DURHAM, NH – Governor Craig Benson has seen his approval ratings drop precipitously in recent months. He is now in a tight race with Democratic challengers John Lynch and Paul McEachern for the November election.

These findings are based on the latest WMUR Granite State Poll, conducted by the University of New Hampshire Survey Center.* The Granite State Poll is sponsored by WMUR-TV, Manchester and the University of New Hampshire. Five hundred nine (509) randomly selected adults were interviewed by telephone between July 6 and July 20, 2004. The margin of sampling error for the survey is +/-4.3 percent. (For more detailed results, visit the Survey Center web site at www.unh.edu/survey-center/gov72104.pdf.)

**Gubernatorial Approval**

New Hampshire Governor Craig Benson has ruffled the feathers of the New Hampshire Legislators during his tenure in office, both Democrats and Republicans. But until recently, these disagreements have remained within the “Concord Beltway” and his approval ratings among state residents have stayed high. However, the most recent Granite State Poll, sponsored by WMUR-TV, shows that the public has started to lose faith in Benson’s performance as governor. Currently, 45 percent of New Hampshire adults say they approve of the job Benson has done as governor, 40 percent disapprove, and 14 percent are neutral. In the April Granite State Poll, 54 percent approved of the job Benson was doing as governor. “It appears that New Hampshire voters have begun to be concerned about the personal, staff, and legislative issues that have surrounded Benson’s tenure as governor,” said Andrew Smith, Director of the UNH Survey Center. “And the drop in approval he has experienced means that he will face a tougher race in November.”

Benson’s personal favorability ratings have also declined since April. Currently 47 percent of New Hampshire adults say they have a favorable opinion of Benson, 36 percent have an unfavorable opinion, 9 percent are neutral, and 8 percent don’t know enough about him to say. In April, 58 percent of New Hampshire adults said they had a favorable opinion of Benson and only 25 percent had an unfavorable opinion of him.

**2004 Gubernatorial Election**

There are currently two Democrats who have thrown their hats into the ring to unseat Governor Benson in November’s election -- former Chair of the USNH Board of Trustees John Lynch and Portsmouth State Representative, and three-time gubernatorial candidate, Paul McEachern. Despite having been involved in government for some years, both men have little name recognition at this time in the campaign season. In the most recent Granite State Poll, 17 percent of New Hampshire adults say they have a favorable opinion of Lynch, 6 percent have an unfavorable opinion of him, 8 percent are neutral, and 69 percent don’t know enough about him to say.

* Users should refer to this copyrighted material as the WMUR Granite State Poll.
McEachern is also suffering from lack of name recognition. Sixteen percent said they have a favorable opinion of McEachern, 4 percent have an unfavorable opinion of him, 10 percent are neutral, and 71 percent don’t know enough about him to say. Lynch, McEachern and Benson have almost identical favorability ratings among likely voters.

Because both Lynch and McEachern are relatively unknown, there is little difference in the support they get from New Hampshire voters. When asked who they would vote for in an election between Benson and Lynch, 46 percent of likely November voters said they will vote for Benson, 39 percent plan to vote for Lynch, 1 percent prefer some other candidate, and 14 percent are undecided. In a race between Benson and McEachern, 48 percent of likely voters say they plan to vote for Benson, 36 percent plan to vote for McEachern, 1 percent prefer some other candidate, and 15 percent are undecided.

**Impact of the Income Tax**

An important difference between Lynch and McEachern is that Lynch has stated that he would veto an income tax while McEachern is in favor of an income tax. Craig Benson also opposes an income tax. In order to understand the political impact of the income tax, likely voters were told of each candidate’s position on the income tax and then asked who they would vote for.

The income tax issue makes little difference in a Benson - Lynch race. When voters were told of each candidate’s opposition to an income tax, 45 percent of likely voters say they would vote for Benson, 37 percent would vote for Lynch, 2 percent prefer some other candidate, and 15 percent are undecided.

However, support for Benson increases 5 percent when voters are made aware of Benson’s opposition to an income tax and McEachern’s support for an income tax. When voters were told of the candidate’s positions on income taxes, 53 percent of likely voters say they would vote for Benson, 38 percent would vote for McEachern, and 9 percent are undecided. “Support for an income tax is perilous for Democratic candidates in New Hampshire,” said Dr. Smith. “Supporting an income tax helps undecided voters make up their minds and more chose the income tax opponent than the income tax supporter.”

**Right Direction or Wrong Track?**

Granite Staters remain optimistic about New Hampshire’s future. Fifty-nine percent think things in New Hampshire are generally going in the right direction, 32 percent think things are seriously off on the wrong track, and 9 percent say they don’t know. The percentage of adults thinking that New Hampshire is headed in the right direction has been at approximately 60 percent for the past year. Typically, incumbents benefit at the ballot box when voters think the state is headed in the right direction.

**Most Important Problem Facing New Hampshire**

For the past several years, the problem of how to fund primary and secondary education in New Hampshire has been the issue New Hampshire adults said was the most important problem facing the state. In recent months, concerns about jobs and the economy have also been seen as an equally important problem. And while improved economic conditions have caused concerns about the economy to drop, education funding is still in the forefront of the minds of many Granite Staters. In the most recent Granite State Poll, the most important problems identified by New Hampshire adults are education funding (31%) jobs and the economy (13%), taxes (11%), health care issues (6%), quality of education (5%), population growth and sprawl (5%), Governor Benson (3%), a desire for a state income or sales tax (2%), and problems with the state budget (2%).
Subgroup Analysis

Benson’s highest approval and favorability ratings come from Republicans and conservatives. Democrats, liberals, and those in union households give Benson his lowest approval and favorability ratings. It is important to note that 24 percent of Republicans disapprove of the job Benson has done as governor.

Granite State Poll Methodology

These findings are based on the most recent Granite State Poll conducted by the University of New Hampshire Survey Center from July 6 to July 20, 2004. A random sample of 509 New Hampshire adults was interviewed by telephone. In 95 of 100 cases, the statewide estimates will be accurate to plus or minus 4.3 percent. Included in this sample were 464 likely November voters. The margin of error for the likely voter sub-sample is plus or minus 4.5 percent. Results reported for other subgroups have potential for somewhat larger variation than those for the entire population.

The data have been weighted to adjust for numbers of adults and telephone lines within households, respondent sex, and region of the state. In addition to potential sampling error, all surveys have other potential sources of non-sampling error including question order effects, question wording effects, and non-response.

Gubernatorial Approval
(NH Adults)

“GENERALLY SPEAKING, do you approve or disapprove of the way Governor Benson is handling his job as governor?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gubernatorial Approval</th>
<th>Approve</th>
<th>Neutral/DK</th>
<th>Disapprove</th>
<th>(N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 2004 (Latest)</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>(484)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2004</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>(524)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2004</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>(495)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2003</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>(485)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2003</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>(505)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2003</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>(496)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2003</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>(618)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Favorability Rating - Governor Craig Benson
(NH Adults)

"Next, I’d like to get your overall opinion of some people in the news. As I read each name, please say if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of this person - or if you have never heard of him or her. Governor Craig Benson."

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Favorability Rating - Governor Craig Benson</th>
<th>Favorable</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Unfavorable</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
<th>(N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 2004 (Likely Voters)</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>(460)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2004 (All Adults)</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>(505)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2004</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>(541)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2004</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>(508)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2003</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>(496)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2003</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>(512)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2003</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>(507)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2003</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>(652)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Favorability Ratings – Democratic Challengers

Businessman John Lynch

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All Adults</th>
<th>All Adults</th>
<th>Likely Voters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Favorable</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfavorable</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N)</td>
<td>(509)</td>
<td>(508)</td>
<td>(463)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NH State Representative Paul McEachern

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All Adults</th>
<th>Likely Voters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Favorable</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfavorable</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N)</td>
<td>(507)</td>
<td>(462)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gubernatorial Trial Heat: Craig Benson vs. John Lynch

“Now, suppose the 2004 New Hampshire gubernatorial election was being held TODAY and the candidates were Craig Benson, the Republican and John Lynch, the Democrat. Who would you vote for ... Craig Benson or John Lynch?”

INCOME TAX POSITION: "And as you may know, John Lynch opposes a state income tax and Craig Benson also opposes a state income tax. Knowing this ... would you vote for ... John Lynch, the Democrat or Craig Benson, the Republican?"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Likely Voters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Tax Position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benson</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynch</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N)</td>
<td>(456)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Craig Benson vs. Paul McEachern

“And suppose the 2004 New Hampshire gubernatorial election was being held TODAY and the candidates were Craig Benson, the Republican and Paul McEachern the Democrat. Who would you vote for ... Craig Benson or Paul McEachern?”

INCOME TAX POSITION: "And as you may know, Paul McEachern favors a state income tax and Craig Benson opposes an income tax. Knowing this ... would you vote for Paul McEachern, the Democrat or Craig Benson, the Republican?"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Likely Voters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Tax Position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benson</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McEachern</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N)</td>
<td>(450)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
"Let's turn to the State of New Hampshire ... There are many problems facing the STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE today. In general, what do you think is the most IMPORTANT problem facing the STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE today?"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jobs, the Economy</th>
<th>Education Funding</th>
<th>Taxes</th>
<th>Health Care</th>
<th>Quality of Education</th>
<th>State Budget</th>
<th>Other / DK</th>
<th>(N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July '04</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr. '04</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. '04</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. '03</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June '03</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr. '03</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. '03</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June '02</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr. '02</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. '02</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. '01</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"Do you think things in New Hampshire are generally going in the right direction or are they seriously off on the wrong track?"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Right Direction</th>
<th>Wrong Track</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
<th>(N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July ‘04</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr. ‘04</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. ‘04</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. ‘03</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June ‘03</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Gubernatorial Approval

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>Approve</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disapprove</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>STATEWIDE</strong></td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>484</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered Democrat</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undeclared</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered Republican</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not registered</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likely Nov. Voter</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-voter</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union household</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-union</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years or less in NH</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 10 years</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 to 20 years</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 20 years</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>268</td>
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<tr>
<td>18 to 34</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>103</td>
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<td>35 to 49</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 to 64</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 and over</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school or less</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College graduate</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-graduate</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than $30K</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$30K to $60K</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$60K to $75K</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75K to $100K</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than $100K</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced/separated</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never married</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend 1 or more/week</td>
<td>55</td>
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