

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
APRIL 7, 2010

For more commentary from Professor Redlawsk see
<http://eagletonpoll.blogspot.com>

Contact: David Redlawsk, Ph.D.
Email: redlawsk@rutgers.edu
Phone: (732) 932-9384 ext. 285; (319) 400-1134 (cell)

CHRISTIE BUDGET PROPOSAL SPLITS GARDEN STATERS

50 percent of New Jerseyans are displeased with budget while governor's favorability rating drops 12 points since March 16 address to Legislature

As he himself predicted, New Jersey Governor Chris Christie's new budget has not won him many friends, according the latest Rutgers-Eagleton Poll released today. The Poll finds impressions of Christie dropped from 45 percent favorable and 26 percent unfavorable in February 2010 to 33 percent favorable and 37 percent unfavorable following his March 16 budget address. This 12-point drop in one month comes on the heels of a budget proposal that displeases 50 percent of New Jersey residents while pleasing only 43 percent. Even so the Governor is seen much more favorably than either party in state government, where only 26 percent view Democrats and 25 percent see Republicans favorably.

"Three weeks after the budget speech, the impact is starting to sink in," said David Redlawsk, director of the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll and professor of political science at Rutgers University. "The result is a recognition that the proposed budget cuts are going to hurt and a significant decrease in favorable impressions of Christie."

The poll, conducted March 31 – April 3, included 953 New Jersey adults. The full sample has a margin of error of +/-3.2 percentage points. Specific questions about the budget were asked of a subsample of adults who had heard at least "a little" about the budget.

New Jerseyans are Paying Attention

Governor Christie's budget proposal has garnered a great deal of attention from Garden Staters, with nearly 4 in 10 of those who had heard at least a little saying they watched or listened to at least part of the budget speech itself, and 65 percent saying they have heard or read at least something about the budget. "That more than a third of New Jerseyans saw or heard the budget speech first-hand is a testament to how seriously people take the state's economic situation," said Redlawsk. "It is also recognition of how visible Christie himself has been on the budget issue. There are very high levels of awareness across all demographic groups."

Reaction to the Budget Mixed at Best

Of those who have heard about the budget, 43 percent say they are very or somewhat pleased with it, while 50 percent are somewhat or very displeased. Another 8 percent are unsure of their response. Not surprisingly, opposition is centered among those who view Christie unfavorably, with 90 percent displeased. Of those who view Christie favorably, 88 percent say they are pleased with the budget. "Support for Christie is tied directly to the budget proposal," said Redlawsk. "How this budget process proceeds and the ultimate impact on New Jersey residents may well define Christie's next few years in office. Of particular note is that the 30 percent of New Jerseyans who

have neither a favorable nor unfavorable impression of Christie are displeased by the budget by a 50 percent to 30 percent margin.”

Predictably, Democrats are strongly displeased by the budget (48 percent very displeased) while Republicans are pleased (73 percent either very pleased or somewhat pleased). Independents are evenly split, with 45 percent either very or somewhat pleased and 44 percent very or somewhat displeased. Women are less likely to be pleased by the budget, with 55 percent displeased compared to 44 percent of men.

High-income residents are much more pleased with the budget than any other income group, with 54 percent of those earning \$150,000 or more saying they are pleased, while 43 percent are displeased. On the other end of the scale, only 31 percent of those making under \$50,000 are very or somewhat pleased. “Those who expect to feel less impact of the budget cuts are much happier with the proposed budget than those who expect to feel the brunt,” said Redlawsk. “Since Christie’s budget does not reinstate the surtax on high earners, which New Jerseyans strongly support according to our February 2010 poll, better-off New Jerseyans are more likely to support it.”

Homeowners are also more pleased with the budget, with 46 percent very or somewhat pleased, compared to 35 percent of renters,.

Budget Cuts Expected to Affect Most

Nearly one-third (31 percent) of Garden State residents aware of the budget expect Christie’s proposed budget cuts to affect them “a great deal,” while another 42 percent expect some impact from the cuts. Fewer than one in 10 expects no impact. “New Jerseyans know that these budget cuts are wide and deep,” said Redlawsk.

Those who expect the budget cuts to affect them a great deal are altogether unhappy with the Governor’s proposal; only 15 percent are at all pleased with the budget proposal, while 59 percent are very displeased. On the other hand, 60 percent of those who expect the cuts to affect them “very little” are pleased with the proposal. “There is a clear sense of self-interest in these results,” noted Redlawsk. “While people may be mistaken in their expectations, those who expect little impact profess to be quite pleased with the plan.”

Christie Favorables now Upside Down

Governor Christie is viewed significantly less favorably now than he was when the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll surveyed New Jerseyans in late February. The February poll gave the Governor a +19 rating, with 45 percent favorable and 26 percent unfavorable. The new poll has him upside down at -4, with 33 percent favorable and 37 percent unfavorable, a swing of 23 percentage points.

“The primary event that occurred between our February Poll and the post-budget poll was the budget address,” said Redlawsk. “While Christie has taken a number of actions that might bother some groups, the budget was the most visible, and it has clearly resulted in a major negative shift in opinion about the Governor.”

Christie has lost support across all parties, but most notably among independents, whose positive feelings dropped from 48 percent in February to 34 percent in March. Even so, Christie comes out ahead when compared to how residents feel about their representatives at the state capitol. Only 26 percent say they feel favorably towards the Democrats in Trenton and 25 percent towards the Republicans.

The Governor draws more support from men more than women. Only 30 percent of woman report a favorable impression, compared to 36 percent of their male counterparts. Additionally,

those with household incomes more than \$150,000 annually are the only group in which the majority views Christie favorably. Of high earners, 50 percent feel favorable toward the Governor, compared to 38 percent with incomes from \$100,000-150,000, 34 percent of those between \$50,000-\$100,000 and 22 percent with household incomes less than 50 thousand dollars per year.

Constitutional Amendment to Limit Property Taxes Supported -- Or Maybe Not

Governor Christie also proposed what he calls "Proposition 2 ½," based on a Massachusetts constitutional requirement that property taxes increase no more than 2 ½ percent annually. Public opinion on the proposal at this early stage varies widely depending on how the question is phrased when the idea is described. Half of the respondents to the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll were asked as if they would support a constitutional amendment proposed by the governor to limit property tax increases. Not surprisingly, nearly two out of three (64 percent) said "yes". Support for such an amendment is wide, with majority support from Republicans, Democrats, and independents, as well as all income groups and all races.

The other half were asked the same question, but told that Massachusetts had a similar law that "some say resulted in closing fire stations, libraries, and senior centers, and cuts in school programs." When put this way, a majority oppose the property tax limits the Governor advocates, with 57 percent opposed and 34 percent in support. Only Republicans reach 50 percent support when potential consequences are presented, while 78 percent of Democrats and 56 percent of independents oppose the measure.

"These stunning results suggest that while there is a great deal of concern about property taxes in New Jersey, there is equal concern about what passing Proposition 2 ½ might do," said Redlawsk. When asked to limit taxes without being made aware of any consequences, New Jerseyans across the board respond with a rousing 'Yes!' But when they consider the loss of services that might come with such limits, support dries up considerably. Both supporters and opponents of Proposition 2 ½ might take a lesson from these results."

Question and Tables follow on the Next Page

Rutgers-Eagleton Poll March 31-April 3, 2010

The Rutgers-Eagleton Poll was conducted from March 31-April 3, 2010 with a scientifically selected random sample of 953 New Jersey adults. Data are weighted to represent known parameters in the New Jersey population, including gender, age, race, education, and Hispanic ethnicity. All results are reported with these weighted data. Of these 953 adults, a weighted sample of 809 had heard at least something about Gov. Chris Christie's proposed budget. This group is the focus of most of the tables in this release.

All surveys are subject to sampling error, which is the expected probable difference between interviewing everyone in a population versus a scientific sampling drawn from that population. The sampling error for a sample of 953 adults is +/-3.2 points, at a 95 percent confidence interval. The sampling error for 812 adults aware of the budget is +/-3.4. Thus if 50 percent of 953 New Jersey adults favored a particular position, one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 46.8 and 53.2 percent (50 + 3.2) had all New Jersey adults been interviewed, rather than just a sample. Sampling error increases as the sample size decreases, so statements based on various population subgroups are subject to more error than are statements based on the total sample. Sampling error does not take into account other sources of variation inherent in public opinion studies, such as non-response, question wording or context effects.

Weighted Sample Characteristics (n=953 Adults)			
42% Dem	48% Male	26% 18-29	66% White
32% Independent	52% Female	38% 30-49	11% Black
26% Republican		19% 50-64	15% Hispanic
		17% 65+	7% Asian
			1% Other/Multiple

Questions and Tables

The questions covered in the release of April 7, 2010 are list below. Column percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding. All percentages are of New Jersey adults.

Q. First I'd like to ask about some people and groups. Please tell me if your general impression of each on is favorable or unfavorable, or if you do not have an opinion. First, [Next]

[Rotate Order]

	Governor Chris Christie April 2010	Feb 2010	Democrats in Trenton	Republicans in Trenton
Favorable	33%	45%	26%	25%
Unfavorable	37%	26%	35%	37%
No Opinion	30%	29%	39%	38%
N=	953	954	953	953

**Governor Chris Christie's Budget
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll**

Governor Chris Christie

	April 2010			February 2010		
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Dem	Ind	Rep
Favorable	11%	34%	69%	20%	48%	78%
Unfavorable	57%	34%	11%	45%	20%	7%
No Opinion	30%	32%	20%	35%	32%	14%
N=	378	289	239	357	280	242

Governor Chris Christie

						Rent or Own Home	
	Liberal	Middle	Conserv	Male	Female	Own	Rent
Favorable	20%	26%	61%	36%	30%	39%	20%
Unfavorable	61%	38%	18%	34%	40%	32%	44%
No Opinion	19%	36%	20%	30%	231%	29%	35%
N=	173	494	240	454	498	664	238

Governor Chris Christie

	Income				White	Black	Latino	Asian
	< 50K	50K – 100K- <100k	<150K	150k +				
Favorable	22%	34%	38%	50%	40%	11%	24%	28%
Unfavorable	39%	42%	35%	31%	36%	53%	36%	34%
No Opinion	39%	23%	27%	19%	24%	36%	40%	39%
N=	301	241	147	109	604	103	134	65

Q. How much have you heard or read about Governor Christie's proposed state budget? Is it:

A lot	34%
Some	31%
A little	20%
Nothing at All	15%
N=	949

	Dem	Ind	Rep	Liberal	Middle	Conserv	Male	Female
A lot	35%	32%	37%	38%	34%	34%	36%	33%
Some	32%	24%	38%	33%	32%	30%	28%	33%
A little	15%	29%	16%	20%	19%	22%	19%	20%
Nothing at All	18%	15%	10%	9%	15%	14%	16%	14%
N=	378	289	236	170	492	240	453	497

**Governor Chris Christie's Budget
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll**

	Income						White	Black	Latino	Asian
	Own Home	Rent Home	< 50K	50K – <100k	100K- <150K	150k +				
A lot	40%	22%	33%	37%	34%	49%	37%	38%	26%	17%
Some	33%	26%	26%	37%	31%	34%	33%	19%	30%	29%
A little	18%	24%	20%	15%	25%	14%	20%	15%	26%	19%
Nothing at All	9%	28%	22%	12%	10%	3%	10%	28%	18%	35%
N=	659	238	301	240	148	108	614	103	140	65

[The remaining questions were asked ONLY of respondents who had heard AT LEAST a “little” about the proposed budget]

Q. Were you able to watch or listen to the Governor's budget speech a couple of weeks ago, even just part of it?

Yes	39%
No	61%
N=	812

	Dem	Ind	Rep	Liberal	Middle	Conserv	Male	Female
Yes	45%	30%	40%	33%	40%	39%	42%	36%
No	55%	70%	60%	67%	60%	61%	58%	64%
N=	313	245	215	156	419	206	381	429

	Income						White	Black	Latino	Asian
	Own Home	Rent Home	< 50K	50K – <100k	100K- <150K	150k +				
Yes	40%	35%	41%	43%	35%	35%	36	49	46	35
No	60%	65%	59%	57%	65%	65%	64	51	54	65
N=	603	171	236	213	133	107	555	74	116	43

Awareness of proposed budget:

Awareness" is a scale that combines the question "have you heard much" question with the "did you see/hear the speech" question. If respondents said "Yes" they saw or heard some of the speech, then they are coded "Very Aware". If respondents said "No" to seeing or hearing the speech personally, but heard "A Lot or Some" about the budget then they are coded as "Somewhat aware" If respondents did not hear or see the speech but had heard "A Little" about the budget, then they are coded "Not Very Aware."

Very aware	39%
Somewhat aware	42%
Not Very Aware	19%
N=	808

**Governor Chris Christie's Budget
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll**

	Dem	Ind	Rep	Liberal	Middle	Conserv	Male	Female
Very Aware	45%	30%	40%	33%	40%	39%	42%	36%
Somewhat aware	42%	42%	46%	51%	41%	40%	40%	45%
Not Very aware	13%	29%	14%	16%	18%	21%	18%	19%
N=	312	246	213	154	418	206	379	427

	Income						White	Black	Latino	Asian
	Own Home	Rent Home	< 50K	50K – <100k	100K- <150K	150k +				
Very Aware	40%	35%	41%	43%	36%	35%	36%	49%	47%	33%
Somewhat aware	44%	37%	39%	43%	44%	52%	46%	37%	28%	38%
Not Very Aware	16%	28%	20%	14%	20%	12%	17%	13%	25%	29%
N=	599	171	236	212	133	105	555	74	116	43

Q. Overall are you very pleased, somewhat pleased, somewhat displeased or very displeased with the Governor's proposed budget?

Very Pleased	13%
Somewhat Pleased	30%
Somewhat Displeased	21%
Very Displeased	29%
Don't Know	8%
N=	802

Reaction to Budget by Christie Favorables

Impression of Gov Christie is:

<i>Reaction to Budget:</i>	Favorable	Unfavorable	No Opinion
Very Pleased	33%	2%	1%
Somewhat Pleased	55%	5%	29%
Somewhat Displeased	5%	27%	35%
Very Displeased	1%	63%	15%
Don't Know	6%	3%	21%
N=	292	325	171

Reaction to Budget by Awareness of Budget

Awareness of Budget:

<i>Reaction to Budget:</i>	Very Aware	Somewhat Aware	Not Very Aware
Very Pleased	19%	11%	3%
Somewhat Pleased	27%	29%	36%
Somewhat Displeased	17%	23%	24%
Very Displeased	34%	33%	12%
Don't Know	3%	4%	25%
N=	314	342	143

Reaction to budget

	Dem	Ind	Rep	Liberal	Middle	Conserv	Male	Female
Very Pleased	3%	12%	28%	4%	8%	31%	16%	9%
Somewhat Pleased	15%	33%	45%	16%	31%	37%	32%	27%
Somewhat Displeased	28%	21%	10%	28%	22%	12%	18%	23%
Very Displeased	48%	23%	10%	45%	32%	11%	26%	32%
Don't Know	6%	12%	6%	6%	8%	9%	7%	9%
N=	311	241	214	155	414	204	375	426

Reaction to budget

	Income							White	Black	Latino	Asian
	Own Home	Rent Home	< 50K	50K – <100k	100K- <150K	150k +					
Very Pleased	15%	8%	8%	13%	14%	24%	16%	0%	9%	7%	
Somewhat Pleased	31%	27%	23%	34%	33%	30%	31%	15%	30%	29%	
Somewhat Displeased	17%	28%	25%	15%	19%	22%	21%	32%	17%	12%	
Very Displeased	29%	27%	36%	31%	28%	21%	25%	44%	38%	40%	
Don't Know	8%	10%	8%	7%	7%	3%	7%	9%	7%	12%	
N=	597	169	234	214	133	106	552	75	112	42	

Q. How much do you think Christie's proposed spending cuts will affect you?

A great deal	31%
Some	42%
Very little	16%
Not at all	7%
Don't Know	4%
N=	809

Effect of Expected Spending Cuts by Reaction to Budget

<i>Reaction to Budget</i>	<i>Spending Cuts will affect me:</i>			
	A Great Deal	Some	Very Little	Not at All
Very Pleased	6%	18%	13%	13%
Somewhat Pleased	9%	39%	47%	20%
Somewhat Displeased	23%	21%	20%	16%
Very Displeased	59%	15%	15%	31%
Don't Know	3%	6%	5%	20%
N=	248	332	132	55

Spending cuts will affect me:

	Dem	Ind	Rep	Liberal	Middle	Conserv	Male	Female
A great Deal	44%	26%	19%	38%	34%	18%	25%	36%
Some	32%	43%	54%	34%	39%	53%	41%	42%
Very Little	14%	18%	19%	15%	17%	19%	19%	13%
Not at All	8%	9%	3%	7%	7%	6%	10%	4%
Don't Know	2%	3%	6%	6%	3%	4%	5%	4%
Total N	313	246	215	157	417	206	381	428

Spending cuts will affect me:

	<i>Income</i>									
	Own Home	Rent Home	< 50K	50K – <100k	100K- <150K	150k +	White	Black	Latino	Asian
A Great Deal	31%	29%	32%	34%	34%	29%	31%	46%	28%	19%
Some	43%	38%	36%	42%	43%	49%	43%	38%	35%	36%
Very Little	15%	22%	14%	17%	20%	16%	17%	11%	20%	12%
Not at All	7%	7%	12%	5%	1%	2%	5%	1%	14%	29%
Don't Know	4%	4%	6%	1%	2%	4%	4%	4%	3%	5%
N=	602	170	236	213	134	106	555	74	116	42

Q. Governor Christie has promised sweeping changes to cut taxes, increase government efficiency, and fix the budget deficit. Do you think it is very likely, somewhat likely or not at all likely he can accomplish what he plans?

	April 2010	Trend: Feb 2010
Very Likely	10%	7%
Somewhat Likely	51%	55%
Not at all Likely	37%	36%
Don't Know	3%	3%
N=	809	954

	Dem	Ind	Rep	Liberal	Middle	Conserv	Male	Female
Very Likely	2%	8%	22%	1%	8%	20%	10%	9%
Somewhat Likely	43%	53%	62%	42%	51%	61%	52%	50%
Not at all Likely	52%	36%	15%	54%	39%	18%	36%	37%
Don't Know	3%	2%	1%	3%	2%	2%	2%	4%
N=	312	244	215	156	418	205	380	428

	Income						White	Black	Latino	Asian
	Own Home	Rent Home	< 50K	50K – <100k	100K- <150K	150k +				
Very Likely	10%	8%	8%	7%	11%	13%	10%	5%	6%	26%
Somewhat Likely	50%	50%	51%	54%	46%	56%	53%	32%	55%	42%
Not at all Likely	37%	40%	37%	37%	42%	29%	35%	58%	34%	33%
Don't Know	3%	2%	3%	3%	2%	2%	2%	4%	4%	0%
N=	603	171	236	213	134	106	553	74	116	43

Q. [SPLIT SAMPLE. RANDOM ASSIGNMENT TO EITHER VERSION A OR B]

[VERSION A] The Governor also proposed a constitutional amendment limiting property tax increases to two and a half percent per year. Would you support such a constitutional amendment?

[VERSION B] The Governor also proposed a constitutional amendment limiting property tax increases to two and a half percent per year. Massachusetts passed a similar law in the 1980's which some say resulted in closing fire stations, libraries, and senior centers, and cuts in school programs. Would you support such a constitutional amendment even if it had those effects?

*Governor Chris Christie's Budget
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll*

	Version A	Version B
Yes	64%	34%
No	27%	57%
Don't Know	10%	8%
Total N	407	403

VERSION A

	Dem	Ind	Rep	Liberal	Middle	Conserv	Male	Female
Yes	50%	73%	78%	49%	63%	77%	65%	62%
No	35%	24%	17%	36%	25%	21%	27%	25%
Don't Know	15%	4%	6%	15%	12%	2%	7%	13%
N=	173	109	107	83	210	104	191	215

	Income						White	Black	Latino	Asian
	Own Home	Rent Home	< 50K	50K – <100k	100K- <150K	150k +				
Yes	70%	53%	53%	67%	69%	67%	63%	58%	72%	56%
No	23%	33%	35%	25%	27%	22%	26%	28%	22%	35%
Don't Know	7%	14%	12%	8%	3%	11%	11%	14%	5%	9%
N=	292	94	111	122	62	54	281	36	58	23

VERSION B

	Dem	Ind	Rep	Liberal	Middle	Conserv	Male	Female
Yes	19%	38%	50%	16%	34%	48%	41%	28%
No	78%	56%	35%	77%	58%	42%	52%	62%
Don't Know	4%	6%	16%	7%	8%	10%	6%	10%
N=	139	135	107	73	208	102	189	214

	Income						White	Black	Latino	Asian
	Own Home	Rent Home	< 50K	50K – <100k	100K- <150K	150k +				
Yes	41%	13%	31%	24%	38%	51%	36%	15%	40%	26%
No	51%	82%	66%	62%	54%	45%	54%	82%	59%	68%
Don't Know	8%	5%	3%	14%	8%	4%	11%	3%	2%	5%
N=	309	76	124	91	72	51	273	39	58	19