

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2011

EDITOR'S NOTE: ATTENTION POLITICAL, ASSIGNMENT EDITORS, Professor David Redlawsk may be contacted at 319-400-1134, 732-932-9384, ext. 285, or redlawsk@rutgers.edu. Visit <http://eagletonpollblog.wordpress.com> for additional commentary.

**RUTGERS-EAGLETON POLL: MAJORITY OF NEW JERSEY VOTERS
OPPOSE RUTGERS-CAMDEN MERGER WITH ROWAN**

Potential higher education bond issue evenly divides voters

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J – A clear majority of New Jersey's registered voters – 57 percent – oppose the proposed merger of Rutgers-Camden with Rowan University, recently championed by Gov. Chris Christie, according to a new Rutgers-Eagleton Poll. Only 22 percent support the merger and 21 percent are unsure, the poll found.

Concurrently, voters are split in supporting a higher education facilities bond: 48 percent favor borrowing for improvements at the state's colleges and universities, and 45 percent do not.

Voters in South Jersey are no more supportive of the merger of the two schools than in the rest of the state. Instead, the highest support is found in northwestern New Jersey and the Shore counties, two areas that are strong backers of Christie. Even in these regions, however, many more voters oppose the merger than support it.

"Governor Christie's plan to merge Rowan and Rutgers-Camden may be the most unpopular idea he has put forward to date," said Rutgers-Eagleton Poll Director David Redlawsk, a professor of political science at Rutgers University in New Brunswick. "Generally, he can count on support from a majority of Republicans. We might also expect voters in South Jersey to be in favor, given the benefits Christie says will come from the merger. But in reality, neither of these groups, or any other, comes close to supporting it."

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.

Opposition to merger plan is broad and deep

While GOP voters usually support Christie's policies, in this case they clearly do not. Though twice as likely as Democrats to support the merger, only 32 percent favor combining the two universities, while 49 percent oppose the plan. Few Democrats support the merger, with only 16 percent in favor and 67 percent opposed. Nearly 20 percent of both parties are unsure. Independent voters are 2-to-1 opposed, but nearly one-quarter of independents are unsure where they stand.

The merger plan does best among those with a favorable impression of the governor, and among the wealthiest Garden Staters, but even most of these voters are skeptical. While the plan garners 30 percent support from those who like Christie, 44 percent of his supporters oppose it. Not surprisingly, those with an unfavorable opinion of Christie are overwhelmingly opposed, at 14 percent support and 71 percent opposition.

One-third of voters with household incomes over \$150,000 support the governor's plan, while 39 percent oppose it, and 28 percent have no opinion. On the opposite end of the financial spectrum, voters in households with annual incomes under \$50,000 are firmly against merging Rowan and Rutgers-Camden: 63 percent are opposed and only 16 percent in favor. About one-quarter of the remaining income groups support the plan and about 60 percent do not.

Despite the potential benefits to South Jersey, voters in the region are not convinced. Mimicking the statewide numbers, 19 percent of those living in Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester and Salem counties support the plan, while 71 percent oppose it. South Jersey voters are much less likely to be unsure, at only 10 percent. Residents of the Shore counties are least opposed, with 44 percent negative, the only region to have less than a majority against the merger, and 27 percent in favor. But 30 percent of these voters are unsure of their position on the issue, the highest in the state.

"The stunning thing about these numbers is simply how negative voters are about the plan," said Redlawsk. "We thought those living in South Jersey would be more supportive than most, since the proposal is put forward as significant enhancement for the region. But the reality is this is a deeply disliked proposal."

New Jerseyans split on education bond

While Christie is proposing to remake higher education in South Jersey, leaders of the state's colleges and universities are considering whether the time is right to put a higher education facilities bond issue on the November ballot. If voted on today, the result would be a toss-up.

Forty-eight percent of respondents would have the state take on more debt to build and refurbish college facilities, thus creating construction jobs, but 45 percent say it is a bad time to take on more debt, and oppose the measure. Only 8 percent are not sure where they stand.

Democrats are stronger supporters of the bond issue than Republicans. Sixty-three percent of Democrats are in support of the bond issue and 27 percent oppose. Only 35 percent of Republicans are in favor, while 59 percent oppose borrowing for college facilities. Independents respond similarly to Republicans: 39 percent are in support of the bond and 53 percent oppose it.

Voters with an unfavorable opinion of Christie are more supportive of the bond: 59 percent support borrowing, while 34 percent think it is a bad time for more debt. Among those who think favorably of Christie, only 37 percent support and 56 percent oppose a bond issue.

There appears to be a limited relationship between support for the bond issue and opposition to the merger of Rutgers-Camden and Rowan University. Half of merger opponents support a higher education bond issue, while 45 percent of supporters also favor borrowing for facilities. This small difference is likely accounted for by partisanship – Republicans are more likely to support the merger, and less likely to support the bond issue proposal.

Whites are weaker supporters of the measure than blacks. Only 45 percent of whites support the bond proposal compared to 56 percent of African-Americans. Forty-seven percent of whites and 35 percent of blacks oppose the bond. Regional differences are minimal: urban voters are more supportive, but there are no differences among other regions of the state.

“Borrowing right now is a tricky business,” said Redlawsk. “While interest rates are at historic lows making borrowing costs as low as they are ever likely to be, voters are generally dubious about governments taking on more debt. At the same time, New Jersey voters seem at least inclined to consider a bond issue, if one is put forward.”

###

QUESTIONS AND TABLES BEGIN ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE

Questions and Tables

The questions covered in the release of February 15, 2012 are listed below. Column percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding. Respondents are Registered Voters (RV).

Q There is talk about a bond issue for New Jersey colleges and universities to pay for new and updated facilities. This would be the first higher-education bond since 1988 and may need to be more than one billion dollars. Supporters say this is needed to improve higher education in New Jersey and will create new construction jobs. Opponents say it is a bad time for the state to take on more debt. Thinking about this would you support or oppose a higher education bond issue?

Support 48%
Oppose 45%
DK 8%

Unwght N= 911

| | Party ID | | | Ideology | | | Education | | | |
|-----------|----------|-----|-----|----------|-----|------|---------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | Dem | Ind | Rep | Lib | Mod | Cons | HS or less | Some Coll | Coll Grad | Grad Work |
| Support | 63% | 39% | 35% | 65% | 49% | 21% | 41% | 51% | 42% | 55% |
| Oppose | 27% | 53% | 59% | 28% | 43% | 73% | 49% | 43% | 48% | 39% |
| DK | 9% | 8% | 6% | 7% | 8% | 6% | 10% | 5% | 10% | 6% |
| Unwght N= | 319 | 400 | 182 | 186 | 511 | 191 | 202 | 246 | 244 | 214 |

| | Employment | | | | Race | | Age | | | |
|-----------|------------|-----|---------|----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| | FT | PT | Retired | Not Empl | White | Black | 18-29 | 30-49 | 50-64 | 65+ |
| Support | 47% | 50% | 43% | 54% | 45% | 56% | 54% | 48% | 49% | 41% |
| Oppose | 46% | 41% | 49% | 38% | 47% | 35% | 37% | 43% | 47% | 48% |
| DK | 7% | 9% | 9% | 8% | 8% | 9% | 9% | 8% | 4% | 11% |
| Unwght N= | 398 | 81 | 291 | 139 | 716 | 84 | 54 | 222 | 348 | 279 |

| | Income | | | | Gender | | Religion | | | Born Again | |
|-----------|--------|---------------|----------------|-------|--------|-----|----------|------------|--------|------------|-----|
| | < 50K | 50K- <100K | 100K- <150K | 150K+ | Male | Fem | Catholic | Protestant | Jewish | Yes | No |
| Support | 47% | 52% | 45% | 50% | 47% | 48% | 45% | 40% | 60% | 46% | 43% |
| Oppose | 43% | 43% | 47% | 47% | 47% | 43% | 47% | 52% | 36% | 45% | 49% |
| DK | 10% | 5% | 8% | 3% | 6% | 9% | 8% | 8% | 4% | 9% | 7% |
| Unwght N= | 244 | 266 | 132 | 102 | 430 | 481 | 396 | 236 | 68 | 125 | 534 |

| | Union Household | | | Christie Impression | | | Region | | | | |
|-----------|-----------------|---------|-------------|---------------------|-------|------------|--------|--------|---------|----------------|-------|
| | Public | Private | No Union | Fav | Unfav | No Opin | Urban | Suburb | Exurban | Phil/ South | Shore |
| Support | 51% | 54% | 46% | 37% | 59% | 49% | 57% | 45% | 49% | 46% | 43% |
| Oppose | 42% | 39% | 46% | 56% | 34% | 35% | 36% | 47% | 42% | 47% | 49% |
| DK | 7% | 7% | 8% | 7% | 7% | 16% | 7% | 8% | 8% | 7% | 8% |
| Unwght N= | 121 | 55 | 717 | 457 | 348 | 98 | 141 | 332 | 105 | 169 | 164 |

*Higher Education February 2012
Rutgers-Eagleton Poll*

| | Support Merger | Oppose Merger | DK |
|--------------|-------------------|------------------|-----|
| Support Bond | 47% | 50% | 41% |
| Oppose Bond | 49% | 45% | 41% |
| DK | 5% | 5% | 18% |
| | 194 | 510 | 206 |

Q. Governor Christie has proposed major changes to higher education in New Jersey, which include the merger of Rutgers University-Camden into Rowan University. Rowan would become a research-oriented university, while Rutgers would lose its law school, business school, and undergraduate college at Camden. Do you support or oppose this plan?

| | |
|-----------|-----|
| Support | 22% |
| Oppose | 57% |
| DK | 21% |
| Unwght N= | 912 |

| | Party ID | | | | Ideology | | | Education | | | |
|-----------|----------|-----|-----|-----|----------|------|---------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--|
| | Dem | Ind | Rep | Lib | Mod | Cons | HS or less | Some Coll | Coll Grad | Grad Work | |
| Support | 16% | 22% | 32% | 15% | 20% | 34% | 19% | 22% | 20% | 26% | |
| Oppose | 67% | 52% | 49% | 61% | 61% | 43% | 64% | 61% | 56% | 49% | |
| DK | 17% | 25% | 20% | 24% | 19% | 23% | 17% | 17% | 24% | 25% | |
| Unwght N= | 318 | 401 | 183 | 186 | 511 | 191 | 202 | 245 | 245 | 215 | |

| | Employment | | | | Race | | Age | | | |
|-----------|------------|-----|---------|----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| | FT | PT | Retired | Not Empl | White | Black | 18-29 | 30-49 | 50-64 | 65+ |
| Support | 27% | 19% | 17% | 17% | 22% | 7% | 23% | 23% | 23% | 17% |
| Oppose | 54% | 61% | 61% | 60% | 54% | 81% | 55% | 58% | 58% | 57% |
| DK | 20% | 21% | 22% | 23% | 24% | 12% | 22% | 19% | 20% | 26% |
| Unwght N= | 398 | 82 | 291 | 139 | 718 | 83 | 54 | 223 | 347 | 280 |

| | Income | | | | Gender | | Religion | | | Born Again | |
|-----------|--------|---------------|----------------|-------|--------|--------|----------|------------|--------|------------|-----|
| | < 50K | 50K- <100K | 100K- <150K | 150K+ | Male | Female | Catholic | Protestant | Jewish | Yes | No |
| Support | 16% | 24% | 24% | 33% | 26% | 17% | 24% | 17% | 18% | 24% | 22% |
| Oppose | 63% | 60% | 61% | 39% | 52% | 62% | 55% | 66% | 51% | 66% | 57% |
| DK | 20% | 16% | 14% | 28% | 22% | 21% | 20% | 17% | 31% | 11% | 21% |
| Unwght N= | 243 | 266 | 132 | 102 | 431 | 481 | 397 | 236 | 68 | 125 | 535 |

| | Union Household? | | | Christie Impression | | | Region | | | | |
|-----------|------------------|---------|-------------|---------------------|-------|------------|--------|--------|---------|------------|-------|
| | Public | Private | No Union | Fav | Unfav | No Opin | Urban | Suburb | Exurban | Phil/South | Shore |
| Support | 18% | 30% | 22% | 30% | 14% | 17% | 21% | 20% | 25% | 19% | 27% |
| Oppose | 68% | 50% | 56% | 44% | 71% | 63% | 59% | 57% | 54% | 71% | 44% |
| DK | 14% | 21% | 22% | 26% | 16% | 20% | 20% | 23% | 21% | 10% | 30% |
| Unwght N= | 121 | 55 | 718 | 458 | 347 | 99 | 141 | 333 | 105 | 169 | 164 |

| | Support Bond | Oppose Bond | DK |
|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----|
| Support Merger | 21% | 24% | 13% |
| Oppose Merger | 61% | 57% | 38% |
| DK | 18% | 20% | 49% |
| | 401 | 433 | 76 |

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 |