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Media Relations

UNH Survey Center: Economic And Budget Issues Most Important Problems; Lynch Still Popular

February 8, 2011

DURHAM, N.H. – New Hampshire’s economy and balancing the state budget are the most important problems facing the state according to state residents. Gov. John Lynch remains popular among Granite Staters. These findings are based on the latest WMUR Granite State Poll, conducted by the University of New Hampshire Survey Center.

Five hundred twenty (520) randomly selected New Hampshire adults were interviewed by telephone between Jan. 27 and Feb. 6, 2011. The margin of sampling error for the survey is +/- 4.3 percent.

Most Important Problem Facing New Hampshire

Despite a dropping unemployment rate and other signs of economic improvement, New Hampshire residents remained concerned about the state’s economy and unemployment. A lack of jobs and a weak economy has been seen as the most important problem facing the state since February 2008. Currently, 43 percent of New Hampshire adults say the economy and jobs is the most important issue facing the state, followed by the state budget (18 percent), education funding (8 percent), high taxes (6 percent), and the quality of education (4 percent).

Similarly, when asked what the most important problem that the state legislature should address, 25 percent said the state budget, followed by dealing with jobs and the state economy (23 percent), education funding (7 percent), taxes (6 percent), and the quality of education (5 percent). Almost no one mentioned dealing with hot button social issues such as gay marriage or abortion.

In order to balance the state’s budget, most New Hampshire residents prefer cutting state spending than increasing taxes. Twenty-nine percent of New Hampshire adults favor balancing the state’s budget entirely through cuts in spending, 21 percent want mainly spending cuts with some tax increases, 35 percent favor an even balance between spending cuts and tax increases, 9 percent want mainly tax increases with some spending cuts, only 2 percent want to balance the budget with only tax increases and 4 percent are unsure.

Republicans are most likely to say that the budget should be balanced by budget cuts, 45 percent think it should be balanced exclusively by budget cuts and 25 percent think it should be balanced mostly by budget cuts. Democrats (48 percent) and Independents (44 percent) are most likely to say there should be an even balance between spending cuts and tax increases.

Gubernatorial Approval

Gov. John Lynch was re-elected to an historic fourth term last November in the most difficult contest since he was first elected in 2004. He won in large part because most people in New Hampshire approved of the job he was doing as governor. Since the election, Lynch’s approval ratings have rebounded to their pre-campaign levels. In the most recent Granite State Poll, 67 percent of NH adults say they approve of the way he is handling his job as governor, 23 percent disapprove, and 10 percent are neutral or don’t know. Lynch continues to have strong support among Democrats (88 percent approve) and Independents (62 percent). Approval from New Hampshire Republicans has rebounded to 51 percent up from 37 percent during the campaign last September.

Lynch’s personal favorability ratings are also quite high and have improved since the election. In the latest Granite State Poll, 66 percent of New Hampshire adults say they have a favorable opinion of Lynch, 17 percent have an unfavorable opinion, 12 percent are neutral, and 4 percent say they don’t know enough about him to say. Lynch’s net favorability rating, the percentage having a favorable opinion minus the percentage having an unfavorable opinion, is a very high +49 percent, up from +37 percent in September. Lynch receives a high net favorability from Democrats (+80 percent) as well as from Independents (+61

 
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percent), and even receives positive net favorability ratings from Republicans (+20 percent).

Right Direction or Wrong Track?

Although the state continues to face tough economic and budget problems, New Hampshire residents think the state is headed in the right direction. Currently, 65 percent of New Hampshire adults feel the state is heading in the right direction, 25 percent think the state is seriously off on the wrong track, and 11 percent don't know. This measure has improved slowly since 2009 but has not returned to pre-recession levels.

For complete detailed tabular results, please visit http://www.unh.edu/survey-center/news/pdf/gsp2011_winter_govapp020811.pdf.

The UNH Survey Center has conducted survey research projects at the University of New Hampshire since 1976. The center has grown rapidly during the past 30 years and now conducts approximately 40 to 50 major survey projects each year. More information: <http://www.unh.edu/survey-center/>.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 12,200 undergraduate and 2,300 graduate students.

PHOTO

Andrew Smith, director of the UNH Survey Center.
http://www.unh.edu/news/img/Andy_Smith.jpg

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