

# The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll

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## RELEASE INFORMATION

A story based on the survey findings presented in this release and background memo will appear in Sunday's *Star-Ledger*. Other newspapers may also use this information in their Sunday editions. Electronic media may release after 5:00 p.m. Saturday, June 29, 1991. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to the "*Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll*".

## OVERALL PESSIMISM IN NEW JERSEY SUBSIDES; RESIDENTS EVALUATE ELECTED OFFICIALS

Although a majority of New Jerseyans still feel things in the state have gone off "on the wrong track," there is a marked improvement from last fall when 3-in-4 state residents had this impression. In addition, according to the most recent *Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll*, both Governor Jim Florio and the state legislature receive "excellent" or "good" ratings from about 1-in-4 state residents. While the positive job performance rating of Governor Florio is basically unchanged, legislative ratings show some decline. On a national level, about 7-in-10 continue to give President George Bush positive ratings.

The telephone survey, conducted with 800 New Jerseyans between June 18 and June 24, 1991, also found that more state residents name programs they consider failures of the Florio administration than point out what they feel are successes. Taxes continue to be viewed by about 4-in-10 New Jerseyans as the administration's biggest failure while auto insurance leads the list of achievements.

### Overall climate in New Jersey

Overall, New Jerseyans are feeling somewhat more positive about their state than they were in the fall of 1990. While a majority of 55 percent still feel things in New Jersey

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"have pretty seriously gotten off on the wrong track," this is a 19 point change from the 74 percent who felt that way in the fall of 1990. In addition, there has been somewhat of an increase in the percentage of residents who feel that state government is interested in what the people think. In the current poll 48 percent say state government pays "a lot" (6%) or "some" (42%) attention to the people when it decides what to do, compared to 43 percent who felt this way in the fall of 1990.

"A year ago the situation in New Jersey was at a low point, when residents were hit with the recession and new taxes," commented Janice Ballou, Director of the Poll. "New Jerseyans have now had time to understand these changes and some feel things are getting back on course."

### **Job Performance Ratings**

While 24 percent of New Jersey residents give Governor Jim Florio a positive job performance rating of "excellent" (4%) or "good" (20%), 71 percent give him "only fair" (34%) or "poor" (37%) evaluations and 6 percent did not have an opinion. These ratings are about the same as the 22 percent positive and 73 percent negative ratings he received in the last poll (February 1991).

More Democrats (35%) than independents (25%) or Republicans (12%) give the Governor positive job performance ratings.

State residents also rated the job performances of the New Jersey Legislature and their State Senate and Assembly Representatives. Overall, 1-in-4 residents give the State Legislature positive ratings of "excellent" (2%) or "good" (23%) while 65 percent say "only fair" (45%) or "poor" (20%) and 9 percent did not know how to rate the legislature's performance. This is a 7 point decline in positive ratings from the 32 percent who rated the legislature as "excellent" or "good" last July.

Members of the State Senate and Assembly as individuals receive higher positive ratings than the legislature as a whole. Forty percent of New Jerseyans say that the representatives from their districts are doing an "excellent" (4%) or "good" (36%) job compared to 50 percent who say "only fair" (35%) or "poor" (15%) and 10 percent who did not offer a rating. This is 4 points less than the 44 percent who rated their state representatives positively about a year ago.

President George Bush continues to get positive evaluations from about 7-in-10 New Jerseyans. Sixty-nine percent feel the President is doing an "excellent" (24%) or "good" (45%)

job while 30 percent rate his performance as "only fair" (21%) or poor (9%). This is about the same as the 71 percent positive rating he received in February 1991.

New Jerseyans also rated Vice President Dan Quayle. Thirty-five percent give him positive ratings of "excellent" (6%) or "good" (29%), while 53 percent say his performance is "only fair" (36%) or "poor" (17%) and 13 percent report they do not know how to rate the Vice President. Since March 1990, Quayle's positive rating increased 8 points from 27 percent.

New Jerseyans were also asked to rate their own job performance as citizens. Forty-six percent give themselves positive ratings of "excellent" (8%) or "good" (38%) for the job they are doing taking part in activities such as voting, learning about candidates, paying attention to public issues, and attending public meetings. However, an almost equal percentage of 52 percent rate themselves as "only fair" (40%) or "poor" (12%).

### **Achievements/Failures of the Florio Administration**

New Jerseyans were given an opportunity to suggest the activities they feel the Florio administration has done that have been good or bad for the state. Since last year there have been some changes in the assessment of the accomplishments of the current administration. While in July 1990, 22 percent of Garden State residents named an accomplishment of the administration, the percentage increased to 34 percent in this recent poll. The main reason for the change is an increase from 8 percent to 15 percent in state residents' identification of the auto insurance program as an achievement of this administration. Other program areas named as being achievements such as the environment (4%), the budget (3%), taxes (4%), and education (2%) stayed about the same as last year. Also, 31 percent said the Florio administration had not done anything good for the state compared to 52 percent who felt this way in July 1990; 35 percent said they did not know of any accomplishments in this recent poll compared to 25 percent who did not offer an opinion last July.

On the other hand, there is an increase in the percentage of state residents who identify negative effects on the state since the Florio administration took over. In this poll 76 percent of the states' residents named an issue they feel is a failure of this administration compared to 64 percent who named one in July 1990. Taxes continue to be the main issue New Jerseyans view as being harmful to the state. Forty-three percent in this poll say taxes have been bad for the

state compared to 46 percent who felt this way in July 1990. In addition, the administration's action on auto insurance is named by 12 percent as being a failure which is a change from 7 percent who cited this in July 1990. Other programs that are viewed as being bad for the state such as the budget (4%) and education (4%) have stayed about the same. In addition, 5 percent in the June poll say that the Florio administration had not done anything bad for the state compared to 17 percent who felt this way in July 1990. The percentage of state residents who say they do not know of anything that the administration had done that has been a failure is 19 percent which is similar to the 18 percent last July.

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**BACKGROUND MEMO--RELEASE SL/EP34-1 (EP84-1), SUNDAY, JUNE 30, 1991**

The latest *Star-Ledger*/Eagleton Poll was conducted between June 18 and June 24, 1991, 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  $\pm 3.5$  percent. Sampling error is the probable difference in results between interviewing everyone in the population versus a scientific sample taken from that population. Sampling error does not take into account other possible sources of error inherent in any study of public opinion. The questions and figures referred to in this release are presented below. The location of each question on the actual questionnaire is in brackets.

"How would you rate the job Jim Florio 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>
<b><u>FLORIO</u></b>							
<b>June, 1991</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>101%</b>	<b>(800)</b>
<i>Party ID</i>							
--Democrat	6	29	40	21	4	100	(195)
--Independent	5	20	30	39	6	100	(340)
--Republican	0	12	36	46	6	100	(215)

**PAST SURVEYS**

February, 1991	3	19	35	38	4	99	(800)
September/October, 1990	3	15	33	45	5	101	(800)
July, 1990	4	19	36	32	8	99	(800)
March, 1990	8	34	34	14	10	100	(800)

"How would you rate the job the New Jersey State Legislature is doing--excellent, good, only fair or poor?" [Q.3]

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>June, 1991</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>(800)</b>
<b><u>PAST SURVEYS</u></b>							
July, 1990	4	28	42	16	11	101	(800)
March, 1990	2	31	45	13	9	100	(800)
March, 1989	2	34	41	12	10	99	(800)
October, 1987	3	41	38	4	14	100	(1,000)

"How good a job are the representatives from your district in the State Senate and Assembly doing--excellent, good, only fair or poor?" [Q.4]

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Depends/ Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>June, 1991</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(800)</b>
<b><u>PAST SURVEYS</u></b>							
July, 1990	8	36	29	12	15	100	(800)
October, 1987	8	43	31	7	11	100	(1,000)

"How would you rate the job George Bush is doing as President--excellent, good, only fair or poor?" [Q.5]

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b><u>BUSH</u></b>							
<b>June, 1991</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(800)</b>
<i>Party ID</i>							
--Democrat	19	36	27	17	0	99	(195)
--Independent	18	47	26	8	1	100	(340)
--Republican	40	52	6	2	0	100	(215)
<b><u>PAST SURVEYS</u></b>							
February, 1991	31	40	20	8	1	100	(800)
March, 1990	13	47	29	8	3	100	(800)
June, 1989	9	44	31	6	10	100	(800)

"How would you rate the job Dan Quayle is doing as Vice President--excellent, good, only fair or poor?" [Q.6]

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b><u>QUAYLE</u></b>							
<b>June, 1991</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>101%</b>	<b>800</b>
<b><u>PAST SURVEYS</u></b>							
March, 1990	3	24	35	20	17	99	(800)

"Thinking about the various activities in government and politics that citizens can take part in such as voting, learning about candidates, paying attention to public issues, and attending public meetings--overall, how would you rate the job you are doing as a citizen----excellent, good, only fair or poor?" [Q.7]

Only

Don't

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>June, 1991</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(800)</b>

**PAST SURVEYS**

February, 1991	10	39	38	13	—	100	(800)
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"Governor Florio has been in office about a year and a half. What would you say has been the Florio administration's greatest achievement? Is there anything Florio has done that you feel has been particularly good for the state?" [Q.8]

	<u>June, 1991</u>	<u>July, 1990</u>
--Has not done anything that is good for the state	31%	52%
--Did not know of anything that is good for the state	35	25
--Auto insurance	15	8
--Environment	4	4
--Budget	3	2
--Taxes	4	3
--Education	2	2
--Personal characteristics	1	1
--Other mentions	5	2
Total	100%	99%
(n)	(795)	(799)

"And, what could you say has been the biggest failure of the Florio administration? Is there anything Florio has done or failed to do that has been bad for the state?" [Q.9]

	<u>June, 1991</u>	<u>July, 1990</u>
--Has not done anything that is bad for the state	5%	17%
--Did not know of anything that is bad for the state	19	18
--Taxes	43	46
--Budget	4	2
--Education	4	3
--Auto insurance	12	7

--Personal characteristics	4	1
--Gun control	1	1
--Other mentions	8	4
Total	100%	99%
(n)	(798)	(800)

"Generally speaking, would you say things in New Jersey are going in the right direction, or have they pretty seriously gotten off on the wrong track?" [Q.12]

	<u>Right Direction</u>	<u>Wrong Track</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>June, 1991</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(800)</b>
<i><u>Party ID</u></i>					
--Democrat	50	41	10	101	(195)
--Independent	33	60	7	100	(340)
--Republican	34	61	5	100	(215)

**PAST SURVEYS**

September/October, 1990	19	74	7	100	(800)
<i><u>Party ID</u></i>					
--Democrat	28	65	8	101	(232)
--Independent	17	77	6	100	(305)
--Republican	11	83	6	100	(226)

"How much attention do you feel your state government pays to what the people think when it decides what to do--a lot of attention, some attention, not much attention, or no attention?" [Q.13]

	<u>A Lot Of Attention</u>	<u>Some Attention</u>	<u>Not Much Attention</u>	<u>No Attention</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>June, 1991</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>(800)</b>
<i><u>Party ID</u></i>							
--Democrat	9	49	32	9	2	101	(195)--
Independent	6	43	34	14	2	99	(340)--
Republican	6	38	47	9	0	100	(215)
<b><u>PAST SURVEYS</u></b>							
September/October, 1990	7	36	39	16	1	99	(800)
<i><u>Party ID</u></i>							



--Democrat	12	43	32	11	1	99	(232)--
Independent	4	36	42	17	1	100	(305)--
Republican	5	27	44	22	2	100	(226)