

# 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, February 8, 1992. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to "The Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll."

## SALES TAX ROLLBACKS REJECTED IF STATE SERVICES REDUCED; PROGRAM SPENDING PREFERENCES LISTED

A solid majority of New Jerseyans disapprove of the proposed state sales tax rollback from 7 to 6 percent if it results in a reduction of state services. However, without a reduction in services, 7-in-10 state residents approve of the one percent sales tax repeal.

New Jerseyans have definite preferences for how they want their tax dollars spent. Leading a list of ten state and local government services are health care programs and job training and employment programs.

In the latest *Star-Ledger*/Eagleton Poll, conducted by telephone with 800 New Jersey adults between January 20 and 27, 1992, 7-in-10 want to balance the state budget by reducing spending rather than increasing taxes.

### State Sales Tax Rollback

Overall, 59 percent of the state's residents "strongly" (34%) or "mildly" (25%) disapprove of the state sales tax rollback if the consequence is a reduction in state services and 35 percent say they "strongly" (20%) or "mildly" (15%) approve. However, there is a 34 point increase in approval when the repeal is not connected to a reduction in state services.

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### ATTENTION RADIO STATIONS:

Audio is available after 5:00 P.M. on Saturday, February 8, 1992, from (908)932-3605 (Rutgers Feature Phone).

The overall idea of a tax repeal is approved by 69 percent of New Jersey residents "strongly" (46%) or "mildly" (23%), while 28 percent "strongly" (15%) or "mildly" (13%) disapprove.

In general, all three partisan groups show similar support for the rollback. Republicans (71%) and Democrats (69%) are somewhat more likely than independents (65%) to support the overall idea of a sales tax rollback. The gap between partisan groups widens when the rollback is linked to fewer services. Republicans (43%) are the most likely to continue to approve of the rollback compared to independents (35%) and Democrats (27%). The largest decline in support is among Democrats whose approval of the rollback drops 42 points when a reduction in services is considered. Among the independents there is a 30 point decline and a 28 point drop among Republicans.

"It's obvious that no one likes to pay taxes," commented Janice Ballou Director of the Poll.

"However, the public does see a value in the services provided by the state. It's the perceived waste in government that produces dissatisfaction."

### **Spending Priorities**

Health care programs and job training and employment programs lead the list of taxpayer priorities for how state and local government should spend their money. A strong majority of 76 percent say government should spend more for health care programs and 71 percent think more should be spent on job training and employment programs.

A majority also feels there should be increased spending on programs for the elderly (63%), public grade and high schools (59%), and programs for the poor (58%).

Fewer state residents want more spent on environmental programs (47%), law enforcement (46%), and public colleges and universities (43%).

Support for more spending is lowest for streets and highways (35%) and public transportation (32%).

Over the past three years there have been changes in the percentage of state residents who want to see increased spending for specific programs. Since 1989 there has been a 25 point drop in the percentage who want more government funding for environmental programs; and support for more spending on programs for the poor is down 10 points.

Spending preferences for transportation programs have also decreased in the past three years. The percentage of New Jerseyans saying more should be spent on streets and highways is down 13 points since 1989 and 8 points since 1990; public transportation programs is about the same as in 1990, but down 8 points since 1989.

Increased financing for programs for the elderly, public grade and high schools, and public colleges and universities is about the same now as in the past three years.

### **Balancing the Budget**

To balance the state budget, 7-in-10 New Jerseyans prefer to have a reduction in spending while 22 percent favor an increase in taxes. This is a 5 point increase from 1990 when 65 percent wanted spending held down to balance the budget.

Republicans (74%) are more likely than independents (71%) or Democrats (66%) to want reduced spending rather than a tax increase. While Republican support for a reduction in spending is about the same as two years ago, there is a 7 point increase among Democrats and a 6 point increase among independents.

The solutions New Jerseyans offer to reduce spending are a reduction in state jobs and salaries (29%), cutting back a specific program (22%), and the elimination of waste and general spending cuts (13%). Twenty-five percent did not offer any suggestions (4%) or did not know (21%) how to reduce spending.

## BACKGROUND MEMO — RELEASE SL/EP37-2 (EP87-2), SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 1992

The latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton* Poll was conducted between January 20 and 27, 1992, 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.

"As you know, most of the money government spends comes from the taxes you and others pay. For each of the following, please tell me whether you think state and local government here in New Jersey should be spending more, less, or about the same as now." [Q.25]

	<u>More</u>	<u>Same</u>	<u>Less</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<u>Health Care Programs</u>						
--January, 1992	76%	17%	5%	2%	100%	(799)
<u>Job Training and Employment Programs</u>						
--January, 1992	71	21	5	3	100	(799)
<u>Programs for Elderly</u>						
--January, 1992	63	32	4	2	101	(799)
--March, 1990	63	32	3	2	100	(800)
--March, 1989	67	28	3	3	101	(800)
--February, 1986	75	21	3	2	101	(600)
--February, 1981	72	22	3	2	99	(1,003)
<u>Public Grade &amp; High Schools</u>						
--January, 1992	59	30	9	2	100	(799)
--March, 1990	58	33	7	2	100	(800)
--March, 1989	62	31	3	4	100	(800)
--February, 1986	54	37	6	3	100	(600)
--February, 1981	52	36	8	4	100	(1,003)
<u>Programs for Poor*</u>						
--January, 1992	58	29	10	2	99	(800)
--March, 1989	68	23	5	4	100	(800)
--February, 1986	62	29	6	3	100	(600)
--February, 1981	50	31	14	5	100	(1,003)

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(Q.25 cont'd.)

	<u>More</u>	<u>Same</u>	<u>Less</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<u>Environmental Programs*</u>						
-- <b>January, 1992</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>(800)</b>
--March, 1989	72	21	3	4	100	(800)
--February, 1986	62	27	6	5	100	(600)
--February, 1981	53	32	9	6	100	(1,003)
<u>Law Enforcement**</u>						
-- <b>January, 1992</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>(800)</b>
--March, 1990	46	46	7	1	100	(799)
--March, 1989	51	42	4	3	100	(800)
--February, 1986	43	47	8	3	101	(600)
--February, 1981	55	36	6	3	100	(1,003)
<u>Public Colleges &amp; Universities</u>						
-- <b>January, 1992</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>(800)</b>
--March, 1990	46	42	8	3	99	(800)
--March, 1989	49	38	8	5	100	(799)
--February, 1986	44	44	8	4	100	(600)
--February, 1981	45	37	11	7	100	(1,003)
<u>Streets &amp; Highways</u>						
-- <b>January, 1992</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>(800)</b>
--March, 1990	43	46	10	1	100	(800)
--March, 1989	48	43	8	2	101	(800)
--February, 1986	56	35	8	1	100	(599)
--February, 1981	44	44	9	3	100	(1,003)
<u>Public Transportation</u>						
-- <b>January, 1992</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>(800)</b>
--March, 1990	35	48	13	4	100	(800)
--March, 1989	40	45	10	6	101	(798)
--February, 1986	45	40	11	4	100	(600)
--February, 1981	58	28	9	6	101	(1,003)

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\*Not asked in March, 1990.

\*\*Prior years was asked as "Police Force."

"As you may know, the state constitution requires that New Jersey has a balanced budget each year.

To balance the state budget next year, if you had to choose between reducing spending for government services, or increasing taxes to keep government services at current levels, which would you prefer?" [Q.26]

	<u>Reduce Spending</u>	<u>Increase Taxes</u>	<u>Both</u>	<u>Depends</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>January, 1992</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(799)</b>
<i><u>Party ID</u></i>							
--Democrat	66	23	1	1	9	100	(192)
--Independent	71	24	--	2	3	100	(350)
--Republican	74	18	2	3	3	100	(225)

**PAST SURVEYS**

March, 1990	65	27	3	3	2	100	(800)
<i><u>Party ID</u></i>							
--Democrat	59	30	4	3	2	98	(265)
--Independent	65	29	1	2	2	99	(273)
--Republican	75	20	2	1	2	100	(239)

"What is one thing you would like the state government to do to reduce spending?" [Q.27]

	<u>%</u>
--Reduction in state jobs and salaries	29
--Mentioned a specific program cutback	22
--Eliminate waste; cut spending	13
--Other	11
--No suggestions	4
--Don't know	21
TOTAL	101%
(n)	(543)

"The Republicans who were elected to the legislature say they will roll back the state sales tax from 7 to 6 percent. Overall, do you approve or disapprove of this state sales tax rollback? (PROBE: Do you mildly or strongly (approve/disapprove) of the roll back?)" [Q.28]

	<u>Strongly Approve</u>	<u>Mildly Approve</u>	<u>Mildly Disapprove</u>	<u>Strongly Disapprove</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>January, 1992</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>101%</b>	<b>(800)</b>
<i>Party ID</i>							
--Democrat	41	28	10	19	2	100	(193)
--Independent	46	19	14	17	3	99	(350)
--Republican	46	25	13	11	5	100	(225)

"Rolling back the state sales tax may cause a budget deficit that could result in a reduction of state services. Do you approve or disapprove of the sales tax rollback if it results in a reduction of services? (PROBE: Do you mildly or strongly (approve/disapprove)?" [Q.29]

	<u>Strongly Approve</u>	<u>Mildly Approve</u>	<u>Mildly Disapprove</u>	<u>Strongly Disapprove</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>January, 1992</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>101%</b>	<b>(800)</b>
<i>Party ID</i>							
--Democrat	14	13	26	37	10	100	(193)
--Independent	21	14	26	36	4	101	(350)
--Republican	25	18	22	28	7	100	(225)