



CLUELESS ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING, YET STRONG AND GROWING SUPPORT FOR MORE HOUSING OPTIONS

Fairleigh Dickinson University, February 6, 2017 – The recent state Supreme Court ruling on affordable housing in New Jersey is likely to have sweeping implications for years to come. Despite its importance, however, more than half of all Garden State residents have heard nothing about the ruling.

The most recent statewide survey from Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind finds 53 percent of adults know nothing about the ruling related to the so-called Mount Laurel decisions from the 1990s. Only a quarter (24%) say they have heard a great deal or some about the ruling.

The court ruled recently that townships and municipalities must allow the development of affordable housing for low and moderate income families. The Mount Laurel rulings set the stage for townships to ignore or do little to address affordable housing needs for over a decade (1999-2015), and was the basis for the ruling recently on affordable housing. According to the state Supreme Court, doing nothing is no longer an option.

“Recent Supreme Court action will affect communities across the state. And yet three-quarters of voters have heard virtually nothing about it. As townships and municipalities wrestle with how to comply with affordable housing requirements, more residents will find it helpful to know what is behind changes in their neighborhoods,” said Krista Jenkins, professor of political science and director of PublicMind.

Two-thirds (67%) say they approve of the court decision to require towns to promote the building of low and moderate income housing. A quarter (28%) disapprove of the ruling. Support for an increase in the number of affordable housing options in New Jersey is up by double digits from 2009, the last time the same question was asked. In 2009, barely half (52%) supported affordable housing. Today, that number has increased by fifteen points (67%).

“The idea of ‘affordable’ is attractive in a state with the highest property taxes and steep housing costs. This helps to explain why the idea gets strong support,” said Jenkins. “Even if you don’t count yourself among those seeking affordable housing, who hasn’t experienced sticker shock in the course of day-to-day expenses? Garden State residents seem to recognize this and want government to do something for those struggling to find housing they can afford.”

Although opinion is more decisive among Democrats (81-15% approve), Republicans are evenly split. Forty-eight percent approve of the ruling with 45 percent who disapprove.

When asked why people either support or oppose the ruling, a variety of responses are offered. Thirty-six percent of those who favor the ruling believe affordable housing should be available everywhere and not subject to income constraints. Other commonly-offered responses include the assistance that low and moderate income people need to find affordable housing, especially given the high cost of living in the state, and a belief that the current inventory of affordable housing is insufficient given the needs in the state. In short, those who favor the rulings are likely to explain their support through the appreciation they have for the experiences of low and moderate wage earners and a belief that government has an obligation to do more to help.

On the other side, those opposed to the rulings explain their opposition largely through a belief that government should not dictate housing development (31%), and a “pull yourself up by the bootstraps” mentality toward low and moderate income earners.

“With so many people in the dark about the ruling and what it portends, attitudes are likely to change. With the 2017 gubernatorial race on the horizon, this is sure to become an issue that will be talked about more frequently which will give residents another chance to become acquainted with this important case and its ramifications,” said Jenkins.

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 Fairleigh Dickinson University poll was conducted by landline and cellular telephone January 25-29, a random sample of 921 adults in New Jersey. Results have a margin of sampling error of +/- 3.6 percentage points, including the design effect.

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.

The total combined sample is mathematically weighted to match known demographics of age, sex, race, and education. 489 interviews were conducted on landlines and 432 were conducted on cellular telephones.

The sample was purchased from Marketing Systems Group and the research was funded by Fairleigh Dickinson University.

PublicMind recently received an “A” rating from statistician Nate Silver’s FiveThirtyEight blog. The ratings measure both accuracy and bias for all major polling services in the United States, providing an update to similar research the poll watchers conducted in 2014. PublicMind’s “A” rating puts it in the top 14 of the more than 380 polling institutes reviewed and graded from A+ through F. PublicMind was found to have a 94 percent accuracy rate for predicting election results, and is one of only two A-rated polling institutes with zero bias to their rankings.

Tables

<i>The State Supreme Court recently heard arguments in a case involving affordable housing in New Jersey, or what some refer to as the Mount Laurel decisions. How much have you heard or read about this recent case?</i>													
		PID			Gender		Race		Education		Age		
	All	Dem	Ind	Repub	Male	Female	White	Non-white	HS/Some college	College+	18-34	35-59	60+
A great deal	8%	7	8	9	9	6	11	2	5	10	1	7	15
Some	16%	15	17	18	18	15	20	9	14	18	9	14	25
Just a little	22%	23	25	19	23	22	23	22	23	22	25	22	20
Nothing at all	53%	54	49	53	50	56	46	66	57	50	65	56	39
DK/Both (vol)	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Refused (vol)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0

In the Mount Laurel rulings, the court said that New Jersey towns are required to actively promote the building of low or moderate income housing. Do you approve or disapprove [rotate] of this decision?

	PID				Gender		Race		Education		Age		
	All	Dem	Ind	Repub	Male	Female	White	Non-white	HS/Some college	College+	18-34	35-59	60+
Approve	67%	81	60	48	61	72	64	72	68	66	74	60	69
Disapprove	28%	15	33	45	34	21	31	20	25	30	20	32	28
DK/Both (vol)	5%	4	4	7	4	6	4	8	7	4	5	7	3
Refused (vol)	0	0	2	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0

<i>Trend: Approve/Disapprove Mount Laurel rulings</i>			
	2017	2009	2008
Approve	67%	52%	55%
Disapprove	28%	36%	28%
DK/Both (vol)	5%	11%	17%
Refused (vol)	0	0	0

<i>Why do you approve of the court ruling? (open ended; multiple responses possible) [N = 612]</i>	
	All
Affordable housing should be avail. everywhere	36%
Helps low income find housing	34%
Cost of living high in NJ	26%
Not enough affordable housing options in the state	25%
It's the right thing to do	12%
Will give low income kids access to better schools	12%
A responsibility of gov't to help the poor	8%
More diversity/integration in communities	6%

<i>Why do you oppose of the court ruling? (open ended; multiple responses possible) [N = 254]</i>	
	All
State should not dictate what kind of housing is built	31%
Taxes are already too high	16%
Income should be able to dictate where people choose to live	16%
Affordable housing devalues the surrounding areas	15%
Low and moderate earners need to work harder to help themselves	7%
Not in my backyard	6%
Affordable housing promotes bad neighborhoods	5%
Just disapprove – no particular reason	5%
People will abuse the system and look for a free ride	2%

Question wording and order

US1 through US7 released February 2, 2017
 NJ1 through NJ5 released January 31, 2017

Now I'd like to ask you about affordable housing in New Jersey...

NJ6 The State Supreme Court recently heard arguments in a case involving affordable housing in New Jersey, or what some refer to as the Mount Laurel Decisions. How much have you heard or read about recent this case? [Asked in 08 and 09]

- 1 A great deal
- 2 Some
- 3 Just a little
- 4 Nothing at all
- 8 DK (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

NJ7 In the Mount Laurel rulings, the court said that New Jersey towns are required to actively promote the building of low and moderate income housing. Do you approve or disapprove [rotate] of this decision? [Asked in 08 and 09]

- 1 Approve [Ask NJ8A]
- 2 Disapprove [Ask NJ8B]
- 8 DK (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

NJ8A Why do you approve of the ruling? [open-ended; multiple responses possible]

NJ8B Why do you disapprove of the ruling? [open-ended; multiple responses possible]

Sample characteristics (weighted)

Gender	<i>Male</i>	49%
	<i>Female</i>	51%
Age	<i>18-34</i>	28%
	<i>35-59</i>	41%
	<i>60+</i>	31%
	<i>Refused</i>	0
Race	<i>White</i>	64%
	<i>African American</i>	13%
	<i>Hispanic</i>	15%
	<i>Asian</i>	5%
	<i>Other/Refused</i>	3%
Party (with leaners)	<i>Dem</i>	48%
	<i>Ind/DK/Refused</i>	21%
	<i>Repub</i>	31%