

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

March 22, 2002  
Release 136-6

CONTACT: MONIKA McDERMOTT  
(732) 932-9384 X 250

A story based on the survey findings presented in this release and background memo will appear in the Friday, March 22<sup>nd</sup> *Star-Ledger*. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to “**The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll.**”

## **Five Governors in One Week May Have Been Too Many**

New Jerseyans appear open to the idea of having an elected lieutenant governor who would take over in the governor’s absence, according to the *Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll*. A slim majority of residents say that they think the system works fine the way it is, but when the numbers are broken down by whether residents paid attention to the quick change of governors in January, a different picture emerges.

The *Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll* was conducted by telephone among a scientifically selected random sample of 803 adults statewide from February 28 through March 6. The margin of sampling error is  $\pm 3.5$  percentage points.

Overall, 51 percent of New Jerseyans feel that the current system of having the president of the state senate take over if the governor leaves before the end of his or her term works fine the way it is. Forty-two percent think the state should have an elected lieutenant governor, like some other states.

But only half of Garden State residents have heard or read anything about the one-week period in January when the state had five different governors due to the current replacement system. Fifty percent report having heard or read about this, while an equal number – 49 percent – know nothing of the situation.

Knowing about January’s five sitting governors makes a difference in opinions. While opinions overall are in favor of keeping the current system, among those who had already heard or read about the five-governor switch, opinions are nearly evenly divided. Forty-nine percent of these residents feel the state should have a lieutenant governor while 47 percent feel the system works fine as it is.

In addition, when those who did not hear or read anything about January’s five governors do hear about the situation, opinions go from supporting the current system to favoring an

elected lieutenant governor’s position. Initially, among those who knew nothing of January’s gubernatorial shifts 54 percent say the system works fine, while only 36 percent would like to see a lieutenant governor installed. But when told that the state had five governors in a one-week period in January, opinions move in the opposite direction. Forty percent of those who were previously unaware of the five governors say they are more likely to want an elected lieutenant governor after hearing about it while seven percent move more towards thinking the system works fine as is. Forty-five percent say the information does not change their initial views – 11 percent initially supported a lieutenant governor’s position, 30 percent believed the current system works fine and four percent were undecided.

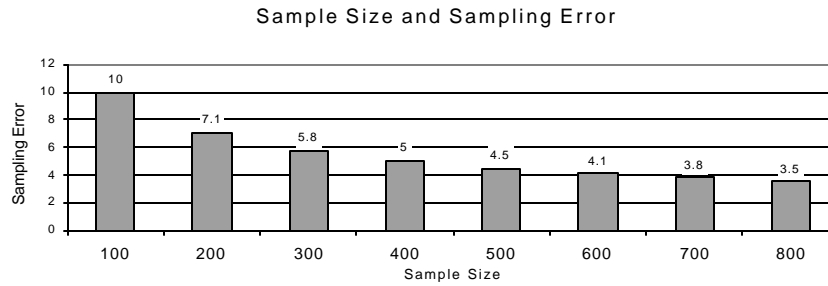
<i>Should NJ have an LG?</i>	<b>Initial Total</b>	<i>Knowing About January’s 5 Governors</i>		
		<b>Already knew</b>	<b>Did not know</b>	
			<i>Initial</i>	<i>Once told</i>
Yes / Lean yes	42%	49%	36%	51%
No / Lean no	51%	47%	54%	37%
Don’t know	7%	4%	10%	12%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Number	(803)	(443)	(360)	(360)

In total, 51 percent of those who are initially unaware of the situation are open to having an elected lieutenant governor after hearing about January’s five governors, while 37 percent favor keeping the system as it is.

The poll’s interim director Monika McDermott sums up the findings: “Five governors in one week may have been a few too many for New Jersey residents – while at first glance they seem to support the current system of replacing the governor with the senate president, when they become aware of January’s musical governorships they favor electing a lieutenant governor.”

**BACKGROUND MEMO – RELEASE (EP136-6) March 22, 2002**

The latest *Star-Ledger*/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll was conducted by telephone from February 28 to March 6 with a scientifically selected random sample of 803 New Jersey adults. The figures in this release are based on this sample size. All surveys are subject to sampling error, which is the expected probable difference between interviewing everyone in a population versus a scientific sampling drawn from that population. The sampling error is  $\pm 3.5$  percent, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of New Jersey residents thought the state should have a lieutenant governor, one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 46.5 and 53.5 percent ( $50 \pm 3.5$ ) had all New Jersey residents been interviewed, rather than just a sample. Sampling error increases as the sample size decreases, so statements based on various population subgroups, such as separate figures reported for Republicans, Independents or Democrats, are subject to more error than are statements based on the total sample. The following chart shows the relationship between sample size and sampling error.



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:

In New Jersey, when the Governor leaves office before the end of his or her term, the President of the State Senate becomes acting Governor. Some other state governments include an elected Lieutenant Governor, who takes over in case of their Governor’s early departure or absence. Do you think New Jersey should have a Lieutenant Governor to take over in the Governor’s absence, or do you think the system works fine the way it is? [JP8]

	<u>Should have lieutenant Gov</u>	<u>System works fine</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>March 2002</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(803)</b>
<i><u>Know about 5-gov. week [JP9]</u></i>					
Yes	49	47	4	100%	(443)
No/Don’t know	36	54	10	100%	(360)

Because of this constitutional system, New Jersey had five different governors during a one-week period this January. Did you hear or read anything about this? [JP9]

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>March 2002</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(803)</b>
<u>Education</u>					
HS or less	41	59	--	100%	(200)
Some college	51	49	--	100%	(279)
College grad	67	33	--	100%	(310)
<u>Income</u>					
Under 35k	39	61	--	100%	(165)
35 to 70k	54	46	--	100%	(243)
70k +	62	38	1	101%	(286)

[ASKED OF THOSE WHO HAVE NOT "HEARD OR READ ANYTHING" OR "DON'T KNOW" IN JP9.]

Does knowing that New Jersey had five different governors in one week affect your opinion of whether the state should have an elected lieutenant governor? IF YES: Are you more likely to think the state should have a lieutenant governor, or more likely to think the system works fine the way it is? [JP10]

	<u>More likely to want LG</u>	<u>More likely to think system fine</u>	<u>Does NOT affect opinion</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>March 2002</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(360)</b>
<u>Should NJ have Lieutenant Governor [JP8]</u>						
Should have Lieutenant Governor	59	8	31	3	101%	(128)
System works fine as is	34	8	54	4	100%	(199)

*JP10 with unchanged opinion breakdowns:*

	<u>More likely to want LG</u>	<u>More likely to think system fine</u>	<u>Does NOT affect opinion: Want LG</u>	<u>Does NOT affect opinion: System fine</u>	<u>Does NOT affect opinion: DK</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>March 2002</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(360)</b>