

The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll

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**ALL OF THE PERCENTAGES IN THIS RELEASE ARE BASED ON "LIKELY VOTERS"
— NEW JERSEY RESIDENTS WHO REPORT THEY ARE CURRENTLY REGISTERED TO
VOTE AND SAY THAT THEY ARE PROBABLY OR DEFINITELY GOING TO VOTE.**

RELEASE INFORMATION

A story based on the survey findings presented in this release and background memo will appear in Tuesday's *Star-Ledger*. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to "*The Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll*."

FLORIO SCORES GAINS ON ISSUES AND IMAGE;

MAJORITY FEEL WHITMAN TAX PLAN NOT CREDIBLE

As the 1993 gubernatorial campaign enters its final two weeks, voters are divided over which candidate would do a better job across a number of issue areas. The issues that Whitman has the greatest edge over Florio are holding down taxes, creating jobs, and holding down auto insurance costs. In comparison, more voters feel the Republican challenger would do a worse job than Florio has done in dealing with the issue of gun control, protecting the environment, and reforming the welfare system.

On most issues, however, more voters are undecided about which candidate would do a better job than they are supportive of either Governor Jim Florio or challenger Christine Todd Whitman, according to a *Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll* conducted by telephone with 601 likely voters between October 11 and 14.

ATTENTION RADIO STATIONS:

Audio is available after 8:00 A.M. on Tuesday, October 19, 1993, from (908) 932-3605 (Rutgers Feature Phone).

The survey also finds that while a majority of voters (52%) feel that the Governor's tax hike package in 1990 was something that he had to do for the good of the state, a majority (56%) feel that Whitman's tax cut proposal is a campaign promise she will not be able to keep.

At this point in the campaign, the Democratic Governor is perceived by voters to have a better personal image than Whitman. Florio is viewed by 8-in-10 voters as more experienced; he enjoys at least a 20 point lead on having a clearer vision of the state's future and on being more competent.

The general election campaign thus far has produced lopsided improvements in favor of Florio, despite the fact that his positive job performance ratings have not improved. On most policy issues and image characteristics, Governor Florio has made substantial gains against his opponent since the beginning of this summer.

FLORIO VS. WHITMAN ON THE ISSUES

Among those who see a difference between the candidates, voters feel that Republican challenger Christine Whitman would do a better rather than worse job than Governor Florio on 7 of 11 issues asked about in the survey. Whitman is favored by the largest margin on holding down taxes where 37 percent say she would do better than the Governor has compared to 21 percent who feel she would do worse. On creating jobs Whitman's margin is 32 percent to 18 percent. The Republican candidate is also favored on holding down the cost of auto insurance (24% to 14%), cutting government spending (30% to 21%), improving public school education (25% to 17%), keeping government free from corruption (25% to 18%), and managing the state's economy (32% to 28%).

On 4 of the 11 issues asked about, voters feel that Whitman would do a worse rather than better job than the incumbent Governor. These issues include dealing with the issue of gun control (42% feel Whitman would do worse and 16% say she would do better), protecting the environment (22% to 13%), reforming the state's welfare system (26% to 20%), and reducing crime (23% to 20%).

Across all eleven issues, however, large numbers of voters feel that Whitman's performance would either be about the same as Florio's or they say they don't know who would do better.

Associate Poll Director Ken Dautrich commented, "Many -- and often sizeable majorities of voters -- don't see much of a difference between what Florio has done in handling issues and in what Whitman would do. So what they may use to make a vote choice are image characteristics, factors which at this point in the campaign are favoring Florio."

CHANGE IN PREFERENCES FOR CANDIDATES ON THE ISSUES

While Whitman is still the preferred candidate to better handle more of these 11 issues, since June of this year there have been significant changes in voters' assessments of whether Whitman would do a better or worse job than Florio -- these changes all move in a positive direction for the Governor.

Across the 11 issues, Florio's largest gain since June has been on managing the state's economy. In June 37 percent felt Whitman would do better than Florio while 13 percent thought she would do worse, a marginal difference of 24 points in Whitman's favor. The current survey finds 32 percent saying Whitman would do better and 28 percent saying she would do worse -- a marginal difference of 4 points. The June through October trend, then, shows a 20 point drop in perceived differences between the candidates on the issue of managing the state's economy.

Other issues where Florio has made substantial gains from June through October in terms of voter preferences include:

- "Reducing crime" -- where there has been an 18 point shift (from a 15 point Florio deficit to a 3 point Florio advantage)
- "Dealing with the issue of gun control" -- where Florio's margin grew by 18 points (from 8 points to 26 points)
- "Holding down taxes" -- where the gap closed by 16 points (from a 32 point Whitman lead to a 16 point Whitman lead)
- "Reforming the welfare system" -- which experienced a 15 point shift (from a 9 point Whitman advantage to a 6 point Florio advantage)
- "Improving public education" -- the gap is down 12 points (from a 20 point to an 8 point Whitman lead)
- "Cutting government spending" -- the margin shifted 13 points (from a 22 point to a 9 point Whitman lead)
- "Creating jobs" -- also a 12 point shift (from a 26 point Whitman lead to a 14 point Whitman lead)

On the remaining 3 issues, Florio also scores gains in voter preferences, but to a lesser degree:

- "Protecting the environment" -- a 9 point shift since June (from a tie to a 9 point Florio lead)

- "Keeping government free from corruption" -- a 5 point change (from a 12 point to a 7 point Whitman lead)
- "Holding down the cost of auto insurance" -- a 4 point change (from a 14 point to a 10 point Whitman advantage)

RATING OF FLORIO ON THE ISSUES

Despite significant levels of movement in favor of Florio across these issues, the job performance ratings voters give the governor on these issues have not improved -- and in fact have declined on some issues -- over the past four months.

Governor Florio receives his highest positive performance rating (57%) on environmental protection, which is unchanged since the start of the summer. Fifty-four percent give him a positive rating on gun control, but this is down from 60 percent in June. And while about 4-in-10 continue to give Florio positive grades in reforming the state's welfare system, 36 percent offer positive evaluations on keeping government free from corruption, which is down 8 points.

About 3-in-10 voters continue to rate the governor's performance as either excellent or good on improving public school education (33%), reducing crime (30%), and managing the state's economy (29%).

About one-quarter of the state's voters give positive evaluations to Florio's performance on cutting government spending (23%), and holding down auto insurance costs (24%). Only 16 percent give Florio a positive job rating on holding down taxes, and 15 percent grade the governor as positive on creating jobs in New Jersey.

TEST OF CREDIBILITY: FLORIO ON TAX HIKES, WHITMAN ON TAX CUTS

An important aspect of credibility for both candidates in this election revolves around the issue of taxes. For Florio, the focus is on whether he deceived voters in 1989 when he said he saw the need for no tax increases but raised taxes shortly after taking office. For Whitman, the focus is on whether her pledge to cut income taxes by 30 percent is nothing more than a campaign promise or a realistic goal.

On the Florio tax hikes, a majority of voters (52%) feel that the 1990 Florio tax package was something Florio had to do for the good of the state, compared to 43 percent who believe that Florio went back on word.

On the Whitman tax cuts, however, a majority of voters (56%) say that the pledge to reduce income taxes by 30 percent over 3 years makes them think of her as a politician who makes promises she cannot keep, compared to 37 percent who feel that the plan to cut taxes is something that will be good for the state.

Dautrich commented, "Coming into the campaign Florio's biggest liability was the credibility of his tax increases -- but the credibility of tax policy has also become a liability for Whitman. The campaign thus far has not only convinced a majority of voters that his tax package was credible, but it has also convinced many voters that Whitman's tax plan is not credible."

CANDIDATES' IMAGES

With about two weeks to go before the election, Democratic Governor Jim Florio is beating his Republican challenger on the battle of who has the better image. On all 6 image characteristics asked about, Florio is preferred over Whitman.

The largest Florio advantage is on "experience" where 84 percent pick Florio and 7 percent choose Whitman. Florio also enjoys 54 percent to 28 percent margin as having a clearer vision of the state's future. This 26 point gap is up from 14 points in the June survey. In addition, 51 percent pick the Governor as the more competent candidate compared to 31 percent who select Whitman. This 20 percentage point margin is up from a 9 percentage point margin at the start of the summer.

Voters are more likely to trust Florio by a 43 percent to 35 percent margin; and they are more likely to feel that Florio cares more about "people like me" (40% to 34%). In June, neither candidate enjoyed a margin on these personal characteristics.

On being more honest, 33 percent pick Florio and 30 percent pick Whitman.

BACKGROUND MEMO — RELEASE SL/EP45-2 (EP95-2), TUESDAY, OCTOBER 19, 1993

The latest *Star-Ledger*/Eagleton Poll was conducted between October 11 and 14, 1993, when a random sample of 801 New Jerseyans, 18 years and older, was interviewed by telephone. This release is based on a subgroup of 601 likely voters. These are people who are registered to vote and say they will probably or definitely vote on Election Day. Figures based on this sample size are subject to a sampling error of about ± 4 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 Governor Jim Florio has done at (START AT DESIGNATED POINT)--excellent, good, only fair, or poor?" [Q.18]

	<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>Protecting the Environment</u>							
--October, 1993	16%	41%	30%	8%	5%	100%	(601)
--June, 1993	13	44	28	9	6	100	(633)
<u>Dealing with the issue of Gun Control</u>							
--October, 1993	26	28	22	19	5	100	(601)
--June, 1993	26	34	14	18	8	100	(633)
<u>Reforming the State's Welfare System</u>							
--October, 1993	12	27	34	20	7	100	(601)
--June, 1993	12	28	29	18	13	100	(633)
<u>Keeping Government Honest and Free from Corruption</u>							
--October, 1993	6	30	33	26	4	99	(601)
--June, 1993	9	35	30	20	6	100	(633)
<u>Improving Public School Education</u>							
--October, 1993	5	28	40	19	8	100	(601)
--June, 1993	8	27	35	23	7	100	(633)
<u>Reducing Crime</u>							
--October, 1993	7	23	40	26	3	99	(601)
--June, 1993	6	27	39	23	5	100	(633)
<u>Managing the State's Economy</u>							
--October, 1993	4	25	33	36	1	99	(601)
--June, 1993	5	25	36	31	3	100	(633)
<u>Holding Down the Cost of Automobile Insurance</u>							
--October, 1993	5	19	28	43	5	100	(601)
--June, 1993	6	22	28	38	5	99	(633)
<u>Cutting Government Spending</u>							
--October, 1993	3	20	40	33	4	100	(601)
--June, 1993	4	22	38	30	6	100	(633)
<u>Holding Down Taxes</u>							
--October, 1993	3	13	28	55	1	100	(601)
--June, 1993	4	18	28	49	2	101	(633)
<u>Creating Jobs</u>							
--October, 1993	2	13	38	43	4	100	(601)
--June, 1993	2	16	37	38	6	99	(633)

"Do you think Christine Todd Whitman would do a better worse, or about the same job of this if elected governor?"
[Q.19]

	Better	Worse	About the same	Don't know	Total	(n)	<i>MARGINAL DIFFERENCE*</i>
<u>Holding Down Taxes</u>							
--October, 1993	37%	21%	35%	7%	100%	(601)	16
--June, 1993	43	11	31	15	100	(633)	32
<u>Creating Jobs</u>							
--October, 1993	32	18	41	9	100	(601)	14
--June, 1993	36	10	34	20	100	(633)	26
<u>Managing the State's Economy</u>							
--October, 1993	32	28	32	8	100	(601)	4
--June, 1993	37	13	31	19	100	(633)	24
<u>Cutting Government Spending</u>							
--October, 1993	30	21	41	8	100	(601)	9
--June, 1993	33	11	37	19	100	(633)	22
<u>Improving Public School Education</u>							
--October, 1993	25	17	46	13	101	(601)	8
--June, 1993	31	11	38	20	100	(633)	20
<u>Keeping Government Honest and Free from Corruption</u>							
--October, 1993	25	18	47	10	100	(601)	7
--June, 1993	25	13	43	19	100	(633)	12
<u>Holding Down the Cost of Automobile Insurance</u>							
--October, 1993	24	14	48	14	100	(601)	10
--June, 1993	25	11	43	21	100	(633)	14
<u>Reducing Crime</u>							
--October, 1993	20	23	49	9	101	(601)	-3
--June, 1993	24	9	47	20	100	(633)	15
<u>Reforming the State's Welfare System</u>							
--October, 1993	20	26	42	12	100	(601)	-6
--June, 1993	23	14	40	23	100	(633)	9
<u>Dealing with the issue of Gun Control</u>							
--October, 1993	16	42	32	9	99	(601)	-26
--June, 1993	14	22	43	21	100	(633)	-8
<u>Protecting the Environment</u>							
--October, 1993	13	22	53	12	100	(601)	-9
--June, 1993	15	15	49	20	99	(633)	0

*Marginal Difference is the percent of likely voters who say Whitman would do a better job than Florio minus the percent who say she would do worse.

"Which candidate has (READ ITEM) Florio or Whitman?" [Q.20]

	<u>Florio</u>	<u>Whitman</u>	<u>Depends</u>	<u>Neither</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<u>Is more experienced</u>							
--October, 1993	84%	7%	1%	2%	5%	99%	(601)
--June, 1993	84	5	1	1	9	100	(633)
<u>Clearer vision of the State's future</u>							
--October, 1993	54	28	2	7	9	100	(601)
--June, 1993	46	32	1	2	19	100	(633)
<u>More competent</u>							
--October, 1993	51	31	2	4	11	99	(601)
--June, 1993	42	33	2	3	20	100	(633)
<u>Trust more</u>							
--October, 1993	43	35	2	14	6	100	(601)
--June, 1993	39	38	1	9	14	101	(633)
<u>Cares more about people like you</u>							
--October, 1993	40	34	2	13	12	101	(601)
--June, 1993	38	37	2	6	17	100	(633)
<u>More honest</u>							
--October, 1993	33	30	2	14	21	100	(601)
--June, 1993	27	30	2	6	35	100	(633)

"Christine Todd Whitman recently announced a plan to stimulate the state economy. The plan includes a 30 percent overall reduction in the state income tax over the next three years. Have you read or heard anything about this plan? IF YES: How much, a lot, some, or just a little?" [Q.21]

	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes--A lot</u>	<u>Yes--Some</u>	<u>Yes--A little</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
October, 1993	25%	21%	32%	22%	100%	(601)

"How do you feel about this tax cut plan--does it make you think of Christine Todd Whitman as a politician who is making promises she cannot keep, or do you think cutting the state income tax by 30 percent over three years is a plan that will be good for the state?" [Q.22]

	<u>Makes promises she cannot keep</u>	<u>Good for the state</u>	<u>Don't know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
October, 1993	56%	37%	7%	100%	(601)

"In his 1989 campaign for Governor, Jim Florio said he saw no need to increase state taxes. However, Florio signed into law increases in the state sales and income taxes. He said this was necessary because of budget problems he did not find out about until after he was elected.

How do you feel about this — does it make you think of Jim Florio as a politician who goes back on what he says, or do you think raising taxes was something he had to do for the good of the state?" [Q.23]

	<u>Jim Florio went back on word</u>	<u>For good of state</u>	<u>Don't know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
October, 1993	43%	52%	4%	99%	(601)
September, 1993	41	54	5	100	(590)