

# 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 28, 1991. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to the "Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll".

## NEW JERSEYANS SPEAK OUT ABOUT TAXES

A majority of New Jersey residents feel that the July 1990 tax program was necessary to balance the state budget; however, 6-in-10 state residents do not think these changes are acceptable. In addition, close to two-thirds remember feeling angry when they first heard about the new tax program and more than half say they are angry now.

About 6-in-10 New Jerseyans report that the amount of state sales taxes and local property taxes they pay increased. Also, a majority report paying more state income taxes. Local property taxes are named by about half of the state's residents as the tax they feel is the most unfair.

The latest *Star Ledger*/Eagleton Poll which was conducted by telephone with 800 New Jersey adults between September 11 and 19, 1991 also found that 3-in-4 residents do not know if their state representatives voted for or against the July 1990 tax package. Three-in-four residents say taxes are only one of several issues they will use to decide who to vote for in the upcoming November legislative elections.

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### ATTENTION RADIO STATIONS:

Audio is available after 5:00 P.M. on Saturday, September 28, 1991 from (908)932-3605 (Rutgers Feature Phone).

New Jerseyans Assess Taxes

Half of the state's residents say that the July 1990 state sales tax and state income tax increases were necessary to balance the state budget. Fifty-two percent say the increase and expansion of the state sales tax was "very" (11%) or "somewhat" (41%) necessary compared to 43 percent who feel it was "not very" (20%) or "not at all" (23%) necessary. A similar 53 percent say the state income tax change was "very" (11%) or "somewhat" (42%) necessary, while 43 percent say it was "not very" (21%) or "not at all" (22%) necessary.

However, 59 percent of the state's residents say the increase in the state sales tax is "not very" (30%) or "not at all" (29%) acceptable, compared to 39 percent who feel it is "very" (3%) or "somewhat" (36%) acceptable. This is a decline of 7 points from the 66 percent who felt the change in the state sales tax was unacceptable in July 1990. The acceptance of the state income tax has experienced a similar change. Currently 57 percent say the state income tax is "not very" (31%) or "not at all" acceptable (26%), which is an 11 point decline from 68 percent a year ago.

"There are different levels of feelings about taxes," commented Janice Ballou, Director of the Poll. "On the one hand there is a responsibility to balance the state's budget, but on the other hand people have to balance their own budgets."

The majority of New Jerseyans say they are now personally paying more state sales taxes, state income taxes, and local property taxes since the July 1990 tax programs went into effect. While 62 percent say they are personally paying more state sales taxes, 30 percent are paying about the same, and 3 percent feel they are paying less. Fifty-four percent say they are

paying more state income taxes, 32 percent about the same, and 3 percent think they are paying less state income taxes. In addition, 59 percent of the residents in the state feel their property taxes have gone up in the past year, 15 percent have about the same local property taxes, and 9 percent have seen a reduction.

Overall, there is more consensus on which tax is the worst than on the one that is the fairest. Forty-seven percent of the state's residents say local property taxes are the most unfair, followed by the federal income tax (18%), the state sales tax (18%), and the state income tax (11%). In selecting

the tax that is the fairest, 27 percent say it is the federal income tax, followed by the state income tax (19%), the state sales tax (18%), and local property taxes (13%). In addition, 14 percent feel that there are not any fair taxes.

#### Reactions to the July 1990 Tax Program

When they first heard about the new tax program in July 1990, 64 percent of the state's residents remember feeling "very" (26%) or "somewhat" (38%) angry compared to 25 percent who recall feeling "not very" (12%) or "not at all" angry (13%). Now 55 percent say they are "very" (16%) or "somewhat" angry (39%) about the tax program and 40 percent are "not very" (23%) or are "not at all" angry (17%).

New Jerseyans give a variety of reasons for their initial feelings about the tax package. In recalling why they felt angry, 29 percent say they did not want to pay any more taxes, 21 percent report the taxes were not fair or not affordable, and 15 percent name wasteful spending. In addition, 9 percent did not think the new taxes were necessary, 7 percent did not like the way the tax program was introduced to the people, and 3 percent felt angry because politicians do not do what they promise.

Among the state's residents who did not feel angry about the tax package, 39 percent say they felt this way because the taxes are necessary. In addition, 23 percent were not angry because they did not think the new tax program would result in any changes for them and 10 percent saw the new taxes as inescapable.

New Jerseyans who are the most likely to remember feeling "very" or "somewhat" angry in July 1990 and still feel angry now are independents, married residents with family incomes that are \$70,000 or more, residents in Central New Jersey, and residents who live in the newer suburbs.

#### Taxes and Elected Officials

Governor Jim Florio is identified by 51 percent of the state's residents as the person who is most responsible for the changes in New Jersey taxes. In addition, 14 percent cite the Democratic legislators as being the most responsible, 10 percent feel the Governor and both parties in the legislature share the responsibility, 7 percent say it was the Republican legislators, and 6 percent feel Governor Florio and the Democratic legislators initiated the changes in the tax package.

However, 3-in-4 state residents do not know how the two state assembly representatives in their district voted on the July 1990 tax package, 12 percent think both voted for it, 11 percent say both voted against it, and 3 percent say one voted for and one voted against the tax package. Knowledge about the tax vote of their state senator is similar. Seventy-four percent did not know if their senator voted for or against the tax package, 13 percent think their senator voted for it and 13 percent say their senator voted against it.

Taxes are not the only issue New Jerseyans will consider in their decision to vote. Seventy-four percent say that taxes are one of several important issues they will use to decide who to vote for, 13 percent say it is the single most important issue, and 9 percent do not see it as an important issue.

When it comes to raising taxes, 59 percent of the state's residents do not think there is any difference between having the Democrats or the Republicans in control of the state legislature. However, 23 percent say taxes are more likely to increase with a legislature controlled by the Democrats and 10 percent feel this way about the Republicans.

**BACKGROUND MEMO--RELEASE SL/EP36-2 (EP86-2), SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 1991**

The latest *Star-Ledger*/Eagleton Poll was conducted between October 20 and 30, 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 at a 95 percent confidence interval. 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.

"Is your general impression of George Bush favorable or unfavorable, or don't you have an opinion about him? Is that very (favorable/unfavorable? or somewhat (favorable/unfavorable?" [Q.29]

	<u>Very Favorable</u>	<u>Somewhat Favorable</u>	<u>Somewhat Unfavorable</u>	<u>Very Unfavorable</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>October, 1991 (Bush)</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>101%</b>	<b>(800)</b>
<i><u>Party ID, 1991</u></i>							
--Democrat	14	22	22	26	16	100	(225)
--Independent	24	34	12	16	15	101	(303)
--Republican	50	28	10	1	11	100	(242)
<b><u>PAST SURVEYS</u></b>							
June, 1989 (Bush)	19	35	7	6	33	99	(800)
<i><u>Party ID, 1989</u></i>							
--Democrat	7	30	11	11	42	101	(270)
--Independent	16	38	7	6	35	102	(276)
--Republican	41	39	2	3	15	100	(220)
April, 1984 (Regan)	23	26	12	16	23	100	(804)

"How would you rate the job George Bush is doing as President--excellent, good, only fair or poor?" [Q.30a]

	<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>BUSH</u>							
<b>October, 1991</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(800)</b>
<u>Party ID</u>							
--Democrat	7	27	45	19	2	100	(225)
--Independent	9	47	30	13	--	99	(303)
--Republican	30	48	18	2	2	100	(242)
<b><u>PAST SURVEYS</u></b>							
June, 1991	24	45	21	9	1	100	(800)
<u>Party ID</u>							
--Democrat	19	36	27	17	--	99	(195)
--Independent	18	47	26	8	1	100	(340)
--Republican	40	52	6	2	--	100	(215)
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 his handling of the nation's foreign affairs--excellent, good, only fair or poor?" [Q.30b]

	<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>BUSH</u>							
<b>October, 1991</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>101%</b>	<b>(800)</b>
<u>Party ID, 1991</u>							
--Democrat	14	33	30	16	7	100	(225)
--Independent	24	35	25	12	5	101	(303)
--Republican	36	40	18	3	3	100	(242)
<b><u>PAST SURVEYS</u></b>							
March, 1990	16	43	31	7	4	101	(800)
<u>Party ID, 1990</u>							
--Democrat	7	36	44	9	4	100	(265)
--Independent	16	46	27	9	2	100	(273)
--Republican	28	49	16	2	5	100	(239)
June, 1989	24	45	21	9	1	100	(800)
<u>Party ID, 1989</u>							
--Democrat	3	33	44	13	7	100	(270)
--Independent	5	44	38	4	9	100	(276)

--Republican	26	44	22	3	4	99	(220)
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"And how would you rate Bush's handling of the problems of the economy?" [Q.30c]

	<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>October, 1991</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(800)</b>
<i><u>Party ID, 1991</u></i>							
--Democrat	--	11	30	57	2	100	(225)
--Independent	1	13	41	44	1	100	(303)
--Republican	5	33	37	20	5	100	(242)

**PAST SURVEYS**

March, 1990	3	32	45	17	3	100	(800)
<i><u>Party ID, 1990</u></i>							
--Democrat	2	26	46	23	3	100	(265)
--Independent	4	24	50	20	2	100	(273)
--Republican	5	49	38	5	3	100	(239)
June, 1989	4	30	41	16	9	100	(800)
<i><u>Party ID, 1989</u></i>							
--Democrat	2	18	45	27	8	100	(270)
--Independent	3	30	43	15	9	100	(276)
--Republican	8	49	32	5	6	100	(220)

"How do you rate his handling of social problems in this country--excellent, good, only fair, or poor? [Q.30d]

	<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>October, 1991</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(800)</b>
<i><u>Party ID, 1991</u></i>							
--Democrat	2	12	29	52	5	100	(225)
--Independent	3	12	40	41	4	100	(303)
--Republican	7	32	37	21	3	100	(242)
<b><u>PAST SURVEYS</u></b>							
March, 1990	3	29	43	22	3	100	(800)
<i><u>Party ID, 1990</u></i>							
--Democrat	1	29	38	29	3	100	(265)
--Independent	4	25	48	22	1	100	(273)
--Republican	6	35	43	11	5	100	(239)
June, 1989	3	27	43	17	10	100	(800)

Party ID, 1989

--Democrat	2	19	43	25	10	99	(270)
--Independent	1	22	50	17	9	99	(276)
--Republican	6	45	35	7	6	99	(220)

"Thinking back over George Bush's first 1,000 days in office, do you think he deserves to be re-elected for a second term, or not? [Q.31]

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Depends</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>October, 1991</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>101%</b>	<b>(800)</b>

Party ID

--Democrat	24	53	11	11	99	(225)
--Independent	42	39	11	7	99	(303)
--Republican	81	9	6	4	100	(242)

"There will be a presidential election about one year from now. Do you think you will vote for Bush the Republican, or the Democratic party's candidate in next year's presidential election? [Q.32]

	<u>Bush</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Depends On Democratic Candidate</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>October, 1991</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>(800)</b>

Party ID

--Democrat	8	52	23	17	100	(225)
--Independent	28	18	32	22	100	(302)
--Republican	75	4	11	9	99	(242)

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

	<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>October, 1991</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>101%</b>	<b>(800)</b>

Party ID

--Democrat  
--Independent  
--Republican

PAST SURVEYS

June, 1991	6	29	36	17	13	101	(800)
March, 1990	3	24	35	20	17	99	(800)