

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

UNEMPLOYMENT AND TAXES ARE KEY ISSUES IN GUBERNATORIAL RACE

Economic issues, particularly unemployment and taxes, are foremost in voters minds as they consider who to vote for in New Jersey's Gubernatorial contest this November, according to the latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton* Poll conducted by telephone with 666 registered voters between June 10 and June 16, 1993. Four-in-ten voters in New Jersey say unemployment is the most important issue the next governor will have to face; an additional 2-in-10 say it is taxes; and another 1-in-10 identify some other economic problem as the most important issue.

In assessing Governor Jim Florio's job performance across 14 specific issues, the Democrat receives his highest positive ratings on the gun control issue (58%) and environmental protection (56%). The incumbent governor's lowest positive ratings are on holding down the cost of health care (21%), holding down taxes (21%) and creating jobs (20%).

On 12 of the 14 issues asked about, the number of voters saying Republican challenger Christie Whitman would do a better job than Florio outpaces those who say she would do worse. The largest difference is on holding down taxes where 41 percent say Whitman would do a better job than Florio while 11 percent say she would do worse. On all 14 issues, however, at least half of the voters say that Whitman either would do the same as Florio or they are not sure whether she would do better or worse.

ATTENTION RADIO STATIONS:

Audio is available after 8:00 A.M. on Monday, June 28, 1993, from (908) 932-3605 (Rutgers Feature Phone).

Most Important Issues in the Election

Economic problems dominate the list of issues voters are most concerned about as the November gubernatorial campaign gets underway. When asked to name the most important issue the next governor will have to face, 41 percent say reducing unemployment, 20 percent say holding down taxes, and an additional 11 percent mention another economic issue. Other issues mentioned include dealing with the problem of crime (4%), improving the educational system (4%), and reforming the health care insurance system (4%).

Ken Dautrich, Associate Director of the Poll, commented, "Voters are overwhelmingly saying that the most important issues on the plate of the next governor are the economic bread and butter concerns of unemployment and taxes. With such strong voter attentiveness to these issues, it will be difficult for either candidate to shift the campaign agenda away from economic policies. Florio will be forced to defend his record on taxes and jobs, and Whitman will be challenged to offer a more palatable economic plan."

The most important issues cited by voters in this election stand in stark contrast to what voters felt was most important during the last New Jersey Gubernatorial campaign. In 1989 only 20 percent of voters mentioned an economic issue compared to 72 percent in the current survey.

Overall, 38 percent say that Governor Florio would do a better job handling the most important issue identified by voters, compared to 34 percent who say Ms. Whitman would do better. Twenty-two percent of voters don't know which candidate would do a better job on the issue they consider most important.

Among those who single out taxes as the most important issue, Whitman is viewed as better able than Florio to handle that issue by a margin of 48 percent to 27 percent. However, those who see unemployment as the most important problem facing the next governor feel Florio can better handle this issue by a 44 percent to 31 percent margin.

Evaluating Florio on the Issues

In looking back on Governor Jim Florio's first term in office, voters give him the highest positive job performance ratings of excellent or good on the issues of gun control (58%) and protecting the environment (56%).

About 2-in-5 voters offer positive ratings of the Democratic governor on keeping government honest (43%), reforming the state's welfare system (42%), providing social services (40%), improving public school education (37%), and improving the state's transportation system (36%).

Three-in-ten registered voters in New Jersey give positive grades of excellent or good to the incumbent governor on reducing crime (34%), managing the state's economy (31%), holding down the cost of automobile insurance (28%), and cutting government spending (28%).

Florio receives his lowest positive ratings from one-fifth of voters on holding down health care costs (21%), holding down taxes (21%), and creating jobs (20%).

Whitman vs. Florio on the Issues

After considering Florio's performance across the issues, voters were asked whether Christie Whitman would perform better, worse, or about the same if she were elected governor. On all but one of the 14 issues majorities of voters say that Whitman's performance either would be the same as Florio's or they are not sure whether her performance would be better or worse.

On most issues, however, the number saying she would do better than Florio outpaces the number who say she would do worse. The largest better-to-worse margin of 30 points is on holding down taxes, where 41 percent say Whitman would do a better job and 11 percent say she would do worse than Florio.

The following are other issues on which voters are more likely to feel that Whitman would do a better rather than worse job than Florio. (It is important to keep in mind that on all these issues more than half of voters either say that Whitman would do the same job as Florio or don't know whether she would do better or worse):

- Creating jobs (35% to 11%)
- Managing the state's economy (34% to 13%)
- Improving public education (29% to 10%)
- Cutting government spending (29% to 11%)
- Holding down health care costs (27% to 9%)
- Holding down auto insurance costs (24% to 10%)

- Reducing crime (22% to 8%)
- Keeping government honest (25% to 13%)
- Reforming the state's welfare system (21% to 14%)
- Improving the transportation system (14% to 7%)

On the issue of providing social services, 18 percent feel she would do a better job while 15 percent say she would do worse; and on protecting the environment the better-to-worse margin is about even (16% to 15%).

For one issue, slightly more voters say Whitman would do a worse job than Florio rather than a better job. On the gun control issue, 20 percent feel she would do worse, compared to 14 percent who say Whitman would do better than Florio.

The Economic Climate for the Election

Close to half (47%) of New Jersey's voters say that their personal financial situation has stayed about the same since Jim Florio was elected governor, 38 percent say it has gotten worse, and 14 percent report that it has improved.

Democrats are about as likely to say their own financial situation has gotten better (21%) as they are to say it got worse (22%). Republicans (52% to 7%) and independents (44% to 13%) are more likely to indicate that their own financial situation has deteriorated rather than improved since Florio was elected.

Among voters who indicate that their family's financial situation has improved over the past few years, 20 percent say most of the improvement is due to Florio's economic policies. However, among those who say their economic condition has worsened, 36 percent feel the decline is because of Florio's policies.

The survey shows, however, there are signs that New Jersey's economy may be improving--at least from the perspective of employment. The current survey shows that 28 percent of New Jerseyans say that an adult in their household has been out of work and actively looking for a job in the past year, which is down from 34 percent who said that at the beginning of 1993.

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--Registered Voters	34%	38%	1%	4%	22%	99%	(643)
<i>Party ID</i>							
--Democrat	15	59	2	3	21	100	(217)
--Independent	34	33	1	5	27	100	(243)
--Republican	64	15	1	5	15	100	(169)
<i>Vote Choice</i>							
--Florio	1	77	1	3	18	100	(296)
--Undecided	11	8	4	4	74	101	(57)
--Whitman	80	3	1	3	13	100	(268)
<i>Most Important Issue</i>							
--jobs/unemployment	31	44	2	3	21	101	(262)
--taxes	48	27	2	3	20	100	(145)
--other economic	31	43	--	5	22	101	(84)
--other	29	37	--	7	27	100	(152)

"How would you rate the job Governor Jim Florio has done at (START AT DESIGNATED POINT)--excellent, good, only fair, or poor?" [Q.26A]

	<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>June 1993 Registered Voters</u>							
Dealing with the issue of Gun Control	25%	33%	15%	18%	9%	100%	(666)
Protecting the Environment	13	43	29	8	7	100	(666)
Reforming the State's Welfare System	13	29	28	16	14	100	(666)
Keeping Government Honest and Free from Corruption	9	34	30	20	8	101	(666)
Improving Public School Education	9	28	34	21	7	99	(666)
Reducing Crime	7	27	38	24	5	101	(666)
Providing Social Services such as Aid to the Needy	6	34	37	11	12	100	(666)
Improving the State's Transportation System	6	30	35	14	15	100	(666)
Managing the State's Economy	6	25	37	28	4	100	(666)
Holding Down the Cost of Automobile Insurance	6	22	29	38	6	101	(666)
Cutting Government Spending	5	23	38	28	6	100	(666)
Holding Down Taxes	4	17	30	47	2	100	(666)
Holding Down the Cost of Health Care	3	18	35	35	10	101	(666)
Creating Jobs	3	17	39	36	5	100	(666)

"Do you think of Christine Todd Whitman would do a better, worse, or about the same job of this if elected governor?" [Q.26B]

	<u>Better</u>	<u>Worse</u>	<u>the Same</u>	<u>Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<u>June 1993 Registered Voters</u>						

Holding down Taxes	41%	11%	34%	15%	101%	(666)
Creating Jobs	35	11	35	20	101	(666)
Managing the State's Economy	34	13	34	19	100	(666)
Cutting Government Spending	29	11	40	20	100	(666)
Improving Public School Education	29	10	41	20	100	(666)
Holding down the Cost of Health Care	27	9	43	21	100	(666)
Keeping Government Honest and Free from Corruption	25	13	43	20	101	(666)
Holding down the Cost of Automobile Insurance	24	10	45	21	100	(666)
Reducing Crime	22	8	49	20	99	(666)
Reforming the State's Welfare System	21	14	41	24	100	(666)
Providing Social Services such as Aid to the Needy	18	15	46	22	101	(666)
Protecting the Environment	16	15	49	21	101	(666)
Dealing with the issue of Gun Control	14	20	45	21	100	(666)
Improving the State's Transportation System	14	7	53	26	100	(666)

"Thinking about your family's financial situation over the past few years, have things gotten better, worse, or stayed about the same since Jim Florio became Governor?" [Q.31]

	<u>Better</u>	<u>Worse</u>	<u>About the Same</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<u>June, 1993</u>						
--Registered Voters	14%	38%	47%	1%	100%	(666)
<u>Party ID</u>						
--Democrat	21	22	55	2	100	(226)
--Independent	13	44	42	1	100	(248)
--Republican	7	52	42	0	101	(178)
<u>Vote Choice</u>						
--Florio	23	17	58	2	100	(303)
--Undecided	10	30	55	5	100	(61)
--Whitman	5	60	35	0	100	(278)

"How much of this change is due to the policies of the Florio administration--most, some, just a little, or none?" [Q.32]

	<u>Most</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>A Little</u>	<u>None</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<u>Among those who say personal Financial Situation has:</u>							
--Gotten better	20%	38%	15%	27%	--	100%	(96)
--Gotten worse	36	38	17	8	1	100	(261)

"In the last 12 months, has any adult in your household been out of work and actively looking for a job?" [Q.D11]

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<u>June, 1993</u>				
--Total	28%	72%	100%	(800)
<u>February, 1993</u>				
--Total	34	66	100	(800)