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RUTGERS-EAGLETON POLL: MAJORITY OF NEW JERSEY VOTERS SUPPORT CHRISTIE INCOME TAX CUT

But most would prefer property tax cut first

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J – As Gov. Chris Christie prepares to give his annual budget address, a new Rutgers-Eagleton Poll shows a majority of registered voters support his proposed 10 percent income tax cut. But even though 52 percent say they support the governor's signature budget proposal, fully three-quarters would prefer to see a property tax cut come first.

Moreover, voters significantly overestimate how much money they would actually receive from an income tax cut. A New Jersey taxpayer making \$50,000 would save a little less than \$100 per year from a 10 percent income tax cut, and those making \$100,000 would save about \$275. Voters anticipate a median savings of nearly \$750.

"People are eager for tax relief," said poll Director David Redlawsk, a professor of political science at Rutgers University. "Yet for most New Jerseyans the burden they feel comes from property taxes, more than from income taxes. A majority would certainly take an income tax cut over nothing, but large numbers have no idea how much they would save from Christie's proposal."

While there are strong partisan differences in support for an income tax cut – 72 percent of Republicans want it, while only 38 percent of Democrats offer support – everyone agrees that a property tax cut is preferred. Nearly eight-in-ten Republicans and Democrats say cut property taxes first, and 73 percent of independents agree.

Results are from a poll of 914 registered voters conducted statewide among both landline and cell phone households from Feb. 9-11. The full sample has a margin of error of +/- 3.3 percentage points.

Income tax cut popular among Republicans, voters with higher incomes

Predictably, nearly three-quarters of Republicans favor the proposed income tax cut, with only 21 percent opposed. Independents support the proposal, 54 percent to 32 percent. Democrats statewide are dubious about this plan, with half opposed and only 38 percent in favor. These figures lead to an

expected outcome: 71 percent of voters with positive feelings about Christie support an income tax cut. A majority (55 percent) who feel unfavorable toward Christie oppose his plan.

Household income makes little difference in support for the proposed tax cut: 58 percent who earn more than \$150,000 annually and 53 percent who earn less favor the proposal. Gender also makes little difference: 54 percent of men and 50 percent of women say they favor the tax cut.

“While those at higher income benefit more in terms of dollars, that doesn’t seem to make much difference,” said Redlawsk. “Support for the proposed income tax cut remains consistent across all income levels.”

Christie’s income tax relief is less popular among the more educated; only 43 percent of voters with post-graduate education favor the proposal, while more than half of those with less education say they like the idea. Support for the income tax cut is slightly higher among whites (54 percent) than among blacks (49 percent). More retired voters (55 percent) favor the savings than full-time workers (52 percent) or part-timers (50 percent). Fewer than half of the unemployed support the proposed tax cut.

Voters overestimate value of income tax cut

Thirty-five percent of registered voters think a 10 percent tax cut would save them more than \$500 per year, but reports suggest that a household would have to earn more than \$150,000 in taxable income to save just over \$500 in state taxes. Another 32 percent say they are unsure about their savings. Only 22 percent estimated their savings at \$200 or less.

Support for the tax cut is greatly influenced by inaccurate perceptions of how much will be saved. Among the 31 percent who think they will save \$750 per year or more, nearly two-thirds support the tax cut. Among those who expect to save less, support runs from 44 to 48 percent.

“Only 14 percent of voters report household incomes over \$150,000,” noted Redlawsk. “These respondents can expect savings above \$500 from the proposed cut. But more than twice as many say they expect to save that much. People really do not have a good sense of how much they pay in state income tax and what a 10 percent savings means. This leads them to overestimate their own gain, which may affect their support for the proposal.” -

Voters in households with lower incomes give the lowest estimate of their savings, though they still over estimate badly. About a quarter of those earning under \$50,000 believe their tax savings would be more than \$200, far higher than the \$80 savings likely at \$50,000 income. Moreover, 10 percent of those earning less than \$50,000 and 15 percent of earners between \$50,000 and \$100,000 anticipate tax savings of more than \$2,000.

“There is a great deal of misinformation about how much can be saved in state income taxes,” said Redlawsk. “Most voters appear to be guessing at best, and are guessing very high. One-third won’t even make a guess.”

Strong preference for property tax reduction

Although the governor’s proposed income tax cut is popular across the state, an overwhelming majority of voters (76 percent) would prefer a property tax reduction. Given a choice between the two taxes, Republicans, Democrats and independents all agree that property taxes should be reduced first. Voters’ opinions of the governor do not seem to affect preference for property tax reduction. Those with a favorable opinion (80 percent) and an unfavorable opinion (74 percent) strongly prefer a property tax cut come first. Even eight-in-10 of the highest earning Garden Staters – who would benefit most from an income tax cut - prefer to see their property taxes cut before income taxes.

“Everyone likes lower taxes” said Redlawsk. “But property tax cuts are what New Jerseyans seem to want. While recent changes pushed by Gov. Christie have placed stronger caps on property tax increases, voters still want to see those taxes actually reduced. It’s one thing nearly everyone agrees on.”

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QUESTIONS AND TABLES BEGIN ON THE NEXT PAGE

Questions and Tables

The questions covered in the release of February 21, 2012 are listed below. Column percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding. Respondents are Registered Voters (RV).

Q. Governor Christie has proposed a 10 percent across-the-board N.J. state income tax cut. From what you know about it, do you favor or oppose this proposal?

Favor	52%
Oppose	36%
DK	12%
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Unwght N=	912

	Party ID			Ideology			Education			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Lib	Mod	Cons	HS or less	Some Coll	Coll Grad	Grad Work
Favor	38%	54%	72%	39%	50%	75%	54%	55%	54%	43%
Oppose	50%	32%	21%	44%	40%	16%	29%	36%	33%	48%
DK	12%	14%	7%	17%	10%	9%	17%	9%	13%	9%
Unwght N=	319	400	183	186	512	191	202	246	244	215

	Employment				Race		Age			
	FT	PT	Retired	Not Empl	White	Black	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
Favor	52%	50%	55%	48%	54%	49%	45%	50%	57%	51%
Oppose	38%	33%	36%	34%	34%	35%	40%	37%	34%	36%
DK	10%	17%	9%	18%	12%	16%	15%	13%	9%	13%
Unwght N=	398	82	290	140	717	84	54	223	348	279

	Income				Gender		Religion		
	< 50K	50K- <100K	100K- <150K	150K+	Male	Female	Catholic	Protestant	Jewish
Favor	53%	54%	53%	58%	54%	50%	53%	51%	56%
Oppose	35%	36%	37%	35%	36%	37%	35%	40%	32%
DK	12%	10%	10%	7%	10%	13%	12%	9%	12%
Unwght N=	244	265	132	102	431	481	396	236	68

	Born Again		Union Household			Christie Impression		
	Yes	No	Public	Private	No Union	Fav	Unfav	No Opin
Favor	53%	52%	40%	51%	53%	71%	33%	41%
Oppose	39%	35%	53%	30%	34%	19%	55%	41%
DK	8%	13%	7%	18%	12%	10%	12%	18%
Unwght N=	125	534	121	55	718	458	348	98

	Expected Tax Cut Savings				
	Don't Know	\$200 or less	> \$200 to \$750	> \$750 to \$2,000	> \$2000
Favor	45%	44%	48%	63%	69%
Oppose	36%	47%	46%	28%	24%
Don't Know	19%	9%	7%	8%	6%
Unwght N=	341	200	97	163	113

*Christie Tax Cut Proposal February 2012
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll*

Q. How much money do you think a 10 percent cut in the state income tax would save your family each year? [PROMPT AS NEEDED: Just give me your best guess.]

\$10 to 100	15%
\$101 to 200	7%
\$201 to 300	3%
\$301 to 500	7%
\$501 to 1000	13%
\$1001 to 2000	8%
\$2001 +	14%
DK	32%
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Unwght N=	878

Mean estimated savings among those with response: \$2,364
Median estimated savings among those with response: \$746

Expected Savings	Income			
	<50K	50K- <100K	100K- <150K	>150K
Don't Know	46%	25%	24%	15%
\$200 or less	29%	20%	18%	12%
Over \$200 to \$750	6%	18%	15%	11%
Over \$750 to \$2,000	8%	22%	29%	34%
More than \$2000	10%	15%	14%	28%
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	239	273	133	107

Q. If you had to choose between either reducing state income taxes or reducing property taxes, which one would you prefer to be reduced first, income or property taxes?

Income Tax	22%
Property Tax	76%
DK	3%
Unwght N=	910

	Party ID			Ideology			Education			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Lib	Mod	Cons	HS or less	Some Coll	Coll Grad	Grad Work
Income Tax	19%	25%	20%	20%	24%	17%	20%	22%	23%	22%
Property Tax	78%	73%	79%	74%	74%	81%	79%	76%	75%	75%
DK	3%	3%	1%	6%	2%	2%	1%	3%	3%	3%
Unwght N=	319	399	182	187	510	190	200	247	244	214

	Employment				Race		Age			
	FT	PT	Retired	Not Empl	White	Black	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
Income Tax	23%	22%	14%	28%	21%	27%	32%	26%	19%	13%
Property Tax	76%	75%	83%	66%	78%	68%	62%	74%	79%	82%
DK	1%	3%	3%	6%	2%	5%	6%	0%	2%	4%
Unwght N=	396	82	290	140	715	85	54	224	345	279

Christie Tax Cut Proposal February 2012
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll

	Income				Gender		Religion		
	< 50K	50K- <100K	100K- <150K	150K+	Male	Female	Catholic	Protestant	Jewish
Income Tax	25%	25%	20%	18%	18%	24%	21%	23%	24%
Property Tax	71%	74%	79%	80%	80%	73%	77%	76%	75%
DK	4%	1%	1%	2%	2%	3%	2%	1%	1%
Unwght N=	243	266	131	101	428	482	396	236	68

	Born Again		Union Household			Christie Impression			No Opin
	Yes	No	Public	Private	No Union	Fav	Unfav		
Income Tax	29%	21%	24%	17%	22%	17%	24%	31%	
Property Tax	70%	76%	73%	83%	76%	80%	74%	64%	
DK	1%	3%	3%	0%	3%	2%	2%	6%	
Unwght N=	125	534	121	54	717	457	346	99	

Rutgers-Eagleton Poll February 9-11, 2012

The Rutgers-Eagleton Poll was conducted by telephone from February 9-11, 2012 with a scientifically selected random sample of 914 New Jersey registered voters. Data are weighted to represent known parameters in the New Jersey population, using gender, age, race, and Hispanic ethnicity matching to 2010 US Census Bureau data. All results are reported with these weighted data. This telephone poll included 734 landline respondents supplemented with 180 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 914 adults is +/-3.3 percentage points, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of New Jersey voters 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, Incorporated. The questionnaire was developed and all data analyses were completed in house. 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.

Weighted Sample Characteristics			
914 New Jersey Registered Voters			
37% Democrat	47% Male	14% 18-29	71% White
43% Independent	53% Female	32% 30-49	15% Black
20% Republican		39% 50-64	7% Hispanic
		24% 65+	6% Asian/Other/Multi