOOD OF THE ELECTORATE

New Jersey voters are equally divided about the how things are going in the country. Forty-six percent say things are going in the right direction compared to 47 percent who say things are off on the wrong track. As would be expected, Clinton supporters (66%) are more optimistic than Dole voters (17%) about the ways things are in the country. Voters who have not yet decided on a candidate are about evenly divided with 46 percent feeling things are going in the right direction and 48 percent saying they are on the wrong track. However, this is a different mood than the one President Bush faced during his 1992 re-election bid when 81 percent of New Jersey voters felt the country was on the wrong track. A September *Washington Post* Poll shows that nationally 40 percent say the country is currently going in the right direction while 54 percent feel it is on the wrong track.

At this times New Jerseyan are generally positive about the performance of key elected officials. Overall, a majority of voters give both Governor Whitman (59%) and President Clinton (53%) excellent or good job ratings.

Comparing this election to the same time in the 1992 Presidential race, interest is about the same with 61 percent saying they have a lot of interest in the 1996 race compared to 64 percent who said this in 1992. As many registered voters in 1996 (80%) say that they will definitely vote in November as did in 1992 (80%). Also, similar percentages in 1996 (72%) and 1992 (68%) report that the outcome of the election will make a great deal or some difference in the way government it run for the next few years.

New Jersey voters are more positive about their choice of candidates in 1994. At this time 58 percent say that they are voting more for a candidate compared to 38 percent who

say they are voting against the other. In 1992, 49 percent said they were voting for a candidate while 46 percent said going against. Also, when Bill Clinton ran in 1992, 39 percent said they were voting more for him while 57 percent said they were voting against Bush. In 1996, 64 percent say that they are voting for Bill Clinton.

- 30 -

Copyright, September 20, 1996, The Eagleton Institute and *The Star-Ledger*.

- more -

BACKGROUND MEMO — RELEASE SL/EP58-2 (EP108-2), FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 1996

The latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton* Poll was conducted between September 5 and 11, 1996, when a random sample of 808 New Jerseyans, 18 years and older, was interviewed by telephone. Figures based on this sample size are subject to a sampling error of about ±3.5 percent at a 95 percent confidence interval.

Figures are reported for 627 registered voters. The sampling error for this subset is about ±4.0 percent.

This release of the *Star-Ledger/Eagleton* Poll includes two classifications of registered voters based on their support for a candidate: 1) "Vote Choice - Traditional" refers to the initial preference for a candidate in a particular election. This group classification includes both firm and soft supporters of a candidate and groups of people who lean toward a candidate with undecided voters; 2) "Vote Choice - Firm" refers to how firmly voters support a candidate. A firm voter selects a candidate and says they are very sure about their choice and will not change their mind before the election. A not firm voter either selects a candidate and says they might change their mind or is initially undecided in their vote choice. Only voters who are firm are allocated to a specific candidate while all others are referred to as not firm. A 1993 Eagleton post-election study showed that the "Vote Choice - Traditional" underrepresents the group of voters who might change their minds prior to or even on Election Day.

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.

Note: The percentages in this release are based on registered voters.

"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>
September, 1996-Registered Voters	16%	43%	27%	12%	2%	100%	(627)
<u>Vote Choice - Firm</u>							
--Clinton	7	35	36	20	2	100	(264)
--Not Firm	14	48	26	8	3	99	(191)
--Dole	36	50	12	3	--	101	(146)
<u>Party ID</u>							
--Democrat	5	37	37	19	2	100	(217)
--Independent	14	42	27	13	3	99	(226)
--Republican	34	50	13	3	--	100	(167)
<u>Vote Choice - Firm</u>							
--Torricelli	5	25	38	30	2	100	(114)
--Not Firm	13	48	27	9	2	99	(391)
--Zimmer	41	44	12	2	--	99	(90)

“And, how would you rate the job Bill Clinton is doing as President--excellent, good, only fair, or poor?” [Q.3]

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September, 1996 - Registered Voters	10%	43%	32%	15%	1%	101%	(627)
<i><u>Vote Choice - Firm</u></i>							
--Clinton	22	64	14	1	--	101	(264)
--Not Firm	2	45	46	7	1	101	(191)
--Dole	1	7	40	51	1	100	(146)
<i><u>Party ID</u></i>							
--Democrat	21	63	14	2	--	100	(217)
--Independent	6	40	39	13	2	100	(226)
--Republican	1	19	46	35	--	101	(167)
<i><u>Vote Choice - Firm</u></i>							
--Torricelli	27	54	18	1	--	100	(114)
--Not Firm	6	47	35	11	1	100	(391)
--Zimmer	1	13	33	51	1	99	(90)

“Generally speaking, would you say things in the country are going in the right direction, or have they pretty seriously gotten off on the wrong track?” [Q.4]

	<u>Right Direction</u>	<u>Wrong Track</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September, 1996 - Registered Voters	46%	47%	7%	100%	(627)
<i><u>Vote Choice - Firm</u></i>					
--Clinton	66	28	7	101	(264)
--Not Firm	46	48	7	101	(191)
--Dole	17	76	7	100	(146)
<i><u>Party ID</u></i>					
--Democrat	59	33	7	99	(217)
--Independent	45	49	7	101	(226)
--Republican	29	63	7	99	(167)
<i><u>Vote Choice - Firm</u></i>					
--Torricelli	56	35	9	100	(114)
--Not Firm	50	44	7	101	(391)
--Zimmer	21	73	6	100	(90)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>					
September, 1992 - Registered Voters	16	81	3	100	(663)

Would you say you are voting more for (CANDIDATE NAMED IN Q.10 OR Q.12) or more against the other candidates?" [Q.13]

	<u>More For</u>	<u>More Against</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September, 1996 - Registered Voters	58%	38%	4%	100%	(598)
<i><u>Vote Choice - Traditional</u></i>					
--Clinton	64	33	4	101	(357)
--Dole	49	47	4	100	(181)
<i><u>Vote Choice - Firm</u></i>					
--Clinton	70	28	2	100	(264)
--Dole	51	45	4	100	(146)
<i><u>Party ID</u></i>					
--Democrat	71	27	2	100	(215)
--Independent	50	44	6	100	(207)
--Republican	50	45	5	100	(164)
<u>PAST SURVYES</u>					
September, 1992 - Registered Voters	49	46	4	99	(627)
--Clinton	39	57	4	100	(340)
--Bush	62	35	3	100	(267)

Bob Dole has announced a plan to stimulate the economy by having a 15 percent reduction in the federal income tax. How much have you read or heard about this plan--a great deal, some, not much, or nothing at all?" [Q.15]

	<u>A Great Deal</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Not Much</u>	<u>Nothing At All</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September, 1996 - Registered Voters	23%	46%	23%	7%	--	99%	(627)
<i><u>Vote Choice - Firm</u></i>							
--Clinton	27	42	24	6	--	99	(264)
--Not Firm	13	48	28	11	--	100	(191)
--Dole	28	52	16	3	1	100	(146)
<i><u>Party ID</u></i>							
--Democrat	20	43	29	8	--	100	(217)
--Independent	25	45	21	8	1	100	(226)
--Republican	23	53	20	3	1	100	(167)

"If Bob Dole were elected, how likely is it that the federal income tax will be cut by 15 percent, very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely or not likely at all?" [Q.18]

	<u>Very Likely</u>	<u>Somewhat Likely</u>	<u>Not Too Likely</u>	<u>Not Likely At All</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September, 1996 - Registered Voters	10%	28%	34%	25%	3%	100%	(627)
<i><u>Vote Choice - Firm</u></i>							
--Clinton	6	17	38	36	2	99	(264)
--Not Firm	4	30	40	22	4	100	(191)
--Dole	25	45	23	3	4	100	(146)
<i><u>Party ID</u></i>							
--Democrat	6	15	39	37	2	99	(217)
--Independent	9	29	34	25	3	100	(226)
--Republican	17	45	28	6	4	100	(167)
<i><u>Vote Choice - Firm</u></i>							
--Torricelli	6	21	29	43	1	100	(114)
--Not Firm	7	29	38	23	3	100	(391)
--Zimmer	29	39	19	8	6	101	(90)
<i><u>Gender</u></i>							
--Male	12	30	27	29	2	100	(324)
--Female	8	25	42	21	4	100	(303)
<i><u>Gubernatorial Vote in 1993</u></i>							
--Voted Florio	4	24	38	34	1	101	(193)
--Voted Whitman	16	35	30	16	3	100	(294)

“How much do you think you will benefit from Dole's plan to reduce the federal income tax--a great deal, some, not much, or not at all?” [Q.19]

	<u>A Great Deal</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Not Much</u>	<u>Nothing At All</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September, 1996 - Registered Voters	11%	28%	31%	28%	2%	100%	(627)
<i><u>Vote Choice - Firm</u></i>							
--Clinton	7	16	33	42	2	100	(264)
--Not Firm	9	29	35	24	3	100	(191)
--Dole	20	50	21	7	2	100	(146)
<i><u>Party ID</u></i>							
--Democrat	7	16	32	41	3	99	(217)
--Independent	10	25	32	32	2	101	(226)
--Republican	17	48	26	7	2	100	(167)
<i><u>Vote Choice - Firm</u></i>							
--Torricelli	4	12	27	56	1	100	(114)
--Not Firm	11	28	35	23	3	100	(391)

- more -

--Zimmer	24	46	19	10	1	100	(90)
<u>February, 1994</u>							
--Benefit from Whitman's plan	7	41	34	17	2	101	(801)

Washington Post Poll -- National Results

“Just your best guess: Do you think a 15% income tax would help you personally or not?”

August 6 - 9

Registered Voters

--Would	60%
--Would not	37
--No opinion	4

(n=926)

“If you had to choose between a 15 % income tax cut and reducing the federal budget deficit, which would you choose---the 15% income tax cut or reducing the federal budget deficit?” [Q.20]

	<u>The 15%</u> <u>Income Tax Cut</u>	<u>Reduce The</u> <u>Federal Budget Deficit</u>	<u>Don't</u> <u>Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September, 1996 - Registered Voters	31%	63%	6%	100%	(627)
<u>Vote Choice - Firm</u>					
--Clinton	25	71	4	100	(264)
--Not Firm	29	63	7	99	(191)
--Dole	45	48	8	101	(146)
<u>Party ID</u>					
--Democrat	33	63	5	101	(217)
--Independent	25	70	5	100	(226)
--Republican	40	51	8	99	(167)
<u>Vote Choice - Firm</u>					
--Torricelli	25	75	1	101	(114)
--Not Firm	29	65	6	100	(391)
--Zimmer	50	40	10	100	(90)
<u>Age</u>					
--18 - 29	48	51	1	100	(94)
--30 - 49	34	62	4	100	(277)
--50 - 64	26	66	7	99	(140)
--65 or older	18	69	12	99	(114)

- more -

CBS News Poll - National Results

“If you had to choose, would you prefer cutting the federal budget deficit or cutting taxes?”

	<u>The 15% Income Tax Cut</u>	<u>Reduce The Federal Budget Deficit</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
August 12 - 13	55%	39%	6%	100%	(1,252)

“We're interested in finding out which issues are important to you in the 1996 elections. Please tell me if you personally think each of the following is very important, somewhat important, or not very important. First, is **(ROTATE ITEM 1)** very important, somewhat important, or not very important in the 1996 elections? **(REPEAT RESPONSE OPTIONS EVERY THREE ITEMS)**” [Q.45]

	<u>Very Important</u>	<u>Firm Choice For President</u>			<u>Firm Choice For Senator</u>		
	<i>Total</i>	<i>Dole</i>	<i>Clinton</i>	<i>Not Firm</i>	<i>Zimmer</i>	<i>Torricelli</i>	<i>Not Firm</i>
--managing the economy and keeping the country prosperous	86	92	86	85	89	83	88
--reducing crime and drug use	86	88	86	84	93	89	84
--improving the educational system	86	81	91	84	87	87	86
--providing jobs	81	74	86	81	74	92	79
--controlling health care costs	79	73	84	77	74	87	77
--improving race relations	67	53	72	68	64	75	66
--cleaning up and protecting the environment	67	42	78	71	47	82	68
--promoting family values	66	77	59	68	73	61	65
--reducing the budget deficit	64	58	67	63	63	70	63
--providing leadership in foreign policy	61	76	55	60	76	61	58
--holding down taxes	60	71	58	52	71	61	57
--providing social services such as welfare and aid to the needy	45	27	61	39	34	61	43
--doing what you want done about abortion	40	32	46	37	30	49	39
(n)	(627)	(146)	(264)	(191)	(90)	(114)	(391)

- more -

Has any group you belong to given you any information about which candidate to vote for in the 1996 election?"
[Q.XD4B]

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
September, 1996 - Registered Voters	13%	87%	1%	101%	(627)