

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, September 21, 1991. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to the "Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll".

POCKETBOOK CONCERNS TOP 1991 ELECTION ISSUES; ELECTED OFFICIALS GET LOW PERFORMANCE SCORES

With about six weeks left until the 1991 state assembly and senate elections, taxes and the economy top New Jerseyans' list as the most important issues facing the next New Jersey Legislature.

In addition, the latest *Star Ledger*/Eagleton Poll found that only about 1-in-4 state residents give positive job performance ratings to the Governor and to the New Jersey State Legislature.

The telephone survey, conducted with 800 New Jerseyans from September 11 to 19, 1991, also found that New Jerseyans are more positive about Governor Florio's handling of the environment, car insurance, and state taxes than they were a year ago, but positive evaluations of his management of the budget and funding for New Jersey's public schools has stayed about the same.

In the past four months there has been a return to a more pessimistic view of New Jersey. About 6-in-10 New Jerseyans now say that things in the state are off on the wrong track.

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ATTENTION RADIO STATIONS:

Audio is available after 5:00 P.M. on Saturday, September 21, 1991 from (908)932-3605 (Rutgers Feature Phone).

Most Important Issue: Taxes and the Economy

Taxes and the economy are at the top of the list of eleven issues state residents suggest as the most important problems confronting the candidates for the New Jersey Senate and Assembly. About half (45%) of the state's residents name either taxes (25%) or the economy (20%), as the most

important problem facing the state, while 8 percent suggest education issues, 8 percent say budget issues, and 7 percent identify the environment as the key problem facing legislators elected in 1991. Other issues suggested by New Jerseyans are auto insurance (4%), social issues and services (4%), drugs (4%), crime (3%), growth and development (1%), government performance (1%) and transportation (1%).

Ken Dautrich, Associate Director of the Poll, commented, "The Poll shows that pocketbook issues are the top concerns of residents right now, and this isn't surprising given the performance of the economy over the past year."

Job Performance Ratings

Overall, New Jerseyans are critical of the job performances of the Governor and the State Legislature. While 23 percent of the state's residents give Governor Jim Florio a positive job performance rating of "excellent" (3%) or "good" (20%), 73 percent give him negative evaluations of "only fair" (39%) or "poor" (34%). The positive ratings for the Governor have stayed about the same since the July 1990 poll that was taken right after the new sales tax program went into effect.

More Democrats (38%) than independents (16%) or Republicans (17%) give the Governor positive job performance ratings.

The job performance of the New Jersey Legislature is about the same as the Governor. Twenty-two percent rate the Legislature as "excellent" (2%) and "good" (20%) while 46 percent say "only fair" and 17 percent "poor", and the remaining 15 percent did not give an opinion.

New Jerseyans' feelings about the job performance of the Legislature are not partisan, both Democratic and Republican legislators receive about the same evaluations. Twenty-four percent give the Democratic legislators a positive rating of "excellent" (3%) or "good" (21%) compared to a 25 percent positive rating of "excellent" (1%) or "good" (24%) for the Republicans.

However, New Jerseyans are more positive about those in the State Senate and Assembly who represent them. Forty-one percent say their own elected officials are doing an "excellent" (5%) or "good" (36%) job, compared to 31 percent who feel they have done an "only fair" (31%) or poor (13%) job, with the remaining 15 percent not offering an opinion.

Governor's Performance Rating on Specific Issues

Governor Florio receives his most positive performance rating for the way he has protected the environment. Forty-three percent give him an "excellent" (8%) or "good" (35%) rating while 33 percent say "only fair", 15 percent "poor", and 9 percent did not give an opinion.

About 1-in-4 give the Governor an "excellent" (6%) or "good" (19%) assessment on his handling of the car insurance problems compared to 70 percent who say it is either "only fair" (28%) or "poor" (42%). About 1-in-5 state residents offer positive ratings to the Governor's handling of problems with the state budget, state taxes, property taxes and funding

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for public schools in the state. Twenty-two percent rate the Governor's handling of funding for the public schools as "excellent" (2%) or "good" (20%); he receives a 17 percent positive assessment of "excellent" (2%) or "good" (15%) on his handling of problems with the state budget; 18 percent rate the Governor's management of property taxes "excellent" (3%) or "good" (15%); and 16 percent give Florio "excellent" (2%) or "good" (14%) ratings for his handling of state taxes.

In the past year there has been some improvement in New Jerseyans' evaluation of Governor Jim Florio's management of three specific issue areas--the environment, the state's car insurance problems and state taxes. There has been a 13 point increase in his positive performance rating for protecting the environment, from 30 percent to 43 percent. New Jerseyans' excellent and good ratings of Florio's handling the car insurance problem has increased 9 points from 16 percent to 25 percent and the positive ranking for his handling of state taxes increased 5 points from 11 percent to 16 percent.

Overall Mood in the State

In the last four months, pessimism about the direction of the state has increased. However, pessimism is not at the high mark of 74 percent that it reached a year ago. Sixty-three percent now feel things in the state have gone off "on the wrong track", which is an eight percentage point increase from 55 percent who felt that way in June 1991.

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BACKGROUND MEMO--RELEASE SL/EP35-1 (EP85-1), SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 1991

The latest *Star-Ledger*/Eagleton Poll was conducted between September 11 and September 19, 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 ± 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> |
|----------------------|------------------|-------------|----------------------|-------------|-----------------------|--------------|------------|
| <u>FLORIO</u> | | | | | | | |
| September, 1991 | | 3% 5% | | 20% 101% | | 39% (800) | 34% |
| <u>Party ID</u> | | | | | | | |
| --Democrat | 7 | 31 | 39 | 17 | 7 | 101 | (217) |
| --Independent | 3 | 13 | 41 | 38 | 6 | 101 | (318) |
| --Republican | 0 | 17 | 34 | 48 | 1 | 100 | (223) |

PAST SURVEYS

| | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|---|----|----|----|----|-----|-------|
| June, 1991 | 4 | 20 | 34 | 37 | 6 | 101 | (800) |
| 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 Governor Florio's handling of (READ ITEM)...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> |
|--|------------------|-------------|----------------------|-------------|-----------------------|--------------|------------|
| The state's car insurance problems? [Q.3a] | | | | | | | |
| September, 1991 | | 6% 5% | | 19% 101% | | 28% (800) | 42% |
| <u>PAST SURVEYS</u> | | | | | | | |
| Sept./Oct., 1990 | 3 | 13 | 24 | 53 | 7 | 100 | (800) |
| July, 1990 | 5 | 16 | 25 | 41 | 13 | 100 | (800) |

Problems with the state
budget? [Q.3b]

September, 1991 **2** **15** **40** **34** **8** **99** **(800)**

PAST SURVEYS

Sept./Oct., 1990 3 12 28 50 7 100 (800)

July, 1990 3 18 32 33 14 100 (800)

State taxes? [Q.3c]

September, 1991 **2** **14** **31** **50** **3** **100** **(800)**

PAST SURVEYS

Sept./Oct., 1990 2 9 19 67 3 100 (799)

July, 1990 2 11 22 58 6 99 (799)

Property taxes? [Q.3d]

September, 1991 **3** **15** **26** **46** **11** **101** **(800)**

Funding for public schools
in the state? [Q.3e]

September, 1991 **2** **20** **32** **30** **17** **101** **(800)**

PAST SURVEYS

Sept./Oct., 1990 5 17 28 36 15 101 (800)

July, 1990 5 23 26 29 18 101 (800)

Protecting the environment?
[Q.3f]

September, 1991 **8** **35** **33** **15** **9** **100** **(800)**

PAST SURVEYS

Sept./Oct., 1990 5 25 31 20 19 100 (800)

July, 1990 7 35 26 12 20 100 (800)

"How would you rate the job the New Jersey State Legislature is doing--excellent, good, only fair or poor?" [Q.4]

| | <u>Excellent</u> | <u>Good</u> | <u>Only Fair</u> | <u>Poor</u> | <u>Don't Know</u> | <u>Total</u> | <u>(n)</u> |
|------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|--------------|----------------------------|
| September, 1991 | | 2% 15% | | 20% 100% | | 46% | 17% (800) |

PAST SURVEYS

| | | | | | | | |
|---------------|---|----|----|----|----|-----|---------|
| June, 1991 | 2 | 23 | 45 | 20 | 9 | 99 | (800) |
| 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) |

"And, how would you rate the job the Democrats in the New Jersey State Legislature are doing--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> |
|------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|--------------|----------------------------|
| September, 1991 | | 3% 13% | | 21% 100% | | 41% | 22% (800) |

"How would you rate the job the Republicans in the New Jersey State Legislature are doing--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> |
|------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|--------------|----------------------------|
| September, 1991 | | 1% 14% | | 24% 100% | | 44% | 17% (800) |

"How good a job are the representatives from your district in the State Senate and Assembly doing--excellent, good, only fair or poor?" [Q.7]

| | <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> |
|------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------|----------------------------|
| September, 1991 | | 5% 15% | | 36% 100% | | 31% | 13% (800) |

PAST SURVEYS

| | | | | | | | |
|------------|---|----|----|----|----|-----|-------|
| June, 1991 | 4 | 36 | 35 | 15 | 10 | 100 | (800) |
|------------|---|----|----|----|----|-----|-------|

| | | | | | | | |
|---------------|---|----|----|----|----|-----|---------|
| July, 1990 | 8 | 36 | 29 | 12 | 15 | 100 | (800) |
| October, 1987 | 8 | 43 | 31 | 7 | 11 | 100 | (1,000) |

"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.8]

| | <u>Right Direction</u> | <u>Wrong Track</u> | <u>Don't Know</u> | <u>Total</u> | <u>(n)</u> |
|------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------|------------|
| September, 1991 | | 32% | | 63% | 5% |
| | | 100% | (800) | | |

PAST SURVEYS

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------|----|----|---|-----|-------|
| June, 1991 | 37 | 55 | 8 | 100 | (800) |
| September/October, 1990 | 19 | 74 | 7 | 100 | (800) |

"What do you think is the most important problem facing New Jersey that whoever is elected as your state Senate and Assembly representatives will have to face?" [Q.10a]

| | <u>September, 1991</u> |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| Taxes | 25% |
| Economy | 20 |
| Education | 8 |
| Budget, Budget Deficit | 8 |
| Environment | 7 |
| Auto Insurance | 4 |
| Social Issues and Services | 4 |
| Drugs | 4 |
| Crime | 3 |
| Growth and Development; Housing | 1 |
| Government Performance | 1 |
| Transportation | 1 |
| Other issues | 7 |
| None/Don't Know | 7 |
| TOTAL | 100% |
| (n) | (800) |