

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*."

NEW JERSEYANS' POLICY PRIORITIES; RATINGS OF ELECTED OFFICIALS; PREVIEW OF THE 1994 U. S. SENATE ELECTION

Taxes are the main issue New Jerseyans would like to talk about if they had an opportunity to attend a town meeting with Governor Whitman. However, a majority of the state's residents are not able to offer a suggestion on how the Governor can reduce the state's budget. Among the suggestions for cutbacks, the two that are mentioned most frequently by New Jerseyans are various cuts related to the salaries and the number of state employees, and reductions or reforms in welfare programs.

The latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton* Poll finds that a majority of New Jerseyans don't have an impression of their new Governor. Therefore, it is not surprising that 31 percent say they can't rate her job performance.

The telephone survey, conducted with 801 New Jerseyans from February 10 to February 16, 1994, shows that since June 1993, President Clinton's positive ratings have increased 23 percentage points to 51 percent. In the last year, Senator Bill Bradley's positive ratings have declined 9 percentage points to 47 percent who rate his job performance as excellent or good, and Senator Frank Lautenberg, who is up for re-election this year, has about the same positive ratings (39%) as he had in February 1993.

ATTENTION RADIO STATIONS:

Audio is available after 8:00 A.M. on Monday, February 21, 1994, from (908)932-3605 (Rutgers Feature Phone).

Thinking about the upcoming race for the U. S. Senate, about half (49%) of New Jersey residents feel it's time for a change compared to 28 percent who say the incumbent Senator Frank Lautenberg deserves to be re-elected.

Janice Ballou, Poll Director, noted, "This poll suggests that there is an anti-incumbent trend in New Jersey that may be an underlying dynamic in the 1994 U. S. Senate race. It underscores the public's discontent with government that has led to discussions of legislation for term limitations and initiative and referendum."

CONVERSATIONS WITH GOVERNOR WHITMAN

Since her election, Governor Whitman has given New Jerseyans an opportunity to talk to her about state government through town meetings and call-in talk shows. Thirty-seven percent of state residents have heard a great deal (9%) or some (28%) about these outreach programs compared to 62 percent who have not heard much (29%) or have heard nothing at all (33%).

Overall, 2 percent report that they have attended a town meeting, called in to a talk show, or written to Governor Whitman while 98 percent have not taken advantage of these opportunities. From a partisan perspective, Republicans (3%) and independents (3%) have contacted Whitman, while none of those who say they are Democrats report having communicated with the Governor.

Given the opportunity to talk with Governor Whitman, there are a wide range of topics that New Jerseyans would like to put on the policy agenda. Taxes still remain the number one concern with 22 percent mentioning either property taxes (11%), all taxes in general (7%), the state income tax (3%) or the state sales tax (1%). Crime and the associated problem of drug and alcohol abuse are mentioned by 17 percent of New Jerseyans, followed by unemployment (11%), and issues related to education (10%).

It was more difficult for New Jerseyans to make suggestions to the Governor on the areas of government where the state budget could be cut. A majority (51%) could not offer a suggestion. Twelve percent name a variety of options related to cuts in the number of state employees and state employee salaries, 11 percent want welfare costs reduced, 6 percent suggest eliminating "waste," and 5 percent recommend reductions in a variety of specific government programs.

"There is a historical tension between taxing and spending that is exemplified by the ongoing concern New Jerseyans have about taxes which is in conflict with the difficulty they have in making recommendations to reduce spending," noted Janice Ballou, Poll Director. "It is much easier for them to suggest problem areas for the Governor to solve than to identify ways to cut expenses."

GUBERNATORIAL JOB PERFORMANCE RATINGS

It's been about a month since the inauguration of Christie Whitman and, not surprisingly, 53 percent of New Jerseyans have not yet formed an overall opinion of the new Governor. However, favorable impressions of Whitman (36%) outnumber unfavorable impressions (11%) by a margin of more than three-to-one.

In addition, 31 percent of New Jerseyans feel they do not know enough about the Governor to give her job performance a rating. In her initial evaluation, Governor Whitman receives positive job performance ratings of "excellent" (9%) or "good" (28%) from 37 percent of New Jersey residents, while 33 percent give her negative ratings of "only fair" (28%) or "poor" (5%). More Republicans (52%) than independents (38%) or Democrats (23%) give the Governor positive job performance ratings.

In comparison, the first job performance rating for Jim Florio in March 1990 had fewer people who did not give him an evaluation (10%), while 42 percent rated his job as Governor as positive compared to 48 percent who gave the former Governor negative evaluations.

Whitman's job performance rating on two specific issues is similar to her overall rating. Her handling of the problems with the state budget is given a positive rating of "excellent" (7%) or "good" (30%) by 37 percent, 35 percent say it is "only fair" (28%) or "poor" (7%), and 29 percent did not rate the Governor on this issue. New Jerseyans are somewhat more likely to have an opinion about how Whitman has handled state taxes. While 22 percent say they can not rate the Governor on this issue, 37 percent give her "excellent" (8%) or "good" (29%) ratings while 41 percent say it is "only fair" (31%) or "poor" (10%).

PRESIDENTIAL JOB PERFORMANCE RATINGS

Since Bill Clinton was elected President, New Jerseyans have had a range of opinions about his job performance. Currently he enjoys positive assessments from a majority of the state's residents. This is an increase of 23 percentage points from June 1993 and a 7 percentage point improvement from a year ago. Fifty-one percent feel the President is doing an "excellent" (12%) or "good" (39%) job and 48 percent rate his job performance as "only fair" (35%) or "poor" (13%). In February 1993, the President had positive ratings of 44 percent, but in June 1993, Clinton's positive ratings declined to 28 percent.

There are strong partisan differences in the positive job performance ratings for the President. While 68 percent of the Democrats rate him as "excellent" or "good," 51 percent of the independents and 27 percent of the Republicans give him this evaluation.

Performance evaluations of specific aspects of the President's actions are less positive than his overall rating. Clinton receives 42 percent positive ratings for his handling of the problems of the economy, 39 percent for foreign affairs, and 34 percent for the nation's social problems.

SENATORIAL JOB PERFORMANCE RATINGS

Forty-seven percent of New Jerseyans give Bill Bradley, the senior U. S. Senator from New Jersey, positive job performance ratings of "excellent" (11%) or "good" (36%) compared to 36 percent who rate him "only fair" (29%) or "poor" (7%). Seventeen percent report that they do not know how to rate Senator Bradley. This is a decline of 9 percentage points from the 56 percent positive rating Senator Bradley received a year ago. One of the reasons for the change in Bradley's rating is a 10 percentage point increase in those who say they do not know how to rate the Senator.

Senator Frank Lautenberg, who is up for re-election in November 1994, receives "excellent" (5%) or "good" (34%) evaluations from 39 percent of New Jerseyans and 39 percent rate him "only fair" (32%) or "poor" (7%). Twenty-two percent do not know how to evaluate Senator Lautenberg's job performance. These ratings are similar to February 1993 when 42 percent gave him positive ratings, 42 percent negative ratings and 15 percent did not know how to evaluate the Senator.

THE 1994 SENATORIAL ELECTION: LAUTENBERG'S RE-ELECTION

Indications at this early stage in the 1994 senatorial election are that Senator Lautenberg, who is expected to run for re-election, may have a difficult campaign ahead. Half (49%) of the state's residents think "it's time for a change" compared to 28 percent who feel Lautenberg deserves to be re-elected. Twenty-three percent don't have an opinion (18%) about Lautenberg, or feel it depends on the other candidates in the election (5%).

There are partisan differences in Lautenberg's support. More Democrats (36%) say he deserves to be re-elected, than independents (27%) or Republicans (22%).

BACKGROUND MEMO — RELEASE SL/EP47-1 (EP97-1), SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 1994

The latest *Star-Ledger*/Eagleton Poll was conducted between February 10 and February 16, 1994, when a random sample of 801 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.

"Overall, how would you rate New Jersey as a place to live — 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>
February, 1994	18%	53%	22%	7%	--	100%	(801)

PAST SURVEYS

July, 1990	16	43	25	15	1	100	(800)
February, 1988	27	51	17	4	1	100	(800)

"Is your general impression of Governor Christie Whitman favorable or unfavorable, or don't you really have an opinion about her?" [Q.3]

	<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>
February, 1994	17%	19%	7%	4%	53%	100%	(801)
<u>Party ID</u>							
--Democrat	6	15	10	7	61	99	(237)
--Independent	15	17	5	4	59	100	(334)
--Republican	35	27	7	2	30	101	(197)

"How would you rate the job Christie Whitman is doing as Governor — excellent, good, only fair or poor?" [Q.4a]

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February, 1994	9%	28%	28%	5%	31%	101%	(801)

Party ID

--Democrat	7	16	33	6	37	99	(237)
--Independent	6	32	28	3	31	100	(334)
--Republican	16	36	23	3	21	99	(197)

First Rating

<u>Of Florio</u>							
March, 1990	8	34	34	14	10	100	(800)

"And how would you rate Whitman's handling of problems with the state budget?" [Q.4b]

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February, 1994	7%	30%	28%	7%	29%	101%	(801)
<i>Party ID</i>							
--Democrat	2	24	31	12	30	99	(237)
--Independent	6	29	29	5	31	100	(334)
--Republican	14	39	23	4	20	100	(197)

"How would you rate the Governor's handling of state taxes?" [Q.4c]

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February, 1994	8%	29%	31%	10%	22%	100%	(801)
<i>Party ID</i>							
--Democrat	3	26	32	14	26	101	(237)
--Independent	6	26	31	10	26	99	(334)
--Republican	15	40	29	4	12	100	(197)

"How much have you read or heard about the town meetings and call-in shows that Governor Christie Whitman has been having to give people an opportunity to talk to her about state government . . . a great deal, some, not much, or nothing at all?" [Q.5]

	<u>A Great Deal</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Not Much</u>	<u>Nothing At All</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February, 1994	9%	28%	29%	33%	1%	100%	(801)

"Have you taken part in any of these meetings, called in during a talk show, or written to Governor Whitman to give her your ideas about state government?" [Q.6]

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February, 1994	2%	98%	100%	(801)
<i>Party ID</i>				
--Democrat	--	100	100	(237)
--Independent	3	97	100	(334)
--Republican	3	97	100	(197)

"If you did have an opportunity to talk to Governor Whitman at a town meeting, what is the one problem in New Jersey you would ask her to work on?" [Q.7]

Taxes	22%
Property taxes (11%)	
Taxes - general (7%)	
State income tax (3%)	
State sales tax (1%)	
Crime (14%), drugs/alcohol abuse (3%)	17
Unemployment/jobs	11
Education/schools	10
Social services, welfare, care of the poor, elderly, handicapped, child care, AIDS	6
Environment, toxic clean-up, pollution	3
Health care/health costs/health insurance	3
Economy, budget deficit	3
Values/moral issues	2
Other (specify)	15
Don't know	6
TOTAL	98%
(n)	(801)

"And, if you could talk to the Governor, what is the one area of state government you would suggest she cut back on to help cut the state budget?" [Q.8]

Employment/salary cuts	12%
Welfare cuts/reforms	11
Reduction of waste in government	6
Spending cuts in a range of different areas	5
Reduction in the size of government	4
Elimination of perks	3
Other suggestions	8
Don't know/no suggestions	51
TOTAL	100%
(n)	(745)

"How would you rate the job Bill Clinton is doing as President — excellent, good, only fair, or poor?" [Q.9a]

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February, 1994	12%	39%	35%	13%	1%	100%	(801)
<i>Party ID</i>							
--Democrat	17	51	27	5	--	100	(237)
--Independent	10	41	34	13	1	99	(334)
--Republican	8	19	47	26	--	100	(197)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>							
June, 1993	5	23	45	25	2	100	(801)
February, 1993	15	29	26	18	12	100	(801)

"How would you rate his handling of the nation's foreign affairs — excellent, good, only fair or poor?" [Q.9b]

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February, 1994	6%	33%	39%	19%	2%	99%	(801)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>							
June, 1993	3	22	47	23	4	99	(801)

"And, how would you rate Clinton's handling of the problems of the economy — excellent, good, only fair or poor?" [Q.9c]

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February, 1994	8%	34%	40%	16%	2%	100%	(801)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>							
June, 1993	3	18	44	33	2	100	(801)

"And, his handling of the nation's social problems — excellent, good, only fair or poor?" [Q.9d]

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February, 1994	6%	28%	42%	20%	4%	100%	(801)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>							
June, 1993	4	21	44	26	5	100	(801)

"How would you rate the job Bill Bradley is doing as Senator — excellent, good, only fair or poor?" [Q.10]

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February, 1994	11%	36%	29%	7%	17%	100%	(801)
<i>Party ID</i>							
--Democrat	18	36	29	5	12	100	(237)
--Independent	11	38	25	6	20	100	(334)
--Republican	3	32	39	13	14	101	(197)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>							
February, 1993	14	42	26	10	7	99	(801)
April, 1992	11	39	33	12	5	100	(800)

"How would you rate the job Frank Lautenberg is doing as Senator — excellent, good, only fair or poor?" [Q.11]

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February, 1994	5%	34%	32%	7%	22%	100%	(801)
<i>Party ID</i>							
--Democrat	9	36	34	3	18	100	(237)
--Independent	4	35	30	6	25	100	(334)
--Republican	3	33	35	13	17	101	(197)
<i>Voter Registration Status</i>							
--Registered to vote	6	35	32	7	20	100	(680)
--Not registered	2	31	33	4	30	100	(121)
<u>PAST SURVEYS</u>							
February, 1993	7	35	34	8	15	99	(801)
April, 1992	6	33	34	13	13	99	(800)

"There will be an election for United States Senator in New Jersey this year. Thinking about the job that Frank Lautenberg has done as U.S. Senator, do you think he deserves to be re-elected or do you think it's time for a change?" [Q.12]

	<u>Deserves Re-Election</u>	<u>Time For A Change</u>	<u>Depends (VOL)</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
February, 1994	28%	49%	5%	18%	100%	(801)
<i>Party ID</i>						
--Democrat	36	45	4	15	100	(237)
--Independent	27	51	6	17	101	(334)
--Republican	22	53	5	21	101	(197)
<i>Voter Registration Status</i>						
--Registered to vote	29	48	6	17	100	(680)
--Not registered	24	51	4	21	100	(121)
<i>Lautenberg's Job Performance Rating</i>						
--Excellent	82	10	8	--	100	(41)
--Good	50	34	5	10	99	(275)
--Only fair	16	68	7	9	100	(257)
--Poor	--	98	--	2	100	(53)
--Don't know	6	39	3	51	99	(174)

PAST SURVEYS

February, 1993* "Jim Florio deserves re-election."	38	51	3	8	100	(801)
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February, 1988 — "If the election was between Frank Lautenberg, the Democrat, and Pete Dawkins, the Republican, who would you vote for"?

	<u>Lautenberg</u>	<u>Dawkins</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
Voters	44%	16%	38%	2%	100%	(587)
<i>Party ID</i>						
--Democrat	80	3	15	3	101	(170)
--Independent	37	12	50	1	100	(225)
--Republican	17	43	40	--	100	(157)

*In February, 1993, question did not include the phrase, "or do you think it's time for a change."