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DISAPPROVAL FOR MIDDLE CLASS TAX HIKES

Death and taxes are inevitable, but tax increases are less certain, and a recent statewide survey of registered voters in New Jersey from Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind finds that while recent proposals to raise revenue for road projects and open space preservation are met with opposition, increasing income tax on the rich is another story. Seventy-two percent of respondents say that despite the need for road and bridge projects, taxes should not be raised on gasoline to pay for road improvements. Seventy-one percent of registered voters also reject an increased tax on water consumption in order to pay for open space preservation. However, 63 percent support raising the tax rate on income earners making in excess of a million dollars annually in order to make the tax code more equitable.

"When combined, these findings offer clear support for avoiding middle and lower class tax hikes," said Krista Jenkins, director of PublicMind and professor of political science at Fairleigh Dickinson University. "Making gas tank fills more costly than they already are, and driving up costs for water use are added fees that most in the state are unwilling to tolerate."

PublicMind asked a similar question about a gas tax increase in both 2010 and 2006. In 2010, 61 percent of registered voters opposed a tax hike and in 2006 the number was closer to where it is today at 74 percent. [See <http://publicmind.fdu.edu/governor1001/final.pdf>]

A lack of support for the gas tax increase could pose problems for the state. Already weakened roads and bridges were hit hard by the brutally cold and icy winter, and repairs are sorely needed. However, as state leaders have made abundantly clear, revenue for road projects is dwindling. And, as PublicMind has shown, open space preservation remains a valued goal among voters, but raises questions about where the funds will emerge to pay for the acquisitions. [See <http://publicmind.fdu.edu/2013/farm/final.pdf>]

"State leaders may be given clear directives from voters, but public preferences leave revenue options more limited than leaders may want," said Jenkins.

Although the usual partisan differences are apparent, majorities of both Republicans (83%) and Democrats (65%) reject the gas tax increase, as well as the water consumption tax hike (82% and 60%, respectively). It's only on the issue of the income tax hike on the wealthy that partisans differ. More than three-quarters (78%) of Democrats support the tax increase, with less than a majority of Republicans (47%) wanting the same. And, on this issue, those who approve of the job the governor is doing differ

also. By a sizable margin, those who give him a disapproving rating favor the increase (76%) as compared with those who remain supportive of the governor's job performance (54%).

“Support for the so-called “millionaire’s tax” is unlikely to sit well with those familiar with the recent report on the flight of the super-rich out of the state to avoid high property and excise taxes. Raising the income tax rate on top income earners is likely to add to the concerns of those who feel as if the wealthy are already shouldering their fair share of revenue generating for the state,” said Jenkins.

The Fairleigh Dickinson University poll of 703 registered voters in New Jersey was conducted by telephone with both landline and cell phones from March 3 through March 9. The margin of error is +/- 3.7 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

The most recent survey by Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind was conducted by telephone from March 4 through March 9 using a randomly selected sample of 703 registered voters in New Jersey. One can be 95 percent confident that the error attributable to sampling has a range of +/- 3.7 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 landline 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 respondents interviewed in the same time frame. The total combined sample is mathematically weighted to match known demographics of age, race and gender.

Tables

Which of the following comes closest to your view, even if neither statement is perfect: New Jersey needs to raise the gasoline tax because all of the current money is committed and without new revenue there cannot be any new road or bridge projects OR Regardless of the need, no new taxes should be imposed.

	All	PID			Gender		Race		Union household		Christie approval	
		Dem	Ind	Repub	Male	Female	White	Non-white	Yes	No	Favorable	Unfavorable
Should raise the tax	23%	31	19	14	27	20	25	20	31	21	21	27
Should NOT raise the tax	72%	65	76	83	69	75	70	76	63	75	76	69
DK/Ref (vol)	5%	4	5	4	4	6	5	4	6	4	3	4

Which of the following comes closest to your view, even if neither statement is perfect. New Jersey needs to raise the tax on water consumption in order to ensure adequate funds are available for open space preservation OR Regardless of the need, no new taxes should be imposed.

	All	PID			Gender		Race		Union household		Christie approval	
		Dem	Ind	Repub	Male	Female	White	Non-white	Yes	No	Favorable	Unfavorable
Should raise the tax	21%	32	13	13	22	21	23	19	24	21	20	25
Should NOT raise the tax	71%	60	77	82	71	71	69	74	70	72	73	69
DK/Ref (vol)	7%	7	11	5	6	8	8	7	6	7	7	6

Which of the following comes closest to your view, even if neither statement is perfect. New Jersey needs to raise the tax rate on income earners making in excess of a million dollars annually in order to make the tax code more equitable OR A tax increase on top income earners is unwarranted.

	All	PID			Gender		Race		Union household		Christie approval	
		Dem	Ind	Repub	Male	Female	White	Non-white	Yes	No	Favorable	Unfavorable
Should raise tax	63%	78	57	47	62	65	58	76	71	62	54	76
Should NOT raise the tax	31%	17	37	48	33	29	36	18	26	32	41	19
DK/Ref (vol)	6%	6	6	5	6	6	5	6	3	6	6	5

Exact Question Wording and Order

US1 and US2 withheld for future release
NJ1 through NJ11 released March 11, 2014
POT1 through POT2 withheld for future release

[ROTATE TAX SERIES]

TAX1 Which of the following comes closest to your view, even if neither statement is perfect: New Jersey needs to raise the gasoline tax because all of the current money is committed and without new revenue there cannot be any new road or bridge projects OR Regardless of the need, no new taxes should be imposed.

- 1 Should raise the tax
- 2 Should NOT raise the tax
- 8 DK/Both

TAX2 Which of the following comes closest to your view, even if neither statement is perfect. New Jersey needs to raise the tax on water consumption in order to ensure adequate funds are available for open space preservation OR Regardless of the need, no new taxes should be imposed.

- 1 Should raise the tax
- 2 Should NOT raise the tax
- 8 DK/Both

TAX3 Which of the following comes closest to your view, even if neither statement is perfect. New Jersey needs to reinstate raise the tax rate on income earners making in excess of a million dollars annually in order to make the tax code more equitable OR A tax increase on top income earners is unwarranted.

- 1 Should reinstate the tax
- 2 Should NOT reinstate the tax
- 8 DK/Both

Weighted sample characteristics

		Registered voters N = 703; MoE = +/- 3.7
Gender	<i>Male</i>	49%
	<i>Female</i>	51%
Age	<i>18-34</i>	22%
	<i>35-59</i>	45%
	<i>60+</i>	30%
	<i>Refused</i>	3%
Race	<i>White</i>	67%
	<i>African American</i>	12%
	<i>Hispanic</i>	13%
	<i>Asian</i>	4%
	<i>Other/Refused</i>	4%
	<i>Self</i>	14%
Union household	<i>Someone else</i>	8%
	<i>No</i>	75%
Party (with leaners)	<i>Dem</i>	45%
	<i>Ind/DK/Refused</i>	25%
	<i>Repub</i>	30%