

## Poll gauges reaction to education spending

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Gov. Chris Christie's proposed education reform plan caused a mix of reactions among New Jersey residents, ranging from appraisal to anger.

The Eagleton Institute of Politics conducted a poll from Oct. 21 to 27 of 885 random registered voters about their views on Christie's plan, which includes eliminating tenure and basing a teacher's salary off students' performance.

According to those polled, 59 percent believe the state should spend more on education, while 15 percent believe less should be spent, and 21 percent think spending is sufficient.

Seventy-four percent of Democrats polled say more money needs to be spent, while only 38 percent of Republicans polled think the same.

"I believe the difference of opinion on state funding between Democrats and Republicans is because of their basic beliefs," said David Redlawsk, director of the Rutgers-Eagleton poll. "The Republican ideology is cut back on spending, while the Democrat ideology is to support state spending, specifically on education."

The poll also demonstrates that those with children tend to have different views on Christie's plans.

According to those polled, 65 percent of parents with kids younger than 18 think the state should spend more on education, while only 54 percent of people who do not have kids under 18 believe the same.

Alan Levine, a Glen Ridge resident, believes the state invests too much money in education.

"Eighty-five percent of taxes in Glen Ridge go to education. I'm 75 years old and I'm sending my neighbor's kids to school," Levine said. "The state has to find a new way to finance education."

The poll also tackles the debate on tenure. Results report that 73 percent of voters view tenure as a barrier that prevents the firing of unqualified teachers.

"Teachers shouldn't have tenure, they should get fired if they're unqualified," said Carlo Padua, a Bloomfield resident. "This whole thing started because teachers went to a conference in Atlantic City during the middle of the week."

Edward Levine, a Bloomfield resident, holds a different view. Levine teaches special education at Abraham Clark High School in Roselle, N.J.

"Tenure can be and is abused by teachers who don't do their jobs properly. On the other hand, it keeps teachers

because they have job security," Levine said. "If the state loses a benefit like that, you're going to lose some bad teachers but a lot of good teachers as well."

Kathryn Barrett, a Bloomfield resident and mother of two, said there are a lot of negative aspects to tenure.

"I was a teacher for Orange Middle School, but I was laid off because of the governor's state budget cuts," said Barrett, who is currently unemployed. "I worked with many unqualified teachers who still have jobs because of tenure. I was very qualified, but I got laid off because I'm not tenured."

The poll reports that 63 percent of New Jersey citizens polled oppose Christie's proposal to base a teacher's salary off their student's scores on performance tests.

"Basing a teacher's pay off of student tests scores is a terrible idea because there are many factors into a student's tests scores," said Fernando Monero, a teacher at Ridge Street School in Newark.

Regardless, Monero said the state should invest more in education.

"From a teacher's perspective, New Jersey definitely needs to spend more on education," he said. "A lot of recently built Newark schools have technological upgrades. It's only right that all students can have the same equal opportunity."

University students have a variety of opinions on the subject.

"More funds should be given to the education system, but without increasing taxes. This can be done by taking funds from unsuccessful programs," said David Zatorski, a School of Arts and Sciences sophomore.

Ryan Loram, a School of Arts and Sciences sophomore, said the state should invest in others areas.

"I think New Jersey should focus on putting money into other things than education, such as medical facilities and programs," Loram said.

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