

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, May 2, 1992. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to "*The Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll*."

ECONOMIC ISSUES TOP PUBLIC CONCERN

LEADERS' PERFORMANCE RATINGS REMAIN LOW

In the past year, economic issues have surpassed taxes on New Jerseyans' list of important issues facing the state. According to the most recent *Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll*, 2-in-5 name economic issues compared to 1-in-5 who say taxes are their chief concern.

In addition, the latest poll found that the job performance ratings of the Governor, and President Bush are basically unchanged since January. Governor Jim Florio receives "excellent" or "good" ratings from about 1-in-4 state residents and President George Bush's performance is evaluated as "excellent" or "good" by 36 percent. The New Jersey State Legislature receives positive ratings from 1-in-5 state residents.

The telephone survey, conducted with 800 New Jerseyans from April 22 to April 30, 1992, also found that the overall mood of the public in New Jersey is still pessimistic with about 6-in-10 state residents reporting they feel things in the state are "on the wrong track."

ATTENTION RADIO STATIONS:

Audio is available after 5:00 P.M. on Saturday, May 2, 1992, from (908)932-3605 (Rutgers Feature Phone).

MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES: THE ECONOMY DOMINATES

Over the past year the attention of New Jersey residents has shifted from taxes to other economic concerns. The percentage naming economic issues has tripled from 13 percent in February, 1991 to 40 percent. In contrast, those mentioning taxes as the most important state issue has declined 23 points from 41 percent to 18 percent. Other issues are named by about 1-in-10 New Jerseyans as being the most important: social issues and services (10%), and the environment (7%). Fewer state residents identify education (5%), auto insurance (5%), the performance of government (2%), and abortion (2%) as the most important issue facing the state. "In the past year the uncertain economic situation cast a long shadow," commented Janice Ballou, Director of the Poll. "Economic issues such as job security, have a direct impact on individuals so it is not surprising they have become the top concern."

GUBERNATORIAL JOB PERFORMANCE RATINGS

Governor Jim Florio continues to get positive job performance ratings from about 1-in-4 New Jersey residents. This positive rating has been about the same since July, 1990. Florio has a 24 percent positive rating of "excellent" (2%) or "good" (22%), while 72 percent give him "only fair" (42%) or "poor" (30%) evaluations. In January, 1992 the Governor's positive rating was 26 percent, 35 percent rated his performance as "only fair," and 36 percent said it was "poor." While there has not been any significant change in the Governor's positive evaluations in the past three months, the "poor" ratings have declined by 6 points and "only fair" increased by 7 points. More Democrats (33%) than independents (26%) or Republicans (15%) give the Governor positive job performance ratings.

LEGISLATIVE JOB PERFORMANCE RATING

The New Jersey State Legislature receives a 19 percent positive rating. Nineteen percent give the legislature a rating of "good," while no one evaluates its performance as "excellent." Half of the state's residents feel the legislature is doing an "only fair" job, 23 percent give it a "poor" evaluation, and 8 percent do not give a rating. In September, 1991 the legislature's positive rating was 22 percent,

46 percent said "only fair," 17 percent gave a "poor" evaluation, and 15 percent did not offer an opinion. Since September, "poor" ratings of the legislature increased by 6 points, "only fair" gained 4 points and the "don't know" evaluations declined by 7 points.

Partisan evaluations of the legislature are very similar. About 1-in-5 Democrats (21%), independents (19%), and Republicans (19%) give the legislature positive job performance ratings.

PRESIDENTIAL JOB PERFORMANCE RATINGS

In the past three months there has not been a change in the positive job performance ratings New Jerseyans give President George Bush. Thirty-six percent feel the President is doing an "excellent" (8%) or "good" (28%) job, which is similar to the 37 percent positive rating he received in January, 1992. Sixty-four percent rate his performance as "only fair" (34%) or "poor" (30%), compared to 38 percent "only fair" and 22 percent "poor" three months ago. This is an 8 point increase in the "poor" rating and a 4 point decline in "only fair."

OVERALL CLIMATE IN NEW JERSEY

New Jerseyans continue to feel pessimistic about the state. Sixty percent say things in New Jersey "have pretty seriously gotten off on the wrong track," compared to 33 percent who say things "are going in the right direction." This is a slight improvement from the 29 percent who said things "are going in the right direction" three months ago.

BACKGROUND MEMO — RELEASE SL/EP38-1 (EP88-1), SUNDAY, MAY 3, 1992

The latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton* Poll was conducted between April 22 and April 30, 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 ± 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.

"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>							
April, 1992	2%	22%	42%	30%	4%	100%	(800)
<i><u>Party ID, April, 1992</u></i>							
--Democrat	3	30	38	24	5	100	(220)
--Independent	3	23	44	28	3	101	(314)
--Republican	--	15	42	40	3	100	(238)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>							
January, 1992	3	23	35	36	2	99	(800)
<i><u>Party ID, January, 1992</u></i>							
--Democrat	3	38	30	27	2	100	(193)
--Independent	4	22	39	34	1	100	(350)
--Republican	1	14	34	49	1	99	(225)
September, 1991	3	20	39	34	5	101	(800)
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 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>
April, 1992	--	19%	50%	23%	8%	100%	(800)
<i>Party ID</i>							
--Democrat	1	20	52	21	5	99	(220)
--Independent	--	19	48	26	7	100	(314)
--Republican	--	19	52	19	9	99	(238)

PAST SURVEYS

September, 1991	2	20	46	17	15	100	(800)
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)

"How would you rate the job George Bush is doing as 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>
<u>BUSH</u>							
April, 1992	8%	28%	34%	30%	1%	101%	(800)
<i>Party ID, April, 1992</i>							
--Democrat	7	10	33	50	--	100	(220)
--Independent	4	28	39	29	1	101	(314)
--Republican	15	48	25	12	--	100	(238)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>							
January, 1992	5	32	38	22	2	99	(800)
<i>Party ID, January, 1992</i>							
--Democrat	2	16	45	36	1	100	(193)
--Independent	3	35	38	23	1	99	(350)
--Republican	11	45	32	9	3	100	(225)
October, 1991	15	41	31	11	2	100	(800)
June, 1991	24	45	21	9	1	100	(800)
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)

"What in your opinion is the most important issue facing the state of New Jersey?" [Q.7]

	<u>April, 1992</u>	<u>February 1991</u>	<u>March, 1989</u>	<u>July, 1982</u>
Economy	40%	13%	17% ¹	45% ¹
Taxes	18	41	--	--
Social Issues and Services; Crime; Drugs	10	8	17	10
Environment	7	8	32	11
Auto Insurance	5	7	15	--
Education	5	4	3	3
Government Performance	2	4	1 ²	4 ²
Abortion	2	-- ³	-- ³	-- ³
Budget, Budget Deficit (Federal)	1	3	--	--
Growth and Development; Housing	1	--	6	2
Transportation	1	--	2	3
Iraq War	--	5	--	--
Other	4	1	1	3
None/Don't Know	1	6	6	19
TOTAL	97%	100%	100%	100%
(n)	(800)	(800)	(799)	(500)

¹ In 1989, 1982 economy and taxes were in the same category.

² In 1989, 1982 the category was labeled government services.

³ Less than 1%.

"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.6]

	<u>Right Direction</u>	<u>Wrong Track</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
April, 1992	33%	60%	7%	100%	(799)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>					
January, 1992	29	62	10	101	(800)
September, 1991	32	63	5	100	(800)
June, 1991	37	55	8	100	(800)
September/October, 1990	19	74	7	100	(800)