

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

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CONTACT: CLIFF ZUKIN OR
PATRICK MURRAY

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PUBLIC OPINION OF GOVERNOR McGREEVEY AT YEAR 1

"Be Careful What You Wish For You Might Get It" - Sir John Harington (1596)

James E. McGreevey was inaugurated the 51st Governor of New Jersey just 126 days after the World Trade Center buildings fell, inheriting a weak economy and a gaping budget deficit. Not a hand that many would like to have to play. But this is the job McGreevey wanted, a job he had campaigned for non-stop since he almost upset former Gov. Christie Whitman's reelection in 1997. So, after one year in office, how has he done?

Well, according to McGreevey's boss--the citizens of New Jersey-- it's been a rocky start. The Governor ends his first year in office with more critics than supporters, and with many unsure about his leadership ability. He is viewed more as a traditional politician than as the self-proclaimed reformer of his campaign, and few in the Garden State have a good sense of what he is like on a personal level. To further complicate his job, the Governor is trying to lead a state where if he asked 10 people for the *one* thing he should focus on, he would receive five or six different answers.

These are some of the findings of a new Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers poll that takes a look at public opinion of McGreevey at year 1. The survey was conducted in two parts, interviewing 401 adult residents by telephone in scientifically selected samples both before and after the Governor's budget message of February 4. There was little

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185 Ryders Lane, New Brunswick, New Jersey 08901

Director: Cliff Zukin x247 • Associate Director: Patrick Murray x243

Graduate Research Assistants: Kelly Sand • Robert Suls

Phone: 732-932-9384 - Website: <http://slerp.rutgers.edu> - Fax: 732-932-1551

difference in opinions from one time to the next. The polls, conducted between Jan 30 and Feb 2 and between Feb 5 and Feb 9, have a total sample size of 802, with a sampling error of ± 3.5 percentage points.

BASIC ASSESSMENT: ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

McGreevey ends his first year with a negative overall job performance rating. Statewide, just one-third (34%) say they approve of the job he is doing as Governor, while 45 percent disapprove. A healthy slice of one-in-five have come to no judgment or are ambivalent. The two poll readings before and after the Governor's budget address are virtually identical, suggesting the speech and coverage of the state's budget deficit had no major impact on how the Governor is viewed.

Images of the Governor, slightly more personal than his job performance rating, have also tilted negative at the year's end. Slightly more say their overall impression of McGreevey is unfavorable (32%) than favorable (28%), although the largest number (39%) offer no opinion, suggesting that perceptions of the Governor are far from set. By way of comparison, Whitman was more positively regarded at a roughly comparable point in time (47% favorable, 24% unfavorable and 29% no opinion), while impressions of Jim Florio, Whitman's predecessor, were far more negative a year into his tenure (19% favorable, 65% unfavorable, and 17% undecided).

Still, the year-end figures represent a squandering of the good will the Governor started his term with. In March of 2002, just a couple of months into office, favorable impressions of McGreevey outnumbered unfavorable ones by a margin of 51 to 19 percent, with the remaining 30 percent expressing no opinion.

LEADERSHIP LITE, SO FAR

If Jim McGreevey has a plan to better the quality of life in the Garden State, residents aren't clearly seeing it, at least not yet anyway. Notwithstanding the Governor's initiative on halting sprawl, less than half of the public (42%) think McGreevey has a clear vision for making New Jersey a better place to live. An equal number (43%) do not feel the Governor has any such vision, with the remaining 15 percent expressing no opinion.

At this point, barely one year into his administration, the bulk of the public is split between those who think the Governor has some minor accomplishment he can point to (41%), and those who believe he has no real accomplishment so far (37%). Just one-in-ten feel McGreevey has already achieved something “major;” the remainder express no opinion.

And, after a year, most New Jerseyans see their Governor as a “traditional pol.” Leaving far behind the rhetoric of his campaign, just one-in-four (23%) describe McGreevey as a Governor “who favors reform of the political system.” In stark contrast, six-in-ten (61%) state residents view him as a “politics as usual” Governor.

WHAT'S HE LIKE? FEW KNOW

State residents don't have a good sense of their new chief executive as a person. This is not unusual in the Garden State, where New York and Philadelphia television stations treat New Jersey government and politics as a poor cousin, fitting in somewhere between an afterthought and an annoyance. Few living here think they have a good handle on their new governor--just 13 percent feel they know him either “very” or “pretty” well; another 31 percent feel they know him “a little.” The majority (55%) feel they know their governor “not at all” as a person.

Those professing at least a little familiarity with McGreevey were asked how well each of seven adjectives describe the Governor. In general, he scores well on the “thought” dimension and not very well on the “feeling” side. Majorities say the adjectives “intelligent” (59%) and “a hard worker” (56%) apply to McGreevey “a lot.” Yet few find him to be empathetic. Fewer than 3-in-10 feel similarly about the descriptors of understanding “the concerns you personally face in day-to-day life” (21%) or feel him to be “warm and caring” (29%). Just 40 percent of those feeling they know him find him to be extremely “likeable,” and just one-third of this group say that either “a strong leader” (34%) or “honest” (31%) fits McGreevey like a glove.

Poll director Cliff Zukin commented, “Between potholes and missteps McGreevey got off to a staggering start. And in a bleak economic climate it is no doubt more difficult to be a popular governor. But opinions about McGreevey are far from fixed after only a year in office; many are still making up their minds about him.”

*HEY GOV—WORK ON ALL OF THESE **FIRST***

Each of the 802 respondents questioned by the Rutgers-based survey was asked the question, “What one issue facing New Jersey do you think should be the top priority of the Governor to work on in the coming year.” It would be an understatement to say that the poll found no consensus. New Jersey residents are fundamentally fragmented in what is bothering them the most.

While economic concerns in the way of taxes and budget top the list when aggregated, these are in no way dominant. In fact, it is hard to argue there is any *single* dominant issue before the state at this time, at least in the minds of its citizens.

Interviewers classified the comments of those answering the question into the following categories:

13%	Car Insurance
13%	Education
10%	Property Taxes
10%	Other Taxes
9%	Health Care
8%	Budget Deficit/Stimulating the Economy
7%	Jobs & Employment
4%	Sprawl/Environment/Development
4%	Medical Malpractice Insurance
3%	Problems of the Poor/Low Income
2%	Transportation/DMV
2%	Corruption/Ethics
2%	Security/Terrorism
4%	Other
<u>8%</u>	<u>Don't Know/Nothing</u>
99%	TOTAL

Coupling property taxes with all other mentions of different areas of taxation would vault the issue to the top spot, but with only one-in-five of all combined mentions. Further adding those citing the state’s budget deficit would bring the total to one-in-four, and adding those whose primary concern is jobs and employment would increase the total to about one-in-three. But that of course leave about two-in-three with something else as their primary concern. Significant numbers are focused on car insurance, education, and health care. Thus, the Governor faces the additional challenge of trying to lead a diverse citizenry with splintered concerns.

DIFFERENT CONSTITUENCIES, DIFFERENT VOICES

Looking at overall statewide public opinion percentages is akin to listening to an orchestra. While there is an overall wall of sound, it is actually made up by a blend of instruments, each of which has its own voice. This section of the analysis looks at the tunes played by a variety of the musicians in the mix. Here we examine differences in views of the Governor and issue priorities among various strata of the citizenry. The “Gov’s Job” number is calculated by subtracting the percentage who disapprove of the job McGreevey is doing as Governor from the percentage who approve. The top three issues for each group are also listed, with the percentage saying each should be the Governor’s top priority.

By Party:

<i>Democrats</i>	<i>Independents</i>	<i>Republicans</i>
Gov’s Job: +9	Gov’s Job: -12	Gov’s Job: -48
All Taxes 21% Education 15% Car Ins 14%	Car Ins 16% All Taxes 15% Education 11%	All Taxes 30% Budget/Econ 11% Car Ins 10%

Democrats give the Governor a generally favorable job performance rating; independents are quite mixed and mirror the state as a whole,

while Republicans disapprove by a more than 3 to 1 margin. Republicans are heavily focused on economic concerns as their top priority; Democrats express a more mixed agenda of economic and social concerns.

By Gender:

<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
Gov’s Job: -7	Gov’s Job: -16
All Taxes 20% Car Ins 17% Budget/Econ 12%	All Taxes 21% Education 16% Health Care 11%

For some reason, McGreevey’s job performance rating is lower among women than men, quite unexpected given that more women identify with the Democratic party and more men identify with

Republicans. This could be a serious problem for the Governor as it foreshadows a weakness in his political base. Men are relatively more concerned with economic issues; women tilt more towards social concerns.

By Race:

<i>White</i>	<i>African-American and Hispanic</i>
Gov's Job: -22	Gov's Job: +18
All Taxes 23% Car Ins 15% Education 12%	Jobs/Employ 16% Education 16% All Taxes 13%

Blacks and Latinos are quite positive in their assessments of McGreevey—47 percent approve and 29 percent disapprove of the job he is doing as Governor. A majority of whites (51%), who comprise about three-quarters of

state residents say they disapprove. Agendas are quite different, with racial/ethnic minorities focusing on jobs and education and whites on taxes and car insurance.

By Age:

<i>18-29</i>	<i>30-49</i>	<i>50-64</i>	<i>65 +</i>
Gov's Job: +15	Gov's Job: -14	Gov's Job: -30	Gov's Job: -9
Car Ins 19% Education 17% All Taxes 11%	All Taxes 18% Car Ins 13% Education 12%	All Taxes 32% Car Ins 14% Budget/Econ 12%	All Taxes 24% Health Care 12% Education 11%

The Governor's job performance rating is positive only among the

youngest cohort, and they are the least likely of all groups to actually vote. It is moderately negative among those between 30 and 49 and senior citizens, and far more negative among those who are between 50 and 64. This group expresses much greater concern with economic issues, and taxes in particular.

By Region:

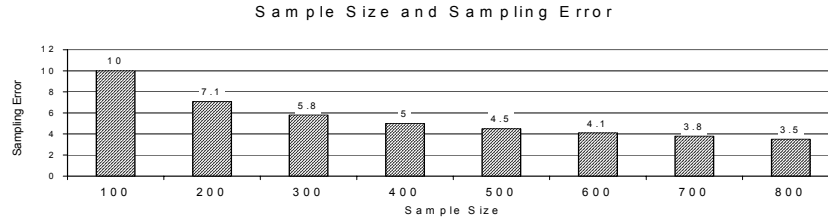
<i>North</i>	<i>Central</i>	<i>South</i>
Gov's Job: 0	Gov's Job: -34	Gov's Job: -13
All Taxes 18% Education 16% Car Ins 12%	All Taxes 28% Education 12% Car Ins 10%	All Taxes 19% Car Ins 18% Health Care 10%

Somewhat surprisingly, McGreevey's job performance rating is lowest in central New Jersey, which includes his home base of Middlesex County,

although strong Republican areas such as Somerset and Hunterdon Counties are also included. Central New Jersey is also relatively more concerned about taxes as an issue. Positive and negative approval ratings are given by equal numbers of those living in the Northern party of the state, while South Jerseyans tilt negative.

BACKGROUND MEMO – RELEASE (EP142-6) February 16, 2003

The latest *Star-Ledger*/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll was conducted by telephone from January 30 to February 9 with a scientifically selected random sample of 802 New Jersey adults. 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 for 802 is ± 3.5 percent, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of New Jersey residents were found to be less likely to agree with a statement, one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 46.5 and 53.5 percent (50 ± 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 residents of North, Central and South Jersey, 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:

“Here in New Jersey, do you approve or disapprove of the way James McGreevey is handling his job as Governor?” [JM1]

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>DK/Refused</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February 2003	34%	45%	21%	100%	(802)
--Jan 30 – Feb 2	33	46	22	101	(401)
--Feb 5 – 9	35	45	20	100	(401)
<u>Party Affiliation</u>					
--Democrat	43	34	23	100	(254)
--Independent	33	45	22	100	(238)
--Republican	20	68	11	99	(205)
<u>Gender</u>					
--Male	37	44	19	100	(388)
--Female	30	46	23	99	(414)
<u>Region</u>					
--North	37	37	26	100	(366)
--Central	25	59	16	100	(215)
--South	35	48	16	99	(212)
<u>Race</u>					
--White	29	51	20	100	(594)
--Black & Hispanic	47	29	25	101	(141)
<u>Age</u>					
--18 to 29	44	29	27	100	(105)
--30 to 49	34	48	18	100	(358)
--50 to 64	24	54	22	100	(202)
--65 and older	33	42	25	100	(115)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>					
--September 2002	43	32	26	101	(804)
--June 2002	50	24	26	100	(801)
--March 2002	45	21	34	100	(803)

“What one issue facing New Jersey do you think should be the top priority of the Governor to work on in the coming year?” [JM2]

<u>(n)</u>	<u>February</u> <u>2003</u> <u>(802)</u>	<u>Party Affiliation:</u>			<u>Gender:</u>		<u>Race/Ethnicity:</u>	
		<u>Dem</u> <u>(254)</u>	<u>Ind</u> <u>(238)</u>	<u>Rep</u> <u>(205)</u>	<u>Male</u> <u>(388)</u>	<u>Female</u> <u>(414)</u>	<u>White</u> <u>(594)</u>	<u>Af-Am/Hisp</u> <u>(141)</u>
Car insurance	13%	14%	16%	10%	17%	10%	15%	10%
Education	13	15	11	9	9	16	12	16
Property taxes	10	9	9	14	11	9	12	3
Taxes – all other	10	12	6	16	9	12	11	10
Health care	9	9	8	7	6	11	7	10
Budget deficit/the economy	8	6	11	11	12	5	9	3
Jobs/employment	7	11	7	5	7	8	4	16
Sprawl/environment	4	4	6	3	4	5	5	1
Medical malpractice	4	3	2	8	3	5	5	1
Poor/low-income services	3	4	2	2	2	4	2	6
Transportation/DMV	2	1	3	2	4	1	1	3
Corruption/government performance	2	--	2	2	3	1	1	4
Security/terrorism	2	1	4	3	3	1	1	2
Other	4	4	2	6	4	5	6	2
Don't know/Refused	8	5	12	4	7	9	7	12
Total	99%	98%	101%	102%	101%	102%	98%	99%

<u>(n)</u>	<u>February</u> <u>2003</u> <u>(802)</u>	<u>Age:</u>				<u>Region:</u>		
		<u>18-29</u> <u>(105)</u>	<u>30-49</u> <u>(358)</u>	<u>50-64</u> <u>(202)</u>	<u>65+</u> <u>(115)</u>	<u>North</u> <u>(366)</u>	<u>Central</u> <u>(215)</u>	<u>South</u> <u>(212)</u>
Car insurance	13%	19%	13%	14%	7%	12%	10%	18%
Education	13	17	12	11	11	16	12	8
Property taxes	10	3	9	17	12	8	14	10
Taxes – all other	10	8	9	15	12	10	14	9
Health care	9	4	10	7	12	8	7	10
Budget deficit/the economy	8	5	9	12	7	8	8	9
Jobs/employment	7	10	8	6	6	6	9	8
Sprawl/environment	4	2	4	7	4	5	3	4
Medical malpractice	4	3	5	2	3	3	5	4
Poor/low-income services	3	--	4	1	6	4	4	1
Transportation/DMV	2	5	2	2	--	2	2	2
Corruption/government performance	2	3	2	--	4	2	2	2
Security/terrorism	2	5	2	--	--	3	--	1
Other	4	1	5	4	9	2	5	8
Don't know/Refused	8	16	7	2	7	10	5	6
Total	99%	101%	101%	100%	100%	99%	100%	100%

“Is your general impression of Jim McGreevey favorable or unfavorable, or don’t you have an opinion about him. [PROBE: Is that very or somewhat?” [JM3]

	<u>Favorable</u>		<u>Unfavorable</u>		<u>No</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
	<u>Very</u>	<u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Very</u>	<u>Opinion</u>		
February 2003	8%	20%	15%	17%	39%	99%	(802)
<i>Party Affiliation</i>							
--Democrat	13	32	11	7	37	100	(254)
--Independent	8	17	17	17	41	100	(238)
--Republican	3	12	22	34	30	101	(205)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>							
--March 2002		51		19	30	100	(803)
<u>Previous Governors</u>							
--Whitman September 1995	17	30	12	12	29	100	(804)
--Florio September 1990	7	12	19	46	17	101	(800)

“How well do you feel you know Jim McGreevey as a person-- very well, pretty well, just a little or not at all?” [JM4]

	<u>Very Well</u>	<u>Pretty Well</u>	<u>A Little</u>	<u>Not At All</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February 2003	3%	10%	31%	55%	2%	101%	(802)
<i>Party Affiliation</i>							
--Democrat	1	12	34	51	1	99	(254)
--Independent	3	9	27	61	--	100	(238)
--Republican	5	10	34	48	3	100	(205)
<i>Gender</i>							
--Male	2	13	30	52	2	99	(388)
--Female	3	6	32	58	1	100	(414)

[IF “VERY,” “PRETTY WELL” OR “A LITTLE” IN JM4, ASK:]

“People are often described by a number of characteristics such as “smart” or “nice.” Please tell me if you think each characteristic I read describes Jim McGreevey a lot, a little, or not very well. If you don’t have an opinion on some, just say so. First, how about [READ ITEM] does this fit McGreevey a lot, a little or not very well?” [JM5]

	<u>A lot</u>	<u>A little</u>	<u>Not very much</u>	<u>No opinion</u> <u>/DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February 2003						
--A hard worker	56%	24%	9%	12%	101%	(373)
--Warm and caring	29	33	21	17	100	(373)
--Likeable	40	39	14	6	99	(373)
--Honest	31	34	21	14	100	(373)
--A strong leader	34	36	23	8	101	(373)
--Understands the concerns you personally face in day- to-day life	21	41	29	10	101	(373)
--Intelligent	59	27	8	6	99	(373)

“Thinking back over Governor McGreevey’s first year, would you say that he has major accomplishments to point to, minor accomplishments, or no real accomplishments?” [JM6]

	<u>Major</u>	<u>Minor</u>	<u>No Real Ones</u>	<u>No opinion/DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February 2003	11%	41%	37%	12%	101%	(802)
<i>Party Affiliation</i>						
--Democrat	17	48	26	9	100	(254)
--Independent	6	39	41	14	100	(238)
--Republican	7	35	52	6	100	(205)

“And do you think he does or does NOT have a clear vision for making New Jersey a better place to live?” [JM7]

	<u>Does</u>	<u>Does Not</u>	<u>No opinion/DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February 2003	42%	43%	15%	100%	(802)
<i>Party Affiliation</i>					
--Democrat	51	32	17	100	(254)
--Independent	42	44	14	100	(238)
--Republican	27	62	11	100	(205)

“Which description better fits Jim McGreevey: a Governor who favors REFORM of the political system, or a POLITICS AS USUAL Governor?” [JM8]

	<u>Reform of the System</u>	<u>Politics as Usual</u>	<u>Depends/Both</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February 2003	23%	61%	1%	16%	101%	(802)
<i>Party Affiliation</i>						
--Democrat	33	50	--	17	100	(254)
--Independent	22	62	2	14	100	(238)
--Republican	10	79	--	11	100	(205)

“Comparing Jim McGreevey to New Jersey’s last governor Christie Whitman, who do you think has been a better governor – McGreevey or Whitman?” [JM9]

	<u>McGreevey</u>	<u>Whitman</u>	<u>Neither (Vol)</u>	<u>DK/Refused</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February 2003	34%	39%	10%	16%	99%	(802)
<i>Party Affiliation</i>						
--Democrat	50	26	9	16	101	(254)
--Independent	36	35	12	16	99	(238)
--Republican	13	66	9	11	99	(205)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>						
--September 2002	35	37	7	20	99	(804)