

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

February 5, 2001

CONTACT: MONIKA McDERMOTT
OR CLIFF ZUKIN

RELEASE: (EP130-3)

A story based on the survey findings presented in this release and background memo will appear in the Monday, February 5 Star-Ledger. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to "*The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll.*"

GARDEN STATE IS OPTIMISTIC ABOUT BUSH'S PRESIDENCY

But Residents' Affections Follow Clinton

New Jersey residents are giving President George W. Bush the benefit of the doubt as he settles into office, but their expectations for a Bush presidency are not high. Many approve of the job he is doing so far, as well as his cabinet appointments, and most are optimistic about the next four years with the Bush administration.

At the same time, however, New Jerseyans only expect Bush to be an average president, which stands in sharp contrast to their opinions about his predecessor. Most residents believe Bill Clinton was an *above* average president, and many expect Bush to pale by comparison.

These are some of the main findings of the most recent Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll, conducted by telephone with a scientific sample of 803 New Jersey residents between January 24 and 30, 2001. The sampling error for the full sample is ± 3.5 percentage points.

Forty-two percent of New Jersey residents approve of the job Bush is doing so far as president, while only 21 percent disapprove, and 37 percent don't have an opinion. In addition, they like what they see in his cabinet appointments: 55 percent approve of his selections. Democrats are, not surprisingly, less approving than are Republicans.

Garden Staters are divided over Bush on an ideological level. Forty-one percent believe that his issue positions are about right for them, but 37 percent view his positions as too conservative. Nine percent believe Bush's issue positions are too liberal for them.

While overall the state is optimistic about the next four years, many residents do not expect much from a Bush presidency. Three-in-five New Jerseyans are optimistic about it, while only

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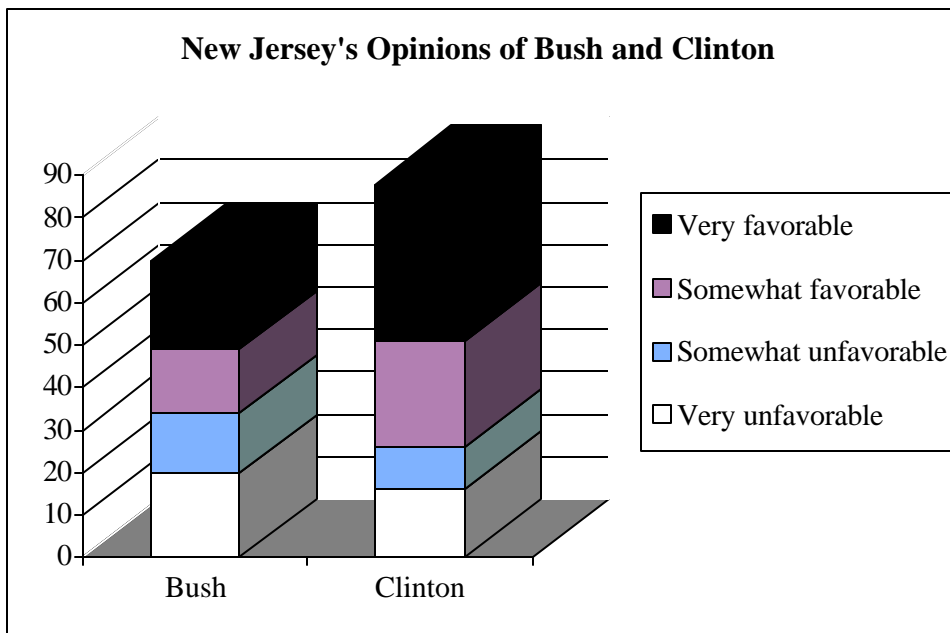
191 Ryders Lane, New Brunswick, New Jersey 08901

Phone: 732-932-9384 - Website: <http://slerp.rutgers.edu> - Fax: 732-932-6778

one quarter of them are pessimistic. But at the same time, only 30 percent of residents expect Bush to be a better-than-average president. Forty-two percent expect him to be just average. Twenty-one percent expect his presidency to be below average.

Monika McDermott, Associate Director of the Poll, explains: “Part of Bush’s challenge in the Garden State comes from comparisons to Clinton, who has always been popular here both as a president and as a person. Many New Jersey residents believe Bush will not measure up.” Over half of Garden State residents – 58 percent – think that Clinton was a better-than-average president, including 21 percent who feel he was outstanding as president. Only 27 percent think Clinton’s presidency was average, and 15 percent say it was below average. Thirty-nine percent expect Bush to do a worse job as president than Clinton did, while only 26 percent expect him to be a better president, and 27 percent expect their presidencies will be qualitatively similar.

Clinton’s job performance rating is higher now than at any time during his administration. A full third of state residents rate the job he did as president as excellent, and another 39 percent think he did a good job. Eighteen percent rate Clinton’s job performance as fair, and only 9 percent describe it as poor.



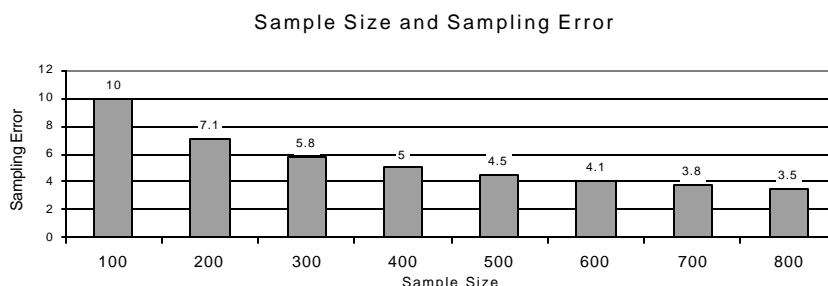
In a state where Democrat Al Gore coasted to victory in November, Bush also has trouble competing on a more personal level. Only 36 percent of New Jersey residents view Bush favorably, compared to 62 percent who view Clinton favorably. Thirty-four percent of Garden Staters view Bush unfavorably, while only one quarter view Clinton unfavorably.

There are signs that the controversy surrounding the presidential election may have left bad feelings among residents of New Jersey. Sixty-one percent of Gore voters have an unfavorable impression of the new president – including 37 percent who view him *very* unfavorably – while only 8 percent view him favorably. In addition, fifty-seven percent of African Americans – a group who supported Gore almost uniformly – have an unfavorable impression of George W. Bush. Only 11 percent of blacks view the new president favorably. In contrast, 89 percent of blacks view Clinton favorably, including 68 percent who view him *very* favorably.

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BACKGROUND MEMO – RELEASE (EP130-3), MONDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2001

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Sampling error does not take into account other sources of variation inherent in public opinion studies, such as non-response, question wording or context effects. The verbatim wording of all questions asked is reproduced in this background memo. The sample has been stratified based on county and the data have been weighted on age and education to insure an accurate proportional representation of the state. The questions referred to in this release are as follows:

"So far, do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling his job as President?" (QGB1)

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
January 2001	42 %	21 %	37 %	100 %	(803)
<u>By Party ID</u>					
-- Democrat	26	34	40	100	(278)
-- Independent	39	19	42	100	(314)
-- Republican	76	5	19	100	(179)

"Is your general impression of Bush favorable or unfavorable, or don't you have an opinion about him?" IF FAVORABLE OR UNFAVORABLE, PROBE: Is that very (FAVORABLE/UNFAVORABLE) or somewhat (FAVORABLE/UNFAVORABLE)? (QGB2)

	<u>Favorable</u>	<u>Unfavorable</u>	<u>Very favorable</u>	<u>Somewhat favorable</u>	<u>Somewhat unfavorable</u>	<u>Very unfavorable</u>	<u>No Opinion</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
January 2001	36 %	34 %	21 %	15 %	14 %	20 %	30 %	100 %	(803)
<u>By Party ID</u>									
-- Democrat	14	54	6	8	22	32	31	99	(278)
-- Independent	32	34	16	16	14	20	35	101	(314)
-- Republican	78	8	57	21	5	3	15	101	(179)
<u>By 2000 Pres. Vote</u>									
-- Gore	8	61	2	6	24	37	31	100	(295)
-- Bush	84	3	61	23	2	1	13	100	(224)
<u>By Race</u>									
-- White	41	31	26	15	14	17	28	100	(579)
-- Black	11	57	6	5	14	43	32	100	(98)

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Are you generally optimistic or pessimistic about the next four years with Bush as President? (QGB3)

	<u>Optimistic</u>	<u>Pessimistic</u>	<u>Neither</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
January 2001	60%	26%	4%	10%	100%	(803)
<u>By Party ID</u>						
-- Democrat	48	39	4	8	99	(278)
-- Independent	57	26	7	10	100	(314)
-- Republican	85	7	--	8	100	(179)
<u>By 2000 Pres. Vote</u>						
-- Gore	39	48	5	8	100	(295)
-- Bush	88	4	2	6	100	(224)

"Do you approve or disapprove of most of the cabinet members Bush has selected for his administration?" (QGB4)

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
January 2001	55%	24%	21%	100%	(803)
<u>By Party ID</u>					
-- Democrat	39	39	22	100	(278)
-- Independent	55	22	23	100	(314)
-- Republican	83	7	10	100	(179)

"What type of president do you think Bush will be--an outstanding president, above average, average, below average, or poor?" (QGB5)

	<u>Outstanding</u>	<u>Above average</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Below average</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
January 2001	9%	21%	42%	11%	10%	7%	100%	(803)
<u>By Party ID</u>								
-- Democrat	4	10	51	16	14	6	101	(278)
-- Independent	7	21	43	12	10	7	100	(314)
-- Republican	24	39	27	3	2	4	99	(179)

"Do you think Bush will do a better job as President than Bill Clinton did, or a worse job than Clinton, or about the same job as Clinton?" (QGB6)

	<u>Better</u>	<u>Worse</u>	<u>Same</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
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-- Democrat	8	59	25	9	101	(278)
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"Do you think Bush's positions on important issues are too conservative for you, too liberal for you, or are his issue positions about right for you?" (QGB7)

	<u>Too conservative</u>	<u>Too liberal</u>	<u>About right</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
January 2001	37%	9%	41%	13%	100%	(803)
<u>By Ideology</u>						
-- Liberal	73	6	15	5	99	(171)
-- Moderate	36	9	41	15	101	(456)
-- Conservative	10	11	68	11	100	(151)
<u>By Party ID</u>						
-- Democrat	56	10	20	14	100	(278)
-- Independent	38	9	42	12	101	(314)
-- Republican	11	6	75	8	100	(179)

"Thinking back over the last eight years, how would you rate the job Bill Clinton did as President--excellent, good, only fair or poor?" (QBC1)

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
January 2001	33%	39%	18%	9%	1%	100%	(803)
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-- Democrat	49	41	7	3	--	100	(278)
-- Independent	31	44	19	6	--	100	(314)
-- Republican	11	29	32	25	2	99	(179)
<u>Past Surveys**</u>							
March 2000	17	41	21	17	3	99	(800)
September 1999	16	45	23	15	1	100	(802)
April/May 1999	16	43	21	18	2	100	(802)
January 1999	23	44	21	10	2	100	(800)
September 1998	20	45	19	15	2	101	(804)
June 1998	14	47	27	10	3	101	(602)
February 1998	27	42	19	10	2	100	(802)
October 1997	9	48	30	10	4	101	(800)
February 1997	8	43	34	13	1	99	(800)

** Previous question: "How would you rate the job Bill Clinton *is doing* as President--excellent, good, only fair or poor?"

“Is your general impression of Bill Clinton favorable or unfavorable, or don’t you have an opinion about him? *If favorable or unfavorable, probe: Is that very (favorable/unfavorable) or somewhat (favorable/unfavorable)?*” (QBC2)

	<u>Very Favorable</u>	<u>Somewhat Favorable</u>	<u>Somewhat Unfavorable</u>	<u>Very Unfavorable</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
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-- White	29	26	13	21	12	101	(579)
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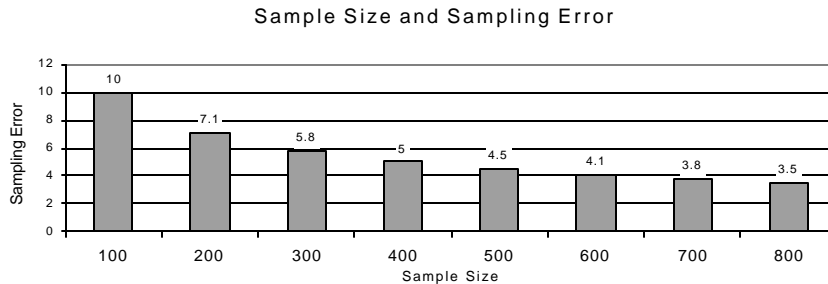
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<u>National Comparison</u>								
Gallup Poll, January 2001 **	15	32	30	11	11	1	100	(1018)

** Source: Gallup News Service, 1-12-01. Question: “How do you think President Clinton will go down in history -- as an outstanding president, above average, average, below average, or poor?”

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“What type of president do you think Clinton has been -- an outstanding president, above average, average, below average, or poor?” (QBC3)

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