

UNH Poll Finds Shaheen Approval Remains Steady

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UNH News Bureau

May 16, 2002

EDITORS AND NEWS DIRECTORS: Andrew Smith, director of the UNH Survey Center, is available for interviews at (603) 862-2226.

DURHAM, N.H. -- Education funding continues to be the most important issue for New Hampshire residents, according to the latest Granite State Poll conducted by the University of New Hampshire Survey Center, but the ongoing legislative battles have not affected Governor Jeanne Shaheen's approval ratings.

The Granite State Poll is sponsored by UNH. Six hundred ninety-four (694) New Hampshire adults were interviewed between April 10 and 18, 2002. The margin of sampling error for the survey is +/-3.7 percent. For more detailed results and methodology, visit the Survey Center Web site at www.unh.edu/survey-center and click on Press Releases.

MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM FACING NEW HAMPSHIRE

The issue of how to fund primary and secondary education in New Hampshire has been on the front pages and in front of state government for at least the past five years. Not surprisingly, it is also the issue that the citizens of New Hampshire believe is most important.

According to the latest Granite State Poll, the most important problems facing New Hampshire today are funding education (43%), taxes (15%), jobs and the economy (10%), and the quality of education (6%). Education funding has been cited as the most important problem facing the state in UNH Survey Center polls, in good economic times and bad, since early 1999. As

the economy continues to improve, both in New Hampshire and across the U.S., the percentage of people in New Hampshire citing the economy or lack of jobs as the most important problem has fallen from 15 percent in October, 2001, to 10 percent this April.

GUBERNATORIAL APPROVAL

Governor Jeanne Shaheen has not been seriously hurt by the education funding debate, much of which has occurred during her tenure as governor. Despite political battles over the state budget and an intense campaign for U.S. Senate, Shaheen's approval ratings have remained stable over the past several months. In the most recent Granite State Poll, 55 percent of New Hampshire adults say they approve of the job Shaheen is doing as governor, 34 percent disapprove, and 11 percent are neutral.

"Shaheen has not suffered serious political damage from the education funding problem," says Andrew Smith, director of the UNH Survey Center. "In trial heat questions about her Senate race, she does equally well among voters who cite education as the most important problem facing the state as she does among the overall electorate. Given that New Hampshire is in the midst of an economic slowdown, and in spite of ongoing problems with education funding, Granite Staters think that Governor Shaheen is doing a pretty good job."

New Hampshire residents also have a generally favorable opinion of Governor Shaheen. Currently, 58 percent say they have a favorable opinion of Shaheen, 29 percent have an unfavorable opinion, 9 percent are neutral, and 5 percent don't know enough about her to say. "Any governor of New Hampshire is constantly in the news and Shaheen has been governor for six years. People in New Hampshire know her, and their opinions about her are not likely to change much during the election," says Smith.

SUB-GROUP ANALYSIS

Shaheen's highest approval ratings come from Democrats, liberals, union households, people who have lived in New Hampshire between six and 10 years, and households earning between \$60,000 and \$75,000. Republicans, conservatives, and those 70 or older give

Shaheen her lowest approval ratings. Surprisingly, people from western New Hampshire, a traditionally more Democratic area of the state, give Shaheen lower approval ratings than do people from other areas.

Both registered Democrats and registered Republicans, union households, people 60 and older, those with higher levels of income, and those with higher levels of education are most likely to cite education funding as the most important problem facing the state. Those not registered to vote, people who have lived in New Hampshire five years or less, those with lower levels of income, people with lower levels of education, and people who have never been married are least likely to mention education funding as the most important problem facing the state.

GRANITE STATE POLL METHODOLOGY

These findings are based on the most recent Granite State Poll conducted by the UNH Survey Center from April 10-18, 2002. A random sample of 694 New Hampshire adults was interviewed by telephone. In 95 of 100 cases, the statewide estimates will be accurate to plus or minus 3.7 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 for 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.

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