

The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll

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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."

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

NEW JERSEYANS WANT TO VOTE ON THE BOND ISSUE

New Jerseyans want the opportunity to vote on Governor Whitman's proposed bond issue to fund the state's pension obligation and provide more money for the state budget. Nine-in-ten New Jerseyans say the decision to commit the state to pay for the bonds should be put on the ballot for a public vote. There is bi-partisan support for a public vote with both Democrats (95%) and Republicans (88%) agreeing the bond issue should be on the ballot.

In addition, about half of the state's residents say the bond proposal is a gimmick to balance the state budget compared to about 3-in-10 who say it is good financial management. About 6-in-10 New Jerseyans agree with the critics of the bond proposal who say that it is being used to pay for today's tax cuts by postponing the payment of this debt to sometime in the future.

The *Star-Ledger*/Eagleton Poll, conducted by telephone between February 27 and March 6 with a random sample of 800 New Jersey residents, also found that about 4-in-10 residents have not read or heard anything about the bond proposal.

ASSESSMENT OF THE BOND PROPOSAL

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At this time New Jerseyans have reservations about issuing somewhat less than 3 billion dollars in bonds to fund the state's pension obligation as a way to provide more money to the state budget.

There is a strong consensus that the Governor's proposal to have the state sell bonds to balance the

budget should be put on the ballot for a public vote. While 90 percent say they would like to have the issue on the ballot, 6 percent think the Governor with the approval of the state legislature should make the decision to commit to pay for the bonds. From a partisan perspective, Democrats (95%), Republicans (88%), and independents (88%) all support having the bond issue on the ballot.

In addition, half (52%) of the state's residents feel that the bond proposal is a gimmick to balance the state budget compared to 28 percent who say it is good financial management and 21 percent who do not have an opinion. Democrats (59%) and independents (58%) are more likely than Republicans (37%) to say the bond proposal is a gimmick. In comparison, 39 percent of the Republicans agree that the proposal is good financial management while 27 percent of the Democrats and 22 percent of the independents have this opinion. Republicans (24%) are also more likely than independents (20%) or Democrats (15%) to say they do not have an opinion about the bond proposal.

A majority of New Jerseyans agree that the Governor is paying for today's tax cuts by postponing the payment of this debt to sometime in the future. Fifty-eight percent agree with this statement compared to 25 percent who disagree and 17 percent who do not have an opinion. Democrats (63%) and independents (63%) are more likely than Republicans (48%) to say the bond proposal will postpone the payment of the debt. In comparison, 34 percent of the Republicans, 24 percent of the Democrats, and 22 percent of the independents disagree with this description of the bond issue.

AWARENESS OF THE BOND PROPOSAL

Overall, 26 percent of New Jerseyans say they have read or heard a great deal (6%) or some (20%) about the bond proposal compared to 32 percent who have read or heard not much and 41 percent nothing at all. However, about 7-in-10 New Jerseyans say that they are very (30%) or somewhat (39%) likely to look for information to help them better understand the bond proposal. In comparison, 30 percent say they are not very (14%) or not at all (16%) likely to obtain this information.

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BACKGROUND MEMO — RELEASE SL/EP61-2 (EP111-2), MONDAY, MARCH 10, 1997

The latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton* Poll was conducted between February 27 and March 6, 1997, when a random sample of 800 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. Sampling error is the probable difference in results between interviewing everyone in the population versus a scientific sample taken from that population. The questions and figures referred to in this release are presented below. The location of each question on the actual questionnaire is in brackets.

“Governor Whitman has suggested issuing about 3 billion dollars in bonds to fund the state’s pension obligation as a way to provide more money to the state budget. How much have you read or heard about this bond proposal--a great deal, some, not much, or nothing at all?” [Q.16]

	<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>
February/March, 1997	6%	20%	32%	41%	1%	100%	(800)
<i>Party ID</i>							
--Democrat	11	17	34	36	2	100	(222)
--Independent	5	20	31	43	1	100	(337)
--Republican	4	24	32	40	--	100	(206)
<i>Political Ideology</i>							
--Liberal	5	13	33	48	1	100	(141)
--Moderate	7	20	35	37	1	100	(446)
--Conservative	8	24	23	43	2	100	(171)

“Under the Governor’s proposal, the state would sell bonds to balance the budget and the state would have to commit to paying off these bonds. Do you think the Governor with approval of the state legislature should make this decision to commit to pay for the bonds or do you think it should be put on the ballot for a public vote?” [Q.17]

	<u>Governor And Legislature</u>	<u>Public Vote</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February/March, 1997	6%	90%	4%	100%	(800)
<i>Party ID</i>					
--Democrat	2	95	3	100	(222)
--Independent	8	88	4	100	(337)
--Republican	8	88	4	100	(206)
<i>Political Ideology</i>					
--Liberal	2	94	4	100	(141)
--Moderate	5	91	4	100	(446)
--Conservative	12	83	5	100	(171)

“Which comes closest to your view on Whitman’s bond proposal -- that it is just a gimmick to balance the state budget or that it is good financial management?” [Q.19]

	<u>Gimmick</u>	<u>Good Financial Management</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February/March, 1997	52%	28%	21%	101%	(800)
<i>Party ID</i>					
--Democrat	59	27	15	101	(222)
--Independent	58	22	20	100	(337)
--Republican	37	39	24	100	(206)
<i>Political Ideology</i>					
--Liberal	62	23	15	100	(141)
--Moderate	52	30	18	100	(446)
--Conservative	46	28	26	100	(171)
<i>Heard of Bond Proposal</i>					
--Great deal/Some	67	25	8	100	(240)
--Not much/Nothing	46	29	25	100	(553)

“Some people who are critical of the bond proposal say that the Governor is paying for today’s tax cuts by postponing the payment of this debt to sometime in the future? Do you agree or disagree with this statement?” [Q.20]

	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February/March, 1997	58%	25%	17%	100%	(800)
<i>Party ID</i>					
--Democrat	63	24	13	100	(222)
--Independent	63	22	16	101	(337)
--Republican	48	34	18	100	(206)
<i>Political Ideology</i>					
--Liberal	71	18	11	100	(141)
--Moderate	60	26	14	100	(446)
--Conservative	43	30	27	100	(171)
<i>Heard of Bond Proposal</i>					
--Great deal/Some	73	22	5	100	(240)
--Not much/Nothing	53	27	21	101	(553)

“How likely are you to look for information to help you better understand this bond proposal -- very likely, somewhat likely, not very likely, or not at all likely?” [Q.21]

	<u>Very Likely</u>	<u>Somewhat Likely</u>	<u>Not Very Likely</u>	<u>Not At All Likely</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
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February/March, 1997	30%	39%	14%	16%	2%	101%	(800)
<i>Party ID</i>							
--Democrat	32	36	14	16	3	101	(222)
--Independent	31	37	10	20	1	99	(337)
--Republican	25	48	17	10	1	101	(206)
<i>Political Ideology</i>							
--Liberal	28	44	16	9	3	100	(141)
--Moderate	30	40	13	15	1	99	(446)
--Conservative	33	35	15	14	3	100	(171)
<i>Heard of Bond Proposal</i>							
--Great deal/Some	45	37	8	9	1	100	(240)
--Not much/Nothing	24	40	16	18	1	99	(553)