NEW JERSEYANS UNSURE ABOUT SURROGATE MOTHERHOOD,

BUT FEEL CONTRACTS SHOULD BE BINDING

New Jerseyans are almost evenly divided over the question of surrogate motherhood, with just slightly more saying that in general they approve rather than disapprove of the practice.

The public clearly feels, however, that if a woman signs a contract agreeing to be a surrogate mother, she should be held to that commitment. According to the latest Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll, 3-in-4 Garden Staters agree that surrogate mother contracts should be considered legal and binding, and 7-in-10 also feel a surrogate mother should not be able to change her mind and back out of a contract after the baby is born.

The survey, conducted between February 16 and 23 with 800 New Jersey residents, and prior to the Catholic Church's recent public statement on the issue, also finds that about 6-in-10 New Jerseyans think surrogate motherhood is a reasonable way for people who cannot have their own children to still have a family, and that it should not be prohibited by law. In addition, New Jerseyans overwhelmingly agree that if surrogate motherhood is allowed, then the state should pass laws regulating its practice.

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ATTENTION RADIO STATIONS: Audio is available after 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, March 21 from (201) 932-3605 (Rutgers Feature Phone).
The issue of surrogate motherhood has been prominent in the last few months primarily because of the "Baby M" trial, and more recently because of the Catholic Church's formal statement in opposition to the idea of surrogate motherhood. Practically every New Jerseyan--97 percent--has read or heard something about the "Baby M" case, with 63 percent saying they have read or heard "a lot."

While the current survey did not ask residents about the "Baby M" case specifically, it did ask about the issue of surrogate motherhood more generally. When reminded that, in most cases, a surrogate mother is someone who agrees to be artificially inseminated and have a baby for people who cannot have a child of their own, New Jerseyans are very divided over the practice. Overall, slightly more residents approve (49 percent) than disapprove (43 percent) of the idea of surrogate motherhood, though more of those who disapprove feel strongly about it: 32 percent of New Jerseyans disapprove strongly and 11 percent disapprove mildly, compared to 22 percent who approve strongly and 27 percent who do so mildly. The remaining 8 percent give no firm opinion.

Younger residents are more likely to support surrogate motherhood than are older ones, with 68 percent of 18 to 29 year olds approving of the idea, compared to 49 percent among those 30 to 49 years old, and only 36 percent of those 50 and over. Men are slightly more likely to approve of surrogate motherhood than are women by a 53 to 45 percent margin. The survey, done prior to the Catholic Church's recent stand against surrogate motherhood, shows no differences between New Jersey's Catholics and Protestants in their support for or opposition to this issue.

Regardless of whether or not they approve of the idea of surrogate motherhood, New Jerseyans agree by an overwhelming 73 to 21 percent margin that contracts in which a surrogate mother agrees to turn her child over to the biological father after it is born should be considered legal and binding. The remaining 6 percent
are unsure. When asked whether or not a surrogate mother who has signed a contract should be given a last chance to reconsider after the baby is born, 7-in-10 New Jerseyans say no, compared to only 2-in-10 who say she should be given the opportunity to change her mind. The remainder offer no opinion.

Michael X. Delli Carpini, research associate for the Poll, commented, "At this time, the public seems to be in agreement only on certain aspects of this issue. On the one hand, there is strong agreement that surrogate motherhood contracts, like any other contract, should be considered legal and binding, and that a woman who agrees to be a surrogate should be prepared to follow through and honor that commitment. On the other hand, the practice of surrogate motherhood is so new, complex, and full of grey areas that there is no clear public consensus about whether or not it's a good idea. Many people just aren't sure."

New Jerseyans are in agreement, however, that there is a need for government involvement in this issue. Fully 85 percent of the public agrees that if surrogate motherhood is allowed, then the state legislature should pass laws regulating it so as to insure that the rights of all individuals involved are protected. This is true among both those who currently approve or disapprove of the general idea of surrogate motherhood.

Many New Jerseyans come down on different sides of some of the other questions and concerns which have been raised about surrogate motherhood, though on balance more people currently seem to agree with 'pro-surgeon motherhood' points of view. For example:

- Slightly more than 6-in-10 residents agree that surrogate motherhood is a reasonable way for couples who are unable to have their own children to still have a family, while 34 percent disagree.

- Nearly 6-in-10 New Jerseyans do not feel surrogate motherhood should be prohibited by law, compared to slightly more than one-third who agree that it should.
-- 56 percent disagree with the idea that surrogate motherhood "turns babies into things that people buy and sell," while 40 percent agree.

-- 47 percent agree that the decision to be a surrogate mother is a private matter which government should stay completely out of, while an equal number disagree.

Younger residents are much more likely than older ones to see surrogate motherhood as a reasonable way for couples to have children, and much less likely than others to feel that it should be prohibited by law.

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The latest Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll was conducted between February 16 and 23, 1987, when a random sample of New Jerseyans, (18 years and older) was interviewed by telephone. Figures presented for the total sample of 800 have a sampling error of ±3.5 percent at a 95 percent confidence interval. Sampling error is the probable difference in results between interviewing everyone in a population versus a scientific sample taken from that population. Sampling error does not take into account other possible sources of error inherent in any study of public opinion. The questions and figures referred to in this release are as follows:

"Over the last few months there has been a court case in New Jersey involving the question of surrogate motherhood and a custody battle over an infant known as "Baby M." How much have you read or heard about this case--a lot, some, just a little, or nothing at all?"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Lot</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Little</th>
<th>Not Heard Of</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>63%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>101%</td>
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<td>(799)</td>
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"In most cases a surrogate mother is someone who agrees to be artificially inseminated, become pregnant, and have a baby for people who cannot have a child of their own. In general, do you approve or disapprove of the idea of surrogate motherhood? (IF APPROVE OR DISAPPROVE, ASK: Do you (approve/disapprove) strongly or mildly?)"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Strongly Approve</th>
<th>Mildly Approve</th>
<th>Mildly Disapprove</th>
<th>Strongly Disapprove</th>
<th>Depends</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
<td>22%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>(800)</td>
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"In most cases, the surrogate mother signs a contract in which she agrees to turn the child over to its biological father after it is born. In your opinion, should such contracts be considered legal and binding, or not?"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Binding</th>
<th>Not Binding</th>
<th>Depends</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>73%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>(800)</td>
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</table>
"If a woman freely signs a contract to be a surrogate mother, should she still have the right to change her mind and keep the baby after it is born, or not?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes, Can Change Mind</th>
<th>No, Can't Change Mind</th>
<th>Other/Depends</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>101%</td>
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"The issue of surrogate motherhood raises some difficult legal and ethical questions. I'd like to read you some statements about it, and for each one please tell me whether you agree or disagree. First, do you agree or disagree?

Allowing women to sign contracts to be surrogate mothers turns babies into things that people buy and sell.

- Agree: 40%
- Disagree: 56%
- Depends: 1%
- D.K.: 3%
- Total: 100% (799)

The decision to be a surrogate mother is a private matter which the government should stay out of completely.

- Agree: 47%
- Disagree: 47%
- Depends: 2%
- D.K.: 4%
- Total: 100% (799)

Surrogate motherhood is a reasonable way for people who are unable to have their own children to still have a family.

- Agree: 62%
- Disagree: 34%
- Depends: 2%
- D.K.: 2%
- Total: 100% (796)

Surrogate motherhood should be prohibited by law.

- Agree: 37%
- Disagree: 58%
- Depends: 1%
- D.K.: 3%
- Total: 99% (799)

If surrogate motherhood is allowed, the state legislature should pass laws regulating it to insure that the rights of all the individuals involved are protected.

- Agree: 85%
- Disagree: 11%
- Depends: 1%
- D.K.: 2%
- Total: 99% (799)