



For immediate release... **Monday, April 11, 2011.** 3 pp.

Contact: Peter Woolley 973.670.3239

Shared Municipal Services: An Idea Whose Time Has Come?

A majority of voters in a state with 566 municipalities and widespread budget problems say sharing municipal services is a good idea. According to the most recent statewide poll by Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind™, 71% say that in order to save money, sharing services like police, fire and school administration is a good idea, while 19% say it's a bad idea. Three of four Republicans (76%) say it's a good idea, and so do two of three Democrats (67%). But women are a bit more hesitant to modify New Jersey's entrenched "home rule" tradition than are men.

Changing the question slightly to ask voters about their town in particular, the answer remains the same: 70% say it's a good idea for their town to share services with a neighboring town.

"Given every town's problems with tight budgets, high property taxes, and pension contributions, perhaps sharing services is an idea whose time has finally come," said Peter Woolley, a political scientist and director of the poll. "It used to be that shared services were a good idea for someone else's town. Now voters are suggesting it's a good idea for their town too," he added.

Asked specifically about sharing their police services with a neighboring town, 64% of voters agree it's a good idea, while 29% object. The survey reveals a gender divide on the issue. Among men, 71% say sharing cops is a good idea but only 58% of women agree.

Asked specifically about sharing school administration with a neighboring town, two-thirds (66%) say it's a good idea, while 25% say it's not. Again, men (71%) are more likely than women (61%) to say it's a good idea.

Asked about sharing their fire services with another town, 66% say it's a good idea, while 27% say it's a bad idea. While 71% of men say it's a good idea, 60% of women agree.

"Of course, the devil is in the details when trying to merge services," said Woolley. "The service providers themselves are often the first ones to object to a change in how things are administered."

The Fairleigh Dickinson University poll of 711 registered voters statewide was conducted by telephone using both landlines and cell phones from March 29 through April 4, 2011, and has a margin of error of +/-4 percentage points.

Methodology, questions, and tables on the web at: <http://publicmind.fdu.edu>

Radio actualities at 201.692.2846 For more information, please call 201.692.7032

Methodology, Questions, and Tables

The most recent survey by Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind was conducted by telephone from March 29, 2011 through April 4, 2011, using a randomly selected sample of 711 registered voters statewide. The margin of error for a sample of 711 randomly selected respondents is +/- 4 percentage points. The margin of error for subgroups is larger and varies by the size of that subgroup. Survey results are also subject to non-sampling error. This kind of error, which cannot be measured, arises from a number of factors including, but not limited to, non-response (eligible individuals refusing to be interviewed), question wording, the order in which questions are asked, and variations among interviewers. PublicMind interviews are conducted by Opinion America of Cedar Knolls, NJ, with professionally trained interviewers using a CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) system. Random selection is achieved by computerized random-digit dialing. This technique gives every person with a land-line phone number (including those with unlisted numbers) an equal chance of being selected. Landline households are supplemented with a separate, randomly selected sample of cell-phone-only-households, interviewed in the same time frame. The total combined sample is mathematically weighted to match known demographics of age, race and gender.

Some people have suggested that one way for New Jersey towns to save money would be to share some services among towns, like police, fire, and school administration. In general do you think sharing municipal services is a good idea or a bad idea?

<i>[Rotate list]</i>	All	Dem.	Ind.	Rep.	men	wom
Good idea	71%	67	71	76	75	68
Bad idea	19%	22	17	17	16	22
Unsure/ref.	9%	11	12	7	9	10

And what about your town, in general, do you think it's a good idea or a bad idea for your town to share services with a neighboring town...

<i>[Rotate list]</i>	All	Dem.	Ind.	Rep.	Men	wom
Good idea	70%	68	73	71	75	66
Bad idea	24%	27	17	24	20	28
Unsure/ref.	6%	5	10	5	5	6

Do you think it's a good idea or a bad idea for your town to share...

<i>[Rotate list]</i>	All	Dem.	Ind.	Rep.	men	wom
...police services with a neighboring town?						
Good idea	64%	63	62	66	71	58
Bad idea	29%	31	24	27	25	33
Unsure/ref.	7%	5	13	7	5	9
...school administration with a neighboring town?						
Good idea	66%	63	73	68	71	61
Bad idea	25%	28	17	23	23	26
Unsure/ref.	9%	9	11	9	6	13
...fire services with a neighboring town?						
Good idea	66%	68	61	64	71	60
Bad idea	27%	27	27	28	24	31
Unsure/ref.	7%	5	12	8	5	9

Exact Question Wording

US1-2 Released 4.7.11

NJ1-2, NJ4-7 Released 4.6.11

NJ8. Some people have suggested that one way for New Jersey towns to save money would be to share some services among towns, like police, fire, and school administration. In general do you think sharing municipal services is a good idea or a bad idea?

NJ9. And what about your town, in general, do you think it's a good idea or a bad idea for your town to share services with a neighboring town...

NJ10. Do you think it's a good idea or a bad idea for your town to share...

ROTATE ORDER

a...police services with a neighboring town?

b.... school administration with a neighboring town?

c. fire services with a neighboring town?

Good

Bad

DK/depends (vol)

Sample Characteristics (%)

Gender

Male	50
Female	50

Age

18-29	12
30-44	25
45-59	32
60+	28
Ref.	3

In addition to being American, would you say you are...?

White	70
Black	14
Hispanic or Latino	9
Asian	3
Other/ref.	4

Party ID

Dem. + lean Dem.	48
ind. + unsure + ref.	14
Rep. + lean Rep.	38

###