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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** ATTENTION EDITORS, Rutgers-Eagleton Poll Director David Redlawsk may be contacted at 319-400-1134, 732-932-9384, ext. 285, or [redlawsk@rutgers.edu](mailto:redlawsk@rutgers.edu). Visit <http://eagletonpoll.blogspot.com> for a link to specific questions and full tables.

### **Governor Christie Generates Divided Responses as First Year Ends**

*Job Rating More Polarized than Most First-year NJ Governors; Overall in Middle of the Pack*

NEW BRUNSWICK – As his first year draws to a close, New Jerseyans are split about Gov. Chris Christie's job performance with a majority rating him only fair or poor, according to a Rutgers-Eagleton poll released today. Only 39 percent of Garden State residents rate the governor's job performance either excellent (17 percent) or good (22 percent), compared to 54 percent who rate him fair (26 percent) or poor (28 percent), and 6 percent who are unsure. Support is stronger among those who say they voted in the recent congressional election: 21 percent of voters rate his performance excellent, and 23 percent rate him as good. Another 23 percent say he is doing a fair job and 29 percent say he is doing a poor job, while 4 percent of voters are unsure.

Gov. Christie's "poor" rating is the second highest over the history of the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll in the first year of a new governor, while his "excellent" rating is also among the highest. Since Gov. Brendan Byrne, only Gov. Jim Florio has performed worse, while Christie's overall positive job rating of 39 percent equals or beats other first-year governors except Jon Corzine (53 percent approval) and Christie Whitman (52 percent good or excellent).

"Historically, New Jerseyans are pretty hard on their governors in the first year," said David Redlawsk, director of the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll and professor of political science at Rutgers University. "And Gov. Christie has clearly polarized the Garden State. The 45 percent of adults who rate his job at one extreme or the other is exceeded only by the 48 percent who did so with Gov. Florio during September of his first year."

The poll of 906 New Jersey adults was conducted December 2-6. The full sample has a margin of error of +/- 3.3 percentage points. The sample includes 666 respondents who say they voted in the 2010 congressional elections. This subsample has a margin of error of +/- 3.8 percentage points.

### **Christie job performance rating stable; middle of the first-year governor pack**

Gov. Christie's job performance rating has been consistent over the past few months. His favorable ratings (excellent and good) have generally been between 40 and 45 percent with little change

despite controversies like the Race to the Top education funding, the recent ARC tunnel cancellation, and other events. Likewise negative views have generally hovered between 52 and 58 percent. Since August his job performance rating has been more negative than positive.

However, compared to Governors since 1974, Christie's job ratings are similar to or better than most early in the first term. The highest-rated was Gov. Christie Whitman, with 52 to 56 percent giving her positive ratings in her first year, followed by 53 percent approval of Corzine's performance at about the same point. Gov. Tom Kean's rating of 39 percent positive in 1982 is equal to Christie's while only 27 to 33 percent rated Gov. Brendan Byrne positively late in 1974. Gov. Jim McGreevey's job performance was approved of by 34 percent after his first year, while Gov. Jim Florio did worst with an 18 percent positive rating in late 1990 and 21 percent in early 1991.

"One thing is clear from this historical data – we cannot make predictions on the rest of the term based on how citizens view governors in the first year," said Redlawsk. "Both Gov. Corzine and Gov. Whitman had high positive ratings at the beginning. But in the end Whitman barely hung on for a second term, and Corzine was defeated. Likewise, Gov. Kean's rating was middling at best, and he won a second term by an unprecedented margin."

#### **Governor Christie more polarizing**

Christie's ratings are more polarized than those of previous governors where data exists, with half of voters and 45 percent of all respondents giving his job performance either an "excellent" or a "poor" rating. In comparison, for most governors back to Brendan Byrne, fewer than 25 percent chose one of the more extreme categories. More Garden Staters say that Christie is doing an excellent job (17 percent of all, and 21 percent of voters) than gave an excellent rating to the next highest, Gov. Whitman (about 13 percent), early in her term.

Similarly, Christie's "poor" rating beats everyone except Gov. Florio by a wide margin. Twenty-eight percent of adults (29 percent of voters) rate his job performance as "poor" compared to Florio's 38 to 45 percent at a similar time in his term. No other governor is above the 20 percent "poor" given to Gov. Byrne in January 1975.

"The image of Gov. Christie as polarizing is borne out in the data," said Redlawsk. "While many Garden Staters see him as a breath of fresh air making needed changes in Trenton, even more rank him as low as they can on our rating scale. The events of his term so far have done little to temper this polarization. If anything, polarization has increased since September."

#### **Christie support highest among Tea Party supporters**

Christie's job performance is rated highest among Republicans with a favorable impression of the Tea Party movement, offering a clue to why he may be so polarizing. Eighty percent of Republicans holding a favorable opinion of the Tea Party rate Christie positively with 43 percent saying he is doing an

excellent job and 37 percent rating his job performance as good. Only 17 percent say he is doing a fair job and 3 percent say he is doing a poor job. Republicans who are not favorable towards the Tea Party movement feel more negative towards the governor. Overall 57 percent of this group – which makes up 45 percent of all Republicans – rate the governor as good or excellent, while 41 percent give him a fair or poor rating.

Independents and Democrats feel negatively about Christie’s job performance after nearly a year in office. While 40 percent of independents say the governor is doing an excellent or good job, 52 percent rate him only fair or poor. Democrats, not surprisingly, are very negative: 18 percent say the governor is doing a good or excellent job while 76 percent call his performance fair or poor.

“Tea Party supporters clearly form the governor’s base and are generally very happy with his performance to date,” said Redlawsk. “However, his negative ratings among independents and his less positive ratings among non-Tea Party Republicans suggests potential trouble getting support for some of his major reform proposals. The polarization in these data is unlikely to subside any time soon.”

**Impressions of Christie more positive than job performance**

Despite his job performance ratings, more New Jerseyans say they have a favorable impression of the governor overall. While 38 percent view him unfavorably, 45 percent express a favorable impression, with 17 percent either neutral or unsure of their feelings toward the governor.

Over the first year of his term, Christie has been seen favorably by fewer than 50 percent of Garden Staters. While in April 2010 his 33 percent favorable rating was substantially lower, in five out of six polls over the year about 45 percent of respondents had a favorable impression of the Governor. Overall his rating has been slightly more favorable than unfavorable most of the year.

“Despite qualms about the job he is doing, Garden Staters on average see Christie in a fairly favorable light,” said Redlawsk. “Even where they may disagree with his policies or see his job performance more negatively, as an individual they tend to like him more than dislike him.”

**Questions and Tables follow on the Next Page**

**Rutgers-Eagleton Poll December 2-6, 2010  
Questions and Tables**

The questions covered in the release of Dec 20, 2010 are listed below. Column percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

**Q. Thanks. First let's talk about how things are going in New Jersey. Please rate how Chris Christie is handling his job as Governor. Is it excellent, good, fair, or poor?**

**Christie Job Performance over 2010 (RV=Registered Voters; December "voters" said they voted in the 2010 Congressional election)**

	August RV	September RV	October RV	December Adults	December Voters
Excellent	22%	12%	16%	17%	21%
Good	23%	27%	29%	22%	23%
Fair	27%	33%	24%	26%	23%
Poor	25%	25%	28%	28%	29%
DK	3%	3%	3%	6%	6%
N=	911	750	876	900	660

**Historical Job performance ratings around first year of office; Rutgers-Eagleton Poll**

	9/1974 Byrne	1/1975 Byrne	9/1982 Kean	9/1990 Florio	2/1991 Florio	9/1994 Whitman	2/1995 Whitman	2/2003* McGreevey	10/2006* Corzine
Excellent	3%	2%	4%	3%	3%	12%	13%		
Good	30%	25%	35%	15%	19%	40%	43%	34%	53%
Fair	45%	47%	41%	33%	35%	33%	28%	45%	30%
Poor	12%	20%	5%	45%	38%	9%	12%		
DK	10%	5%	15%	5%	4%	6%	4%	21%	17%
N=	1004	1004	503	800	800	801	801	802	809

\* In 2003 and 2006 question was asked about approving or disapproving job performance. In analyses "approve" is mapped onto "Excellent" plus "Good" and disapprove onto "Fair" plus "Poor"

**Christie Job Performance, All Adults, December 2010**

	Party ID					Ideology			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Rep Fav Tea Party	Rep Not Fav Tea Party	Lib	Middle	Conserv	
Excellent	5%	17%	34%	43%	25%	6%	12%	38%	
Good	13%	23%	34%	37%	32%	12%	22%	31%	
Fair	32%	26%	21%	17%	25%	30%	30%	17%	
Poor	44%	26%	9%	3%	16%	48%	28%	12%	
DK	6%	9%	2%	0%	2%	4%	8%	2%	
N=	289	385	205	111	92	150	526	205	

**Gov. Christie Job Performance Dec. 2010  
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll**

	Employment				Race				Education			
	Full Time	Part Time	Retire	Not Empl	White	Black	Asian	Hisp	HS or Less	Some Coll	Coll Grad	Grad Work
Excellent	16%	15%	24%	13%	20%	7%	6%	9%	13%	21%	18%	20%
Good	25%	12%	23%	21%	25%	12%	25%	14%	20%	23%	26%	22%
Fair	24%	37%	22%	32%	28%	17%	38%	23%	30%	24%	27%	21%
Poor	29%	29%	24%	30%	23%	56%	14%	40%	31%	25%	24%	33%
DK	6%	7%	7%	4%	4%	8%	17%	13%	6%	8%	5%	4%
N=	423	111	195	168	626	107	56	86	342	236	195	123

	Age				Income				Gender	
	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+	< 50K	50K- <100K	100K- <150K	150K+	Male	Female
Excellent	8%	15%	19%	25%	11%	17%	17%	30%	22%	13%
Good	16%	24%	23%	23%	23%	21%	17%	32%	25%	20%
Fair	37%	26%	24%	21%	28%	26%	31%	19%	24%	28%
Poor	30%	29%	30%	24%	30%	30%	29%	19%	23%	33%
DK	9%	6%	4%	6%	8%	6%	6%	0%	6%	6%
N=	138	331	234	193	294	237	132	88	427	474

**Q. And please rate how Barack Obama is handling his job as President. Is it excellent, good, fair, or poor?**

	Adults	Voters
Excellent	9%	9%
Good	29%	28%
Fair	34%	32%
Poor	27%	30%
DK	1%	1%
N=	904	664

**Christie Job Performance by Obama Performance (Adults)**

	Obama Job performance			
	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Excellent	15%	5%	14%	35%
Good	29%	24%	17%	24%
Fair	11%	32%	31%	20%
Poor	42%	33%	30%	18%
DK	4%	6%	8%	2%
N=	82	261	299	246

**Q. Would you say the state of New Jersey is currently going in the right direction or has it gone off on the wrong track?**

<b>Adults</b>	
Right Direction	38%
Wrong Track	52%
DK	9%
N=	902

**Christie Job Performance by State Direction (Adults)**

	State Direction		
	Right Direction	Wrong Track	DK
Excellent	39%	3%	7%
Good	35%	13%	20%
Fair	18%	30%	42%
Poor	5%	50%	7%
DK	4%	4%	24%
N=	347	467	85

**Q. I'd like to ask about some people and organizations. Please tell me if your general impression of each one is favorable or unfavorable, or if you do not have an opinion. First, [next]: [ROTATE]**

Adults	Tea Party Movement	Dems in Congress	Reps in Congress	President Obama	Dems In Trenton	Reps In Trenton	Senator Menendez	Senator Lautenberg
Favorable	27%	34%	28%	52%	31%	28%	27%	35%
Unfavorable	40%	40%	43%	34%	34%	32%	24%	28%
DK	33%	26%	29%	13%	35%	40%	49%	37%
N=	903	903	904	904	905	904	904	906

**Christie Favorables over 2010 (RV=Registered Voters)**

	February RV	April Adults	August RV	September RV	October RV	December Adults	December Voters
Favorable	45%	33%	46%	46%	45%	45%	49%
Unfavorable	26%	37%	39%	42%	38%	38%	39%
No Opinion/DK	29%	30%	15%	12%	17%	17%	13%
N=	881	953	751	911	879	906	665

**Christie Favorables December 2010 Adults**

	Party ID			Ideology		
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Lib	Middle	Conserv
Favorable	26%	44%	73%	24%	40%	76%
Unfavorable	55%	37%	17%	61%	41%	14%
DK/No Opinion	19%	19%	10%	15%	20%	10%
N=	291	390	204	154	525	205

	Employment				Race				Education			
	Full Time	Part Time	Retire	Not Emp	White	Black	Asian	Hisp	HS or Less	Some Coll	Coll Grad	Grad Work
Favorable	48%	32%	52%	36%	52%	20%	38%	28%	39%	49%	49%	45%
Unfavorable	36%	50%	31%	44%	36%	62%	27%	37%	40%	36%	33%	47%
DK/No Op	15%	18%	17%	20%	13%	18%	35%	35%	22%	15%	18%	8%
N=	424	112	194	172	626	107	59	87	341	238	198	124

**Gov. Christie Job Performance Dec. 2010  
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll**

	Age				Income				Gender	
	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+	< 50K	50K- <100K	100K- <150K	150K+	Male	Female
Favorable	29%	44%	47%	55%	38%	47%	43%	60%	54%	36%
Unfavorable	47%	40%	38%	30%	40%	40%	42%	33%	31%	45%
DK/No Opinion	15%	15%	23%	13%	15%	8%	14%	20%	15%	15%
N=	236	192	294	237	132	88	432	474	236	192

**Rutgers-Eagleton Poll December 2-6, 2010**  
New Jersey Statewide Poll

The Rutgers-Eagleton Poll was conducted by telephone from December 2-6, 2010 with a scientifically selected random sample of 906 New Jersey adults. Data are weighted to represent known parameters in the New Jersey population, using gender, age, race, and Hispanic ethnicity matching to US Census Bureau data. All results are reported with these weighted data. This telephone poll included 725 landline respondents and 181 cell phone respondents, acquired through random digit dialing.

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 906 adults is +/-3.3 percent, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of New Jersey adults favored a particular position, one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 46.7 and 53.3 percent (50 +/-3.3) 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.

This Rutgers-Eagleton Poll was fielded by Braun Research, Inc., of Princeton, New Jersey. The questionnaire was developed and all data analysis was completed in house at the Eagleton Institute of Politics Center for Public Interest Polling. The Rutgers-Eagleton Poll is paid for and sponsored by the Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University, a non-partisan academic center focused on the study and teaching of politics and the political process.

<b>Weighted Sample Characteristics</b> (N=906 New Jersey Adults)			
32% Dem	48% Male	16% 18-29	69% White
45% Independent	52% Female	37% 30-49	12% Black
23% Republican		26% 50-64	10% Hispanic
		21% 65+	6% Asian
			3% Other

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