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**RUTGERS-EAGLETON POLL: MAJORITY OF NEW JERSEY VOTERS
SUPPORT GAY MARRIAGE**

Some polarization evident as legislature debates the issue

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. – As the New Jersey state Senate prepares to vote on gay marriage, a new Rutgers-Eagleton Poll shows that 54 percent of Garden State voters say gay marriage should be legalized. Fewer than 40 percent oppose such a move, while 7 percent have no position on the issue. The last time the state legislature debated a marriage bill, during the 2009 lame-duck session, only 46 percent of Garden Staters were in favor, and 40 percent opposed.

“Over the past two years there has been a clear shift towards support for same-sex marriage in national polling and in New Jersey,” said Rutgers-Eagleton Poll director David Redlawsk, a professor of political science at Rutgers University in New Brunswick. “This shift has occurred pretty much across the spectrum, with the exception of the strongly religious and most conservative voters. And while there has been little aggregate change since this reintroduction of the marriage bill we are seeing some ideological polarization as the debate develops.”

Results are from a poll of 914 adults conducted statewide among both landline and cell phone households from Feb. 9-11. The full sample has a margin of error of +/- 3.3 percentage points.

Support for Gay Marriage in New Jersey

Majority support for legalizing gay marriage in New Jersey cuts across demographic groups. Self-identified liberals are the most supportive, at 81 percent, while 63 percent of Democrats say they favor legalization. Majorities of moderates (55 percent) and independent voters (56 percent) are also in favor. Younger voters are overwhelmingly supportive, with three-quarters of those under 30 supporting gay marriage. Except for the oldest voters, other age groups are also supportive: 57 percent of those 30 to 49 years old express support for legalization, along with 55 percent of those 50 to 64 years old.

Despite ongoing expressions of concern by Catholic Church leadership, a 52 percent majority of Catholic voters continue to support legalizing same-sex marriage. Protestant voters, however, are less supportive, with only 43 percent in favor and 50 percent opposed.

Since a Rutgers-Eagleton Poll in October 2011, men have become more supportive of gay marriage. In October, 47 percent of men supported legalization while 45 percent opposed. Today, a majority of men – 52 percent – are in favor, while 40 percent oppose. Women remain more supportive, 57 percent to 37 percent, similar to the October poll.

“Support for legalizing same-sex marriage runs deep in New Jersey, with limited exceptions,” said Redlawsk. “And while there is no doubt that many of those who oppose the idea feel strongly about it, most New Jerseyans in most demographic groups think it is time to make same-sex marriage legal.”

Opposition to Gay Marriage

Strong opposition to gay marriage does remain within certain groups. Voters who are born-again or evangelical Christians are strongly opposed, with 7 in 10 against legalizing gay marriage. Conservative voters express opposition in similar numbers with 69 percent opposed and 24 percent in favor. Also against gay marriage are voters 65 years old and older, of whom 55 percent oppose and only 37 percent support legalization. Not surprisingly, only 35 percent of Republican voters support the measure, while 58 percent oppose it. And while white voters are in favor by 56 percent to 36 percent, Black voters feel differently with half opposing and 43 percent supporting legalizing gay marriage.

“Opposition to gay marriage is driven primarily by strong religious beliefs for many of its opponents, somewhat independently of political beliefs,” noted Redlawsk. “In particular, Black voters, who reliably vote Democratic, break with the large majority of the party in their opposition, reflecting a more conservative outlook on key social issues like same-sex marriage.”

Polarization as the Debate has Developed

Today’s results suggest ideological polarization on the issue since October. During the past four months moderates have become more supportive, moving from 49 percent support to 55 percent today. Liberals have also shifted even more in favor, up from 75 percent to 81 percent. Conservative voters, on the other hand, have become even more opposed, dropping by 8 points from 32 percent support in October to 24 percent today. The gap between liberals and conservative on legalizing gay marriage has increased from 43 points to 57 points over just a few months.

“As the Democrats in the legislature focus on same-sex marriage, voters have responded by becoming more polarized on the issue,” said Redlawsk. “Debates like this focus public opinion on the two opposite positions, moving apart those even slightly inclined one way or the other. Polarization reflects voters paying more attention and better aligning their own position on the issue with their overall ideological preferences.”

QUESTIONS AND TABLES BEGIN ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE

Questions and Tables

The questions covered in the release of February 13, 2012 are listed below. Column percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding. Respondents are Registered Voters (RV).

Q. On another topic, some people say gay marriage should be legal. Others oppose legalizing gay marriage. What is your position? Do you:

Support Gay Marriage	54%
Oppose Gay Marriage	35%
Support CU/Oppose GM (vol)	4%
DK	7%
Unwght N=	885

GAY MARRIAGE TREND

	FEB 2012 (RV)	DEC 2011 (Adults)*	OCT 2011 (RV)	AUG 2011 (RV)	NOV 2009 (ALL)
Support Gay Marriage	54%	53%	51%	52%	46%
Oppose Gay Marriage	35%	34%	37%	28%	40%
Support CU/Oppose GM (vol)	4%	-	4%	4%	2%
DK	7%	14%	8%	16%	12%
Unwght N=	885	229	451	576	888

* Dec 2011 asked about “same-sex marriage” and did not have a voluntary “civil unions” option

	Party ID			Ideology				Education			
	Dem	Ind	Rep	Lib	Mod	Cons	HS or less	Some Coll	Coll Grad	Grad Work	
Support GM	63%	56%	35%	81%	55%	24%	39%	49%	59%	68%	
Oppose GM	29%	30%	56%	13%	33%	65%	49%	40%	30%	23%	
Sup CU/Opp GM (vol)	3%	5%	2%	0%	5%	4%	4%	3%	3%	4%	
DK	5%	9%	7%	6%	8%	7%	7%	8%	8%	5%	
Unwght N=	310	392	173	184	495	186	196	241	238	205	

	Employment				Race		Age			
	FT	PT	Retired	Not Empl	White	Black	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
Support GM	60%	63%	41%	53%	56%	43%	77%	57%	55%	37%
Oppose GM	31%	23%	46%	37%	32%	44%	16%	32%	36%	48%
Sup CU/Opp GM (vol)	2%	8%	6%	1%	4%	6%	2%	2%	4%	7%
DK	7%	7%	6%	9%	8%	7%	6%	8%	6%	8%
Unwght N=	379	80	285	139	698	81	54	214	338	271

	Income				Gender		Religion		
	< 50K	50K- <100K	100K- <150K	150K+	Male	Female	Catholic	Protestant	Jewish
Support GM	47%	53%	61%	67%	52%	57%	52%	43%	68%
Oppose GM	44%	36%	28%	30%	36%	33%	36%	45%	27%
Sup CU/Opp GM (vol)	4%	4%	3%	2%	4%	4%	4%	5%	0%
DK	5%	7%	9%	1%	8%	6%	8%	7%	5%
Unwght N=	241	258	129	97	418	467	384	231	66

NJ Same-Sex Marriage, February 2012
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll

	Born Again		Union Household			Gov. Christie Impression		
	Yes	No	Public	Private	No Union	Fav	Unfav	No Opin
Support GM	23%	55%	66%	39%	53%	44%	64%	62%
Oppose GM	66%	31%	24%	45%	37%	45%	26%	27%
Sup CU/Opp GM (vol)	4%	4%	4%	4%	3%	4%	3%	3%
DK	6%	9%	6%	12%	7%	7%	7%	9%
Unwght N=	122	518	118	55	694	441	341	95

	Tea Party Impression			Occupy Wall St Imp			Mayor Booker Impression		
	Fav	Unfav	No Opin	Fav	Unfav	No Opin	Fav	Unfav	No Opin
Support GM	32%	70%	44%	72%	47%	51%	57%	53%	48%
Oppose GM	56%	22%	41%	19%	42%	36%	34%	33%	37%
Sup CU/Opp GM (vol)	3%	3%	6%	2%	4%	5%	4%	5%	3%
DK	9%	6%	9%	7%	7%	8%	5%	10%	11%
Unwght N=	222	445	187	256	345	196	423	104	271

Rutgers-Eagleton Poll February 9-11, 2012

The Rutgers-Eagleton Poll was conducted by telephone from February 9-11, 2012 with a scientifically selected random sample of 914 New Jersey registered voters. Data are weighted to represent known parameters in the New Jersey population, using gender, age, race, and Hispanic ethnicity matching to 2010 US Census Bureau data. All results are reported with these weighted data. This telephone poll included 734 landline respondents supplemented with 180 cell phone respondents, acquired through random digit dialing.

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 914 adults is +/-3.3 percentage points, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of New Jersey voters favored a particular position, one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 46.7 and 53.3 percent (50 +/-3.3) had all New Jersey adults been interviewed, rather than just a sample. Sampling error increases as the sample size 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.

This Rutgers-Eagleton Poll was fielded by Braun Research, Incorporated. The questionnaire was developed and all data analyses were completed in house. The Rutgers-Eagleton Poll is paid for and sponsored by the Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University, a non-partisan academic center focused on the study and teaching of politics and the political process.

Weighted Sample Characteristics			
914 New Jersey Registered Voters			
37% Democrat	47% Male	14% 18-29	71% White
43% Independent	53% Female	32% 30-49	15% Black
20% Republican		39% 50-64	7% Hispanic
		24% 65+	6% Asian/Other/Multi