

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

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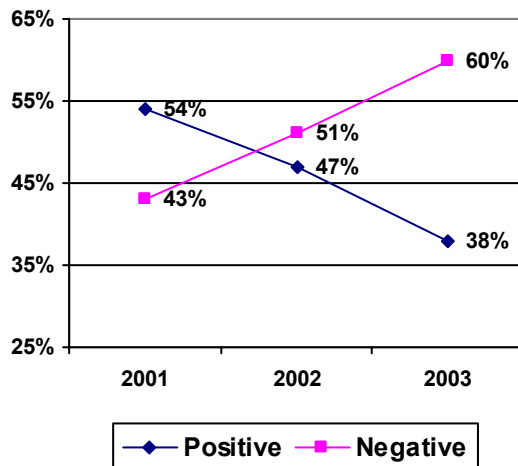
A story based on the survey findings presented in this release and background memo appears in the Sunday, March 2, 2003 Star-Ledger. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to "*The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll.*"

“QUALITY OF GOVERNMENT” RATINGS DECLINE STEEPLY IN NEW JERSEY

PUBLIC OFFICIALS VIEWED AS “ETHICALLY CHALLENGED”
PRACTICE OF “PAY TO PLAY” WIDELY SCORNE

This is not a pretty picture: For it shows there has been a dramatic decline

Rating of Quality of Govt in NJ



in the public trust--in how New Jerseyans describe the quality of their government--over just the last two years. In April 2001, positive ratings of *excellent* or *good* outnumbered negative ones of *only fair* or *poor* by a margin of 54 to 43 percent. Now just 38 percent of state residents boast that theirs is a government of at least good quality—only one percent describe it as excellent. Fully 60 percent offer critical assessments.

What has happened in this time to cause this freefall? Unfortunately, there's no shortage of suspects. Acting Governor Donald DiFrancesco, a Republican, stepped away from making the race for Governor in the wake of questionable business dealings. Senator Robert Torricelli was hounded off the Democratic ticket by widespread concern

The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll • Eagleton Institute of Politics

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over the ethics of his fundraising practices. Essex County Executive Jim Treffinger, frontrunner for the Republican nomination for Senate, was indicted for kickbacks. The Hudson County Executive, Democrat Robert Janisewski pled guilty to accepting bribes and is in the witness protection program. The former Mayor of Camden is in prison. It's easy to go on and on.

At this point, just 15 percent of state residents say there is only *a little* or *no* political corruption in New Jersey. In contrast, 38 percent say there is *a lot* of corruption in the state and another 39 percent say there is *some* corruption. When asked to guess how many out of every 10 politicians in the state are corrupt, the average estimate is 5. It's a number only Tony Soprano would be proud of.

These are some of the main findings of the most recent Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll, conducted between January 30 and February 9 with a scientifically selected sample of 802 New Jersey adults. The sampling error for the poll is ± 3.5 percentage points. The survey examined citizens views of the quality of their government and what are believed to be common political practices.

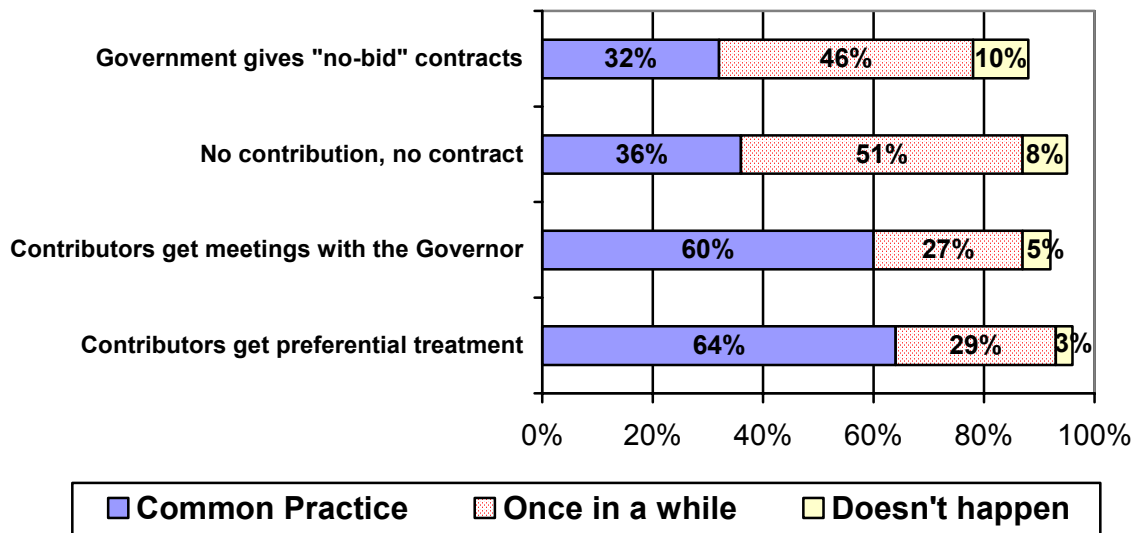
New Jersey has long been known as a "pay to play" state, meaning that those who want to do business with the state are expected to make political contributions to political parties or office-holders. "It is like an ante in a poker game," commented Cliff Zukin, the poll's director: "If you don't put money in the pot, you get no cards and you obviously have no chance of winning. No contributions, no contracts."

The Rutgers-based survey explored four different practices, each of which is said by some to be common in Garden State politics and government. Poll respondents were asked *how often each happens* and *how much they would be bothered* if it was a common practice in the state:

- *Those making large political contributions can get a private meeting with the Governor.*
- *Private firms that give donations to political campaigns and parties get preferential treatment in competing for government contracts.*
- *Firms that do NOT make political contributions to government officials or political parties have no chance of getting some government contracts for buildings or services.*
- *Government gives contracts for some public works or services to private firms without any bidding on the project.*

Most New Jerseyans believe that political favoritism is a way of life in the awarding of contracts in their state. And they find it offensive. Most (64%) think that private firms who give donations to political campaigns and parties regularly get preferential treatment in the competition for government contracts. Another 29 percent believe this happens only *once in a while* and 3 percent say this does not happen. And, six in ten New Jerseyans think that it is now *common practice* for major contributors to be able to get a private meeting with their Governor. Another 27 percent believe this happens only *once in a while* and 5 percent say this does not happen in the Garden State.

How Often Does Each Happen?



Additionally, smaller numbers think it is common practice for firms not making political contributions to be completely shut out of competing for government services or contracts (36% common, 51% once in a while), or for the state to award no-bid contracts to firms for public works or services (32% common, 46% once in a while).

Most New Jerseyans who feel the four scenarios currently describe common practices in the state find them to be repulsive. Three-quarters of those feeling contracts are given on a pay-to-play or preferential basis say they are bothered *a great deal* by such occurrences. More than half—58 percent—who feel it is common for large campaign contributors to get a private meeting with the Governor say they are similarly bothered.

Percent Bothered “A Great Deal” :	Based on those who believe each <i>is now</i> a common practice *	Based on total sample if each was <i>to be</i> a common practice **
Private firms that give donations to political campaigns and parties get preferential treatment in competing for government contracts.	77 %	71 %
Those making large political contributions can get a private meeting with the Governor	58 %	50 %
Firms that do NOT make political contributions to government officials or political parties have no chance of getting some government contracts for buildings or services.	76 %	71 %
Government gives contracts for some public works or services to private firms without any bidding on the project.	77 %	66 %

* Percentages are those respondents who say they are bothered “a great deal” based only on those respondents who believe each *is now* a common practice in New Jersey.

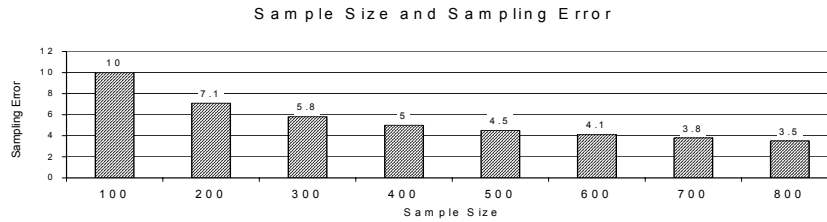
** Percentages are those respondents who say they would be bothered “a great deal” if they knew that this was common practice in New Jersey-- based on the total sample of 802.

In fact, most of those living in New Jersey would have strongly negative reactions if they thought this is how their state routinely does business. Between two-thirds and seven-in-ten say they would be bothered *a great deal* if they thought these practices characterized state decision making on public contracts; half would be very upset if they knew that fatcats could get a private meeting with their Governor.

In assessing the findings Zukin noted, “We are a state of county-based machine politics, fed by contributors who are fed by contracts, and this is a system that has been in place a long time in New Jersey. But it is a system with values that do not respect or represent the wishes of the citizenry, and one that is reinforcing public cynicism and the distance between officials and the public.”

BACKGROUND MEMO – RELEASE (EP142-8) March 2, 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:

“Overall, how would you rate the quality of government in New Jersey -- excellent, good, only fair, or poor?” [CG1]

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>DK/ Refused</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February 2003	1%	37%	44%	16%	2%	100%	(802)
<i>Party Affiliation</i>							
--Democrat	2	46	42	9	--	99	(254)
--Independent	--	33	42	22	2	99	(238)
--Republican	1	34	46	17	2	100	(205)
<i>Age</i>							
--18 - 29	--	39	43	15	3	100	(105)
--30 - 49	1	39	44	15	1	100	(358)
--50 and older	2	36	44	16	2	100	(317)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>							
--June 2002	4	43	42	9	2	100	(801)
--April 2001	5	49	37	6	3	100	(802)
--October 1984	8	53	31	5	2	99	(500)
--January 1981	4	36	48	10	2	100	(1003)

“Compared to most other states is the quality of government in New Jersey better, is it worse here, or is it about the same?” [CG2]

	<u>Better</u>	<u>Worst</u>	<u>About the Same</u>	<u>DK/Refused</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February 2003	16%	20%	51%	14%	101%	(802)
<i><u>Party Affiliation</u></i>						
--Democrat	21	14	53	12	100	(254)
--Independent	11	22	53	14	100	(238)
--Republican	13	28	46	13	100	(205)
<i><u>Age</u></i>						
--18 - 29	21	22	48	9	100	(105)
--30 - 49	15	20	50	14	99	(358)
--50 and older	14	18	53	16	101	(317)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>						
--June 2002	14	18	58	11	101	(801)
--April 2001	17	8	63	13	99	(802)
--October 1984	21	4	66	9	100	(500)

“How much political corruption would you say there is in New Jersey – a lot, some, only a little, or none at all?” [CG3]

	<u>A lot</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Only a Little</u>	<u>None at All</u>	<u>DK/Refused</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February 2003	38%	39%	14%	1%	7%	99%	(802)
<i><u>Party Affiliation</u></i>							
--Democrat	33	42	17	1	7	100	(254)
--Independent	44	33	17	1	5	100	(238)
--Republican	42	39	11	1	7	100	(205)
<i><u>Age</u></i>							
--18 - 29	37	25	26	3	9	100	(105)
--30 - 49	38	43	11	1	8	101	(358)
--50 and older	39	40	13	1	6	99	(317)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>							
--June 2002	33	51	8	1	7	100	(801)

“Corrupt politicians get more press attention than others, so it’s hard to tell how many are really corrupt.”] Out of 10 politicians, how many would you guess to be corrupt?” [CG4]

	<u>None</u>	<u>1-3</u>	<u>4-6</u>	<u>7-9</u>	<u>All 10</u>	<u>DK/Refused</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February 2003	1%	26%	34%	22%	6%	11%	100%	5.1	(802)
<i>Party Affiliation</i>									
--Democrat	2	26	39	21	5	7	100	4.9	(245)
--Independent	1	24	31	26	7	11	100	5.5	(238)
--Republican	1	34	33	16	5	12	101	4.7	(205)
<i>Age</i>									
--18 - 29	3	20	33	31	6	7	100	5.4	(105)
--30 - 49	1	27	35	20	7	9	99	5.1	(358)
--50 and older	2	28	32	18	5	16	101	4.8	(317)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>									
--June 2002	--	35	32	19	5	7	98	4.7	(801)
--September 1998	--	31	38	19	5	7	100	4.9	(403)
--February 1981	1	34	38	17	2	7	99	4.5	(990)

“IN GENERAL, which level of government would you say has more corruption – town and city government, county government, or state government?” [CG5]

	<u>Local</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>All Equally</u>	<u>DK/Refused</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February 2003	31%	17%	37%	8%	7%	100%	(802)
<i>Party Affiliation</i>							
--Democrat	30	16	36	8	10	100	(254)
--Independent	35	17	38	6	4	100	(238)
--Republican	24	21	41	9	5	100	(205)
<i>Age</i>							
--18 - 29	43	14	36	4	3	100	(105)
--30 - 49	30	17	39	7	6	99	(358)
--50 and older	26	17	37	10	9	99	(317)

“I’m going to read you some descriptions of how government may do business in New Jersey. Please just tell me if you think each *is a common practice*, happens *just once in a while*, or if it *doesn’t happen* in New Jersey. (READ ITEM) -- Is this common, happens just once in a while, or doesn’t happen?” [CG6]

February 2003	<u>Common practice</u>	<u>Happens once in a while</u>	<u>Doesn’t happen</u>	<u>Depends /DK/ Refused</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Those making large political contributions can get a private meeting with the Governor	60%	27%	5%	8%	100%	(802)
<u>Party Affiliation</u>						
--Democrat	61	29	3	7	100	(254)
--Independent	66	21	6	7	100	(238)
--Republican	59	29	4	9	101	(205)
<u>Age</u>						
--18 - 29	52	31	10	6	99	(105)
--30 - 49	63	26	5	6	100	(358)
--50 and older	61	26	2	11	100	(317)
Firms that do NOT make political contributions to government officials or political parties have no chance of getting some government contracts for buildings or services	36%	51%	8%	6%	101%	(802)
<u>Party Affiliation</u>						
--Democrat	36	47	10	7	100	(254)
--Independent	34	54	5	7	100	(238)
--Republican	37	50	10	3	100	(205)
<u>Age</u>						
--18 - 29	28	60	4	7	99	(105)
--30 - 49	36	51	9	4	100	(358)
--50 and older	38	47	8	7	100	(317)
Government gives contracts for some public works or services to private firms without any bidding on the project	32%	46%	10%	13%	101%	(802)
<u>Party Affiliation</u>						
--Democrat	35	46	8	11	100	(254)
--Independent	32	49	8	11	100	(238)
--Republican	28	46	14	12	100	(205)
<u>Age</u>						
--18 - 29	28	54	7	12	101	(105)
--30 - 49	34	41	14	11	100	(358)
--50 and older	31	47	7	14	99	(317)
Private firms that give donations to political campaigns and parties get preferential treatment in competing for government contracts	64%	29%	3%	4%	100%	(802)
<u>Party Affiliation</u>						
--Democrat	58	36	1	4	99	(254)
--Independent	69	26	1	4	100	(238)
--Republican	67	28	2	3	100	(205)
<u>Age</u>						
--18 - 29	64	30	1	4	99	(105)
--30 - 49	64	29	4	4	101	(358)
--50 and older	64	28	2	6	100	(317)

“Now let me read you these items again quickly. This time please tell me how much it would bother you if each of these situations was a common practice in New Jersey. (READ ITEM) -- IF THIS HAPPENED REGULARLY, would it bother you a great deal, a little, or not at all?” [CG7]

February 2003	<u>Bother a great deal</u>	<u>Bother a little</u>	<u>Not bother at all</u>	<u>DK/ Refused</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Those making large political contributions could get a private meeting with the Governor	50%	31%	17%	2%	100%	(802)
<i>Believes it is common practice</i>	58	31	11	--	100	(523)
<i>Party Affiliation</i>						
--Democrat	55	32	13	1	101	(254)
--Independent	49	33	17	1	100	(238)
--Republican	52	29	18	1	100	(205)
<i>Age</i>						
--18 - 29	37	32	31	--	100	(105)
--30 - 49	51	30	17	1	99	(358)
--50 and older	55	33	9	3	100	(317)
Firms that do NOT make political contributions to government officials or political parties have no chance to get some government contracts	71%	19%	9%	1%	100%	(802)
<i>Believes it is common practice</i>	76	16	8	--	100	(297)
<i>Party Affiliation</i>						
--Democrat	65	25	10	1	101	(254)
--Independent	75	15	9	1	100	(238)
--Republican	79	14	5	2	100	(205)
<i>Age</i>						
--18 - 29	64	27	9	--	100	(105)
--30 - 49	72	16	11	1	100	(358)
--50 and older	73	18	7	2	100	(317)
Government would give some contracts for public works or services to private firms without any bidding on the project	66%	22%	10%	2%	100%	(802)
<i>Believes it is common practice</i>	77	14	8	1	100	(261)
<i>Party Affiliation</i>						
--Democrat	64	24	10	2	100	(254)
--Independent	66	22	11	1	100	(238)
--Republican	73	18	6	2	99	(205)
<i>Age</i>						
--18 - 29	45	37	16	1	99	(105)
--30 - 49	69	22	8	1	100	(358)
--50 and older	73	16	8	3	100	(317)
Private firms that give donations to political campaigns and parties would get preferential treatment in competing for government contracts	71%	21%	7%	1%	100%	(802)
<i>Believes it is common practice</i>	77	17	5	1	100	(538)
<i>Party Affiliation</i>						
--Democrat	74	21	5	--	100	(254)
--Independent	68	22	8	1	99	(238)
--Republican	74	20	5	2	101	(205)
<i>Age</i>						
--18 - 29	56	31	13	--	100	(105)
--30 - 49	73	20	6	1	100	(358)
--50 and older	77	17	4	2	100	(317)