

The Star-Ledger/**Eagleton-Rutgers Poll**

EMBARGOED – NOT FOR RELEASE UNTIL: TUESDAY, MARCH 18, 1997

RELEASE: SL/EP 61-4 (EP 111-4)

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 Tuesday's <i>Star-Ledger</i> . We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to "The <i>Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll</i> ."
--

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

NEW JERSEYANS ASSESS THEIR TAXES

Since January 1994, when Governor Whitman took office, there has been a 30% reduction in the state income taxes paid by New Jerseyans and about 4-in-10 say they have benefited at least some from this program. In contrast, more than half of the state's residents report that their local property taxes have gone up in the past year. Overall, close to 6-in-10 who have had an increase in their local property taxes say it is a result of the 30% state income tax reduction. When New Jerseyans evaluate their combined payment for state taxes and local property taxes, 6-in-10 say they have experienced an increase in the past three years.

While about 4-in-10 residents whose property taxes have increased feel the local schools are the reason for the change, about a third say state government is responsible. In addition, 6-in-10 residents disagree with the statement that "state government does not have any influence on the cost of local property taxes."

The *Star-Ledger*/Eagleton Poll was conducted between February 27 and March 6, 1997 when a random sample of 800 New Jersey adults were interviewed by telephone.

COMBINED TOTAL TAXES

A majority of New Jerseyans feel that over the past three years the combined total that they pay in both state taxes and local property taxes has increased. Overall, 58 percent say their combined tax payment has gone up, 28 percent feel it has stayed the same, and 6 percent report they have experienced a decline in their total taxes.

As might be expected, New Jerseyans who report that their property taxes have gone up a lot (84%) or a little (73%) are more likely to say their total taxes have increased than those who say their taxes have stayed the same or been reduced (38%).

Home owners (65%) are more likely than those who rent (41%) to report that their total taxes have increased. In addition, while about 6-in-10 of those who have total household incomes of more than \$30,000 say their combined state taxes and local taxes have gone up, half of those with household incomes of less than \$30,000 report an increase.

PROPERTY TAXES

About half (55%) of New Jersey residents say that in the past year their property taxes have gone up a lot (27%) or a little (28%) compared to 26 percent who say they have stayed the same, 3 percent who say they have gone down, and 16 percent who don't know. The percentage who say that their property taxes have increased is less than the 61 percent reported in June 1994 and the 59 percent who said they had an increase in both February 1994 and September 1991.

Home owners (67%) are more likely to report an increase in property taxes than those who rent (35%). However, while only 3 percent of home owners do not know if their property taxes have changed, 39 percent of those who rent don't know if their property taxes have gone up or gone down.

Among those who report their local property taxes have gone up, about equal percentages say it is mainly because of their local public schools (38%) as feel state government (34%) is most responsible. In addition, 16 percent attribute the increases mainly to local government and 6 percent to county government.

Homeowners (43%) are more likely than those who rent (17%) to say the local schools are the reason for the increases in their property taxes. On the other hand, renters (42%) are more likely than homeowners (32%) to say the increases are caused by state government.

Overall, 60 percent of the state's residents disagree with the statement that "the state of New Jersey does not have any influence on the cost of local property taxes" compared to 25 percent who agree with this statement.

ATTITUDES ABOUT THE 30% INCOME TAX REDUCTION

By a margin of 58 to 38 percent more state residents say they have not benefited from New Jersey's 30% state income tax reduction than say they have benefited. Five percent say they have benefited a great deal, 33 percent some, 29 percent not much and 29 percent not at all. While the 38 percent who say they benefited a great deal or some is an increase of 7 percentage points from the 31 percent in November 1995, it is a 5 percentage point decline from the 43 percent who felt this way in February of 1995.

Also, more New Jerseyans who rent their homes (45%) than those who own (33%) say they benefited a great deal or some from the 30 percent state income tax reduction. Residents

who say that their local property taxes have gone up a lot (23%) are less likely to report they benefited a great deal or some from the 30% income tax reduction than those whose property taxes went up a little (45%) or stayed the same (44%). Republicans (54%) are more likely than Democrats (33%) or independents (31%) to report they benefited a great deal or some from the state income tax reduction.

IMPACT OF 30% INCOME TAX CUT ON PROPERTY TAXES

Among those who say that their local property taxes have increased, 56 percent think that the increase is due a great deal (19%) or some (37%) as a result of the 30% state income tax reduction compared to 37 percent who say the income tax reduction did not have much (25%) or any (12%) impact on the increase in property taxes.

Those who say that their property taxes have increased a lot (60%) are more likely than those who say their property taxes have increased some (51%) in the past year to report their increases are caused a great deal or some by the state income tax reduction. Among those who have had property tax increases, more Democrats (59%) and independents (57%) than Republicans (48%) say their increases are caused a great deal or some by the 30% reduction in the state income tax.

TAX EXPERIENCE AND ATTITUDES ABOUT GOVERNOR WHITMAN

As might be expected, state residents who have benefited from the 30% income tax reduction and those who have not had large increases in their property taxes are more positive about Governor Whitman's job performance and are more likely to say they would vote for her reelection.

Among those who report they have benefited a great deal or some from the 30% income tax reduction, 62 percent say they would reelect Governor Whitman compared to 33 percent who

say they did not benefit much and 17 percent who report that they did not benefit at all from this tax cut.

In addition, residents who say that their local property taxes have been the same in the past year (51%) are more likely to support Whitman's reelection than those who say their property taxes have gone up a little (41%) or a lot (22%). Those New Jerseyans who say their combined state and local taxes are the same (52%) or decreased (69%) are more supportive of Whitman's reelection than those who say they have increased (32%).

Whitman's job performance ratings are also different depending on state residents' experiences with their state and local property taxes. Residents who say they have benefited a great deal or some from the 30% income tax reduction (73%) are more likely to give Whitman positive job performance ratings than those who say they did not benefit much (51%) or benefited not at all (24%). Also, Whitman gets her lowest positive job performance rating from those who say their property taxes have increased a lot (27%), compared to those who say they have gone up a little (61%), or have stayed the same (65%). More New Jerseyans whose total combined state and local property taxes have gone down (83%) give Whitman positive job performance ratings than those who say they stayed the same (65%) or increased (41%).

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.

“In the past year have your local property taxes gone up, gone down, or stayed about the same [PROBE: Have they gone (up/down) a lot or a little?] [Q.11a]

	Gone Up A Lot	Gone Up A Little	Stayed Same	Gone Down A Little	Gone Down A Lot	Don't Know	Total	(n)
February/March, 1997	27%	28%	26%	3%	--	16%	100%	(800)
<u>Party ID</u>								
--Democrat		32	24	27	1	--	16	100 (222)
--Independent	26	29	25	2	--	17	99	(237)
--Republican	22	29	28	6	1	14	100	(206)
<u>Annual Household Income</u>								
--Less than \$30,000	26	21	28	3	--	22	100	(160)
--\$30,000 - \$50,000	30	27	24	3	1	15	100	(152)
--\$50,001 - \$70,000	18	36	30	1	1	14	100	(135)
--More than \$70,000	30	31	23	4	--	12	100	(251)
<u>Age</u>								
--18 to 29	17	17	25	5	--	36	100	(143)
--30 to 49	26	31	29	3	--	10	99	(352)
--50 to 64	40	30	19	2	2	7	100	(166)
--65 and over	28	31	24	1	--	17	101	(129)
<u>Housing Status</u>								
--Own	34	33	27	2	1	3	100	(555)
--Rent	17	16	24	3	--	39	99	(197)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>								
--June, 1994	27	34	22	3	--	14	100	(801)
--February, 1994	29	30	26	--	2	12	99	(801)
--September, 1991	>>	59	<< 15	>>	9	<< 17	100	(800)

[ASKED OF THOSE WHOSE PROPERTY TAXES HAVE GONE UP:] “Which of the following do you think is most responsible for the increase in your local property taxes -- state government, county government, local government, or the local public schools” [Q.11b]

State County Local Local Don't

	<u>Gov't</u>	<u>Gov't</u>	<u>Gov't</u>	<u>Schools</u>	<u>Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February/March, 1997	34%	6%	16%	38%	6%	100%	(453)
<i>Party ID</i>							
--Democrat		42	8	17	27	6	100 (131)
--Independent	33	4	15	38	10	100	(190)
--Republican	24	9	15	50	2	100	(108)
<i>Housing Status</i>							
--Own	32	5	13	43	7	100	(373)
--Rent	42	11	25	17	5	100	(63)
<i>Change in Property Tax</i>							
--Gone up a lot		38	7	13	35	7	100 (227)
--Gone up a little	30	6	18	40	6	100	(226)
<i>PAST SURVEYS</i>							
June, 1994		31	10	17	32	10	100 (488)
February, 1994		19	13	21	38	8	99 (506)

“Some people say that the state of New Jersey does not have any influence on the cost of local property taxes -- do you agree or disagree?” [Q.12]

	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February/March, 1997	25%	60%	15%	100%	(800)
<i>Party ID</i>					
--Democrat		23	62	15	100 (222)
--Independent	22	65	13	100	(337)
--Republican	33	53	15	101	(206)
<i>Change in Property Tax</i>					
--Gone up a lot		22	70	8	100 (227)
--Gone up a little	28	66	6	100	(226)
--Stayed same/gone down	27	57	16	100	(230)
<i>Housing Status</i>					
--Own	25	66	10	101	(555)
--Rent	22	52	26	100	(197)

“Overall, how much do you think you have benefited from New Jersey’s 30 percent state income tax reduction--a great deal, some, not much, or not at all?” [Q.13]

	<u>A Great Deal</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Not Much</u>	<u>Not At All</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February/March, 1997	5%	33%	29%	29%	5%	101%	(800)
<u>Party ID</u>							
--Democrat (222)		3	30	29	34	3	99
--Independent	6	25	29	35	5	100	(337)
--Republican	4	50	29	14	3	100	(206)
<u>Annual Household Income</u>							
--Less than \$30,000	6	32	20	32	10	100	(160)
--\$30,000 - \$50,000	2	35	27	33	3	100	(152)
--\$50,001 - \$70,000	6	31	40	21	2	100	(135)
--More than \$70,000	4	38	31	25	2	100	(251)
<u>Change in Property Tax</u>							
--Gone up a lot (227)		3	20	30	45	2	100
--Gone up a little	3	42	29	22	4	100	(226)
--Stayed same/gone down	4	40	30	22	5	100	(230)
<u>Housing Status</u>							
--Own	3	30	33	31	4	101	(555)
--Rent	8	37	20	27	7	99	(197)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>							
--November, 1995	5	26	35	31	3	100	(803)
<u>Party ID</u>							
--Democrat (237)		6	20	38	34	2	100
--Independent	3	27	35	32	4	101	(284)
--Republican	4	35	34	25	3	101	(244)
<u>Annual Household Income</u>							
--Less than \$20,000	6	20	31	40	3	100	(102)
--\$20,001 - \$30,000	3	27	30	33	7	100	(79)
--\$30,001 - \$50,000	5	28	35	29	3	100	(180)
--More than \$50,000	3	27	39	29	2	100	(348)
--February, 1995	9	34	35	20	3	101	(801)
--February, 1994*	7	41	34	17	2	101	(801)

* 1994 -- "How much do you think you will benefit from a 30 percent cut in state income tax rates -- a great deal, some, not much or not at all?"

[ASKED OF THOSE WHOSE PROPERTY TAXES HAVE GONE UP:] “And, how much of the increase in your local property taxes do you think is the result of the state income tax reduction?” [Q.14]

	<u>A Great Deal</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Not Much</u>	<u>Not At All</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February/March, 1997	19%	37%	25%	12%	7%	100%	(453)
<i>Party ID</i>							
--Democrat (131)		22	37	22	11	8	100
--Independent	23	34	21	14	7	99	(190)
--Republican	6	42	34	13	5	100	(1080)
<i>Change in Property Tax</i>							
--Gone up a lot (227)		29	31	29	12	8	99
--Gone up a little	9	42	30	13	6	100	(226)
<i>Housing Status</i>							
--Own	21	36	24	13	7	101	(373)
--Rent	14	39	26	13	8	100	(63)

“Over the past three years, overall, do you think the combined total you pay in both state taxes and local property taxes has gone up, gone down, or stayed the same?” [Q.15]

	<u>Gone Up</u>	<u>Gone Down</u>	<u>Stayed Same</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February/March, 1997	58%	6%	28%	9%	101%	(800)
<i>Party ID</i>						
--Democrat (222)		63	4	26	8	101
--Independent	60	4	26	9	99	(337)
--Republican	48	10	33	8	99	(206)
<i>Annual Household Income</i>						
--Less than \$30,000	50	6	29	15	100	(160)
--\$30,000 - \$50,000	62	8	27	4	101	(152)
--\$50,001 - \$70,000	64	3	27	5	99	(135)
--More than \$70,000	60	7	28	4	99	(251)
<i>Age</i>						
--18 to 29	51	7	32	11	101	(143)
--30 to 49	61	6	25	8	100	(352)
--50 to 64	63	7	24	5	99	(166)

EP111-4 (SL/EP61-4)

- 11 -

--65 and over 53 1 32 14 100 (129)

Change in Property Tax

--Gone up a lot 84 2 10 4 100
(227)

--Gone up a little 73 4 21 2 100 (226)

--Stayed same/gone down 38 10 47 5 100 (230)

Housing Status

--Own 65 4 27 3 99 (555)

--Rent 41 10 29 21 101 (197)

“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>
February/March, 1997	10%	42%	29%	15%	5%	101%	(800)
<u>Change in Property Tax In The Past Year</u>							
--Up a lot	2	25	40	30	3	100	(214)
--Up a little		11	50	29	9	1	100 (219)
--Same		12	53	18	10	6	99 (203)
--Down a little/a lot	27	42	9	--	11	100	(26)
--Don't know	11	40	30	11	8	100	(129)
<u>Benefit From The 30% State Income Tax Cut</u>							
--A great deal/some	16	57	16	6	5	100	(301)
--Not much		8	43	34	14	1	100 (226)
--Not at all		4	20	43	29	5	101 (229)
<u>Total Change In State and Local Taxes</u>							
--Gone up	6	35	35	21	3	100	(457)
--Gone down	27	56	14	3	--	100	(45)
--Same		14	51	22	8	6	101 (218)
--Don't know	9	47	21	8	15	100	(71)

“If Christie Whitman were running for re-election as Governor against a Democratic candidate, who would you vote for -- Whitman the Republican or the Democratic candidate?” [Q.9]

	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Depends</u>	<u>Neither</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February/March, 1997	39%	29%	22%	2%	7%	99%	(800)
<u>Change in Property Tax In The Past Year</u>							
--Up a lot	22	44	22	5	6	99	(214)

EP111-4 (SL/EP61-4)**- 12 -**

--Up a little		41	28	24	1	6	100	(219)
--Same		51	22	20	2	6	101	(203)
--Down a little/a lot	76	12	12	--	--	100	(25)	
--Don't know	40	24	24	1	12	101	(129)	
<u>Benefit From The 30% State Income Tax Cut</u>								
--A great deal/some	62	16	16	2	4	100	(301)	
--Not much		33	32	25	3	7	100	(226)
--Not at all		17	46	25	2	10	100	(229)
<u>Total Change In State and Local Taxes</u>								
--Gone up	32	35	25	2	6	100	(457)	
--Gone down	69	8	16	4	3	100	(45)	
--Same		52	21	18	3	7	101	(218)
--Don't know	33	31	21	1	13	99	(71)	