

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**April 19, 2010**

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

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**NEW JERSEY RESIDENTS SUPPORT MUNICIPAL CONSOLIDATION,  
EXPECT INCREASED EFFICIENCY WITH SAME OR BETTER QUALITY SERVICES**

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J – A majority of New Jerseyans favor consolidating local governments, according to a Rutgers-Eagleton Poll released today. Support for consolidation is driven by the 50 percent of residents who say there are too many local governments and the 70 percent who believe the quality of local services would stay the same or get better under consolidation.

While believing there are too many local governments, Garden Staters remain more committed to their local schools, with only 36 percent saying there are too many school districts. The Rutgers-Eagleton Poll, conducted March 31 to April 3, included 953 New Jersey adults. The full sample has a margin of error of +/-3.2 percentage points.

“New Jerseyans feel overtaxed at the local level, and believe one solution is to increase efficiency by consolidating local governments,” said David Redlawsk, director of the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll and professor of political science at Rutgers University. “As we reported earlier, this same poll shows strong support for cuts in state aid to local government, and making it easier to fire municipal workers. Given what is sometimes called the ‘hyperlocal’ focus of residents, to see a majority support doing away with their own local government is fairly surprising. But it is another reflection of the difficult financial times facing the state.”

Redlawsk also noted that the school district findings are supported by other results showing residents do not want to cut state aid to schools or to lay off teachers. “Residents make a clear distinction between support for their schools and support – or a lack of it – for local government,” he said.

**Most Support Local Government Consolidation**

Fifty-four percent of respondents favor government consolidation, while 38 percent would prefer to maintain their own local government, the poll found. Half believe there are too many

municipal governments, while 40 percent say the number is just right. Nearly three-quarters who say there are too many local governments support consolidation and only 21 percent would prefer to keep their own local officials. Among those who do not think there are too many local governments, 36 percent still support consolidation while 55 percent would keep their own government.

Regional support for consolidation is strongest among Philadelphia area residents (66 percent) and in the exurban areas of New Jersey (67 percent), with 53 percent from shore counties and fewer than half of suburban and urban residents in favor. Resistance to consolidation is strongest in the suburbs: 46 percent oppose the concept compared to 26 percent opposition in exurban areas, 33 percent in the Philadelphia area, 38 percent in shore counties and 39 percent in urban areas.

The prospect of lower property taxes reduces opposition to consolidation, Redlawsk observed. Forty-five percent of opponents said they would favor consolidation if guaranteed a 10 percent tax cut; 54 percent would become proponents with a 20 percent cut. With a 10 percent cut, 47 percent of respondents continue to prefer their own local government but support falls to 36 percent with the enticement of a 20 percent rollback “While consolidation does not guarantee lower taxes, if residents thought merging local government would save money, they would be even more in favor than they are now,” Redlawsk said.

### **Quality of Services Expected to be Maintained**

One-in-four New Jerseyans believe the quality of local services would improve under consolidation, but another 25 percent think services would worsen. Almost half (45 percent) envision no changes in quality. These results are similar to a 1994 Eagleton Poll where 24 percent thought they would see an improvement in quality, 27 percent anticipated a drop in quality and 40 percent thought the quality of services would not change.

“Little has changed between polls,” Redlawsk said, “but there has been virtually no actual consolidation. One reason may be that the state has provided few incentives or mandates to consolidate, and when push comes to shove, the pressure to maintain a sense of community seems to win out, even when residents say they would support consolidation in theory.”

Those favoring consolidation also think it will increase the efficiency of local government by nearly a 6-to-1 margin (62 percent to 11 percent), with 24 percent anticipating not much change.

Among those who approve the current number of municipal governments, most (47 percent) still say not much would change if consolidation were to occur, while 31 percent believe municipal government would be less efficient, and 16 percent say it would be more efficient.

Overall, New Jerseyans think the quality of local services would not be impacted negatively by consolidation, with almost two-thirds of those in favor also believing greater governmental efficiency would result. “Given the economic conditions of the state, there may be more openness to consolidation as a way to get a handle on ever rising costs and property taxes,” Redlawsk said.

### **Local Government is about Police, Schools, and Garbage Collection**

When asked to name their most important local government service, 27 percent of respondents named police services, followed by local schools (23 percent), garbage and recycling (10 percent), roads (9 percent) and fire and rescue (5 percent). No other service drew more than 5 percent of responses.

“Local government is mainly about providing basic services to residents, including police and fire services,” said Redlawsk. “At the same time schools are clearly important to residents. They are reluctant to make cuts in school aid or to lay off teachers but are happy to make it easy to fire municipal workers.”

Redlawsk said that Garden State residents are much less likely to say that there are too many school districts than too many local governments. Only 36 percent say there are too many school districts, while 41 percent say the number of districts is just right, and 14 percent believe there are actually too few school districts.

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### **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.

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 ware 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

***Municipal Consolidation in New Jersey  
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll***

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.

<b>Weighted Sample Characteristics (n=953 Adults)</b>			
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

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

**Rutgers-Eagleton Poll March 31 - April 3, 2010  
Questions and Tables**

The questions covered in the release of April 19, 2010 are list below. Column percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding. All percentages are of New Jersey adults.

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**Q. What is the MOST important service you rely on your local government to provide? Just tell me in a word or two. [OPEN ENDED]**

Police	27%
Schools	23%
Garbage and Recycling	10%
Roads	9%
Fire and/or Rescue	5%
All other Services	14%
Don't Know	12%
<hr/>	
N=	953

**Q. Thinking now about the number of school districts in New Jersey, do you think there are too many, too few, or just the right number?**

Too Many	36%
Too Few	14%
Just Right	41%
Don't Know (Vol)	10%
<hr/>	
N=	950

	Ideology			Party ID		
	Liberal	Middle	Conserv	Dem	Ind	Rep
Too many	33%	35%	44%	26%	41%	48%
Too Few	14%	15%	13%	17%	15%	8%
Just Right	44%	41%	35%	48%	37%	33%
Don't Know (Vol)	9%	10%	8%	10%	8%	11%
<hr/>						
N=	172	493	239	377	290	237

	Education				Employment			
	HS or less	Some Coll	Coll Grad	Post Grad	Full Time	Part Time	Retired	Not Empl
Too Many	24%	37%	42%	58%	44%	24%	47%	19%
Too Few	22%	13%	7%	6%	12%	13%	8%	23%
Just Right	48%	37%	42%	26%	37%	48%	32%	51%
Don't Know (Vol)	6%	14%	9%	11%	7%	16%	14%	7%
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N=	362	259	205	124	432	109	158	248

**Municipal Consolidation in New Jersey  
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll**

	Income					
	Own Home	Rent Home	< 50K	<100k	<150K	150k +
Too Many	45%	16%	25%	35%	52%	54%
Too Few	9%	25%	26%	10%	7%	6%
Just Right	36%	50%	42%	46%	32%	31%
Don't Know (Vol)	10%	8%	7%	10%	9%	9%
N=	661	238	300	240	147	109

	Race/Ethnicity					
	Male	Female	White	Black	Asian	Latino
Too many	43%	29%	44%	11%	21%	7%
Too few	14%	14%	8%	44%	15%	15%
Just right	35%	46%	38%	41%	60%	72%
Don't Know (Vol)	8%	10%	10%	4%	5%	7%
N=	452	498	671	114	67	46

**Q. How about municipal governments in New Jersey, do you think there are too many, too few, or just the right number?**

Too many	50%
Too Few	4%
Just right	40%
Don't Know (Vol)	7%
N=	953

	Ideology			Party ID		
	Liberal	Middle	Conserv	Dem	Ind	Rep
Too Few	55%	47%	55%	39%	58%	60%
Too Many	4%	5%	3%	7%	2%	1%
Just Right	37%	42%	34%	48%	34%	32%
Don't Know (Vol)	4%	6%	9%	7%	6%	7%
N=	172	494	240	378	288	237

	Education				Employment			
	HS or less	Some Coll	Coll Grad	Post Grad	Full Time	Part Time	Retired	Not Empl
Too many	40%	48%	57%	68%	57%	33%	53%	41%
Too few	6%	3%	2%	2%	2%	6%	1%	9%
Just right	50%	39%	34%	22%	35%	52%	36%	45%
Don't Know (Vol)	4%	10%	6%	8%	6%	9%	10%	6%
N=	361	259	206	125	432	108	160	248

*Municipal Consolidation in New Jersey  
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll*

	Income					
	Own Home	Rent Home	< 50K	50K- <100k	100K- <150K	150K +
Too many	55%	39%	35%	61%	60%	65%
Too few	4%	5%	7%	3%	1%	1%
Just right	35%	50%	53%	29%	30%	29%
Don't Know (Vol)	7%	6%	5%	7%	9%	5%
N=	663	238	302	241	146	109

	Race/Ethnicity					
	Male	Female	White	Black	Asian	Latino
Too many	55%	45%	56%	27%	33%	28%
Too few	4%	4%	2%	15%	5%	4%
Just right	38%	42%	35%	55%	53%	61%
Don't Know (Vol)	4%	10%	7%	3%	9%	7%
N=	454	497	673	113	66	46

**Q. Some people have suggested consolidating multiple communities under one local government. Do you think consolidation would make local government more or less efficient, or would it not change much?**

More Efficient	39%
Less Efficient	22%
Not Much Change	34%
Don't Know (Vol)	5%
N=	953

	Ideology			Party ID		
	Liberal	Middle	Conserv	Dem	Ind	Rep
More efficient	38%	39%	43%	32%	43%	48%
Less efficient	19%	24%	21%	24%	17%	23%
Not much change	37%	33%	30%	36%	37%	25%
Don't Know (Vol)	6%	3%	6%	8%	2%	4%
N=	172	493	240	378	289	239

	Education				Employment			
	HS or less	Some Coll	Coll Grad	Post Grad	Full Time	Part Time	Retired	Not Empl
More efficient	24%	43%	49%	61%	46%	29%	42%	31%
Less efficient	25%	21%	21%	15%	19%	26%	22%	25%
Not much change	45%	31%	24%	21%	31%	40%	33%	34%
Don't Know (Vol)	6%	5%	6%	3%	4%	5%	3%	10%
N=	363	259	206	126	433	110	160	249

*Municipal Consolidation in New Jersey  
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll*

	Income					
	Own Home	Rent Home	< 50K	50K- <100K	100K- <150K	150K+
More efficient	44%	27%	27%	45%	56%	56%
Less efficient	20%	25%	22%	23%	18%	14%
Not much change	30%	42%	45%	25%	22%	28%
Don't Know (Vol)	5%	6%	6%	7%	3%	3%
N=	664	238	302	241	148	109

	Race/Ethnicity					
	Male	Female	White	Black	Asian	Latino
More efficient	44%	35%	45%	20%	27%	24%
Less efficient	18%	26%	21%	25%	18%	42%
Not much change	36%	32%	29%	48%	53%	31%
Don't Know (Vol)	3%	8%	6%	6%	2%	2%
N=	455	499	675	114	66	45

**Q. Would you prefer to have your own local government or would you support consolidation with a neighboring town?**

Support Consolidation	54%
Prefer Own	38%
Depends (Vol)	4%
Don't Know (Vol)	3%
N=	953

	Region					
	Urban	Suburban	Exurban	Philly Area	Shore	
Prefer Own	39%	46%	26%	33%	38%	
Support Consolidation	49%	46%	67%	66%	53%	
Depends (Vol)	6%	4%	4%	1%	2%	
Don't Know (Vol)	5%	3%	0%	1%	6%	
N= 946	145	331	134	168	168	

	Ideology			Party ID		
	Liberal	Middle	Conserv	Dem	Ind	Rep
Prefer own	44%	36%	41%	43%	29%	40%
Support consolidation	50%	57%	49%	49%	61%	56%
Depends (Vol)	3%	4%	3%	3%	6%	2%
Don't Know (Vol)	1%	3%	6%	5%	3%	2%
N=	169	493	240	378	284	239

**Municipal Consolidation in New Jersey  
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll**

	Education				Employment			
	HS or less	Some Coll	Coll Grad	Post Grad	Full Time	Part Time	Retired	Not Empl
Prefer own	38%	43%	41%	24%	32%	48%	37%	45%
Support consolidation	55%	45%	55%	70%	62%	46%	53%	45%
Depends (Vol)	3%	7%	2%	2%	4%	6%	2%	4%
Don't Know (Vol)	4%	4%	1%	4%	2%	0%	6%	6%
N=	358	259	203	126	432	109	156	246

	Income					
	Own Home	Rent Home	< 50K	50K- <100K	100K- <150K	150K+
Prefer own	36%	43%	44%	34%	30%	36%
Support consolidation	56%	48%	50%	60%	64%	60%
Depends (Vol)	4%	4%	2%	1%	3%	3%
Don't Know (Vol)	3%	4%	2%	4%	3%	2%
N=	659	236	296	239	148	110

	Race/Ethnicity					
	Male	Female	White	Black	Asian	Latino
Prefer own	34%	43%	35%	49%	40%	58%
Support consolidation	59%	49%	57%	43%	49%	38%
Depends (Vol)	5%	2%	3%	2%	8%	4%
Don't Know (Vol)	1%	5%	3%	5%	3%	0%
N=	453	492	667	114	67	45

**[IF RESPONDENT DOES NOT “SUPPORT CONSOLIDATION” THEN RANDOMLY ASSIGN TO VERSION A OR B FOLLOWUP]**

**Q. [VERSION A] If consolidation guaranteed at least a 10% cut in property taxes, would you support it, or would you still prefer your own local government?**

Support Consolidation	45%
Prefer Own	47%
Depends (Vol)	4%
Don't Know (Vol)	4%
N=	202

**Q. [VERSION B] If consolidation guaranteed at least a 20% cut in property taxes would you support it, or would you still prefer your own local government?**

Support Consolidation	54%
Prefer Own	36%
Depends (Vol)	4%
Don't Know (Vol)	5%
N=	196

*Municipal Consolidation in New Jersey  
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll*

**Q. Do you think the quality of local services would get better, get worse, or stay about the same with consolidation?**

	2010	1994
Get better	25%	24%
Get worse	25%	27%
Stay the same	45%	40%
Don't Know (Vol)	5%	10%
N=	953	801

*2010 Responses*

	Ideology			Party ID		
	Liberal	Middle	Conserv	Dem	Ind	Rep
Get better	22%	26%	26%	26%	23%	27%
Get worse	27%	26%	22%	30%	20%	25%
Stay the same	44%	43%	48%	40%	51%	44%
Don't Know (Vol)	6%	4%	4%	4%	6%	4%
N=	173	494	241	378	289	238

	Education				Employment			
	HS or less	Some Coll	Coll Grad	Post Grad	Full Time	Part Time	Retired	Not Empl
Get better	24%	29%	23%	21%	23%	27%	22%	29%
Get worse	27%	23%	30%	17%	22%	33%	24%	28%
Stay the same	44%	42%	44%	55%	51%	35%	47%	37%
Don't Know (Vol)	5%	6%	4%	7%	4%	6%	6%	6%
N=	363	259	206	125	433	109	161	249

	Income					
	Own Home	Rent Home	< 50K	50K- <100K	100K- <150K	150K +
Get better	23%	27%	26%	23%	24%	28%
Get worse	25%	26%	25%	30%	20%	21%
Stay the same	48%	40%	44%	41%	51%	50%
Don't Know (Vol)	5%	7%	5%	7%	5%	1%
N=	664	238	301	240	147	109

	Race					
	Male	Female	White	Black	Asian	Latino
Get better	26%	24%	20%	36%	27%	52%
Get worse	24%	26%	26%	25%	25%	26%
Stay the same	47%	43%	49%	34%	40%	17%
Don't Know (Vol)	3%	7%	5%	4%	8%	4%
N=	455	498	674	114	67	46

**CROSSTAB: EXPECTED EFFICIENCY OF CONSOLIDATION BY  
ARE THERE TOO MANY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS**

	Too many	Too Few	Just right	Don't Know (Vol)
More efficient	62%	16%	16%	28%
Less efficient	11%	51%	31%	30%
Not much change	24%	27%	47%	22%
Don't Know (Vol)	3%	5%	5%	20%
N=	471	37	380	64

**CROSSTAB: EXPECTED EFFICIENCY OF CONSOLIDATION BY  
LOCAL SERVICE QUALITY UNDER CONSOLIDATION**

	Get better	Get worse	Stay the same	Don't Know (Vol)
More efficient	63%	10%	45%	20%
Less efficient?	5%	50%	14%	26%
Not much change	27%	35%	37%	29%
Don't Know (Vol)	4%	5%	4%	24%
N=	237	240	427	49

**CROSSTAB: SUPPORT FOR CONSOLIDATION OF LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT BY TOO MANY OR TOO FEW LOCAL GOVERNMENTS**

	Too many	Too Few	Just right	Don't Know (Vol)
Prefer Own	21%	64%	55%	48%
Support Consolidation	74%	36%	36%	30%
Depends (Vol)	2%	0%	5%	6%
Don't Know (Vol)	2%	0%	3%	14%
N=	467	36	376	63