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## Gov. Christie's Anti-Abortion Speech Lowers Opinion In One-Third Of New Jersey Voters

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By Mel Fabrikant Wednesday, March 16, 2011, 09:22 AM EDT

A small minority – 10 percent – of registered voters in New Jersey believes abortion should be illegal under all circumstances, according to a Rutgers-Eagleton Poll released today. Just over a third (37 percent) say abortion should be legal under all conditions, and another 50 percent support legal abortion with restrictions.

Gov. Chris Christie brought abortion back into the spotlight when he spoke at an antiabortion rally in Trenton in January, where he proclaimed himself an "ally" of anti-abortion efforts.

While 54 percent of registered voters say his speech did not affect their opinion of the governor, 31 percent say it made them feel worse about Christie, while 14 percent say his participation in the rally made them feel better.

"New Jersey's attitudes on abortion have not changed much since we last asked, seven years ago," said David Redlawsk, director of the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll and professor of political science at Rutgers. "Abortion rights continue to have support in the state. It's not surprising that Governor Christie's public entrance into this issue has had somewhat negative consequences for him."

The poll of 912 New Jersey adults was conducted among both landline and cell phone households Feb. 24-26, with a margin of error of +/- 3.3 percentage points. A weighted subsample of 811 registered voters is reported here, with a margin of error of +/- 3.4 percentage points.

Most New Jerseyans support legal abortion, at least in some circumstances. Nearly nine-in-10 voters (87 percent) favor legalized abortion under at least some circumstances; 37 percent want no limits on the procedure, but 10 percent want it banned with no exceptions, the poll finds.

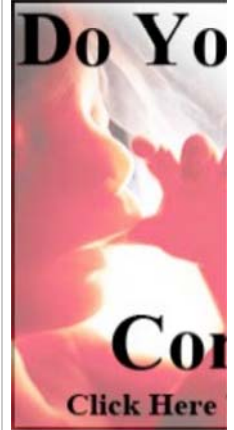
When last asked in January 2004, 31 percent supported abortion in all instances, while another 51 percent supported abortion rights only under certain circumstances. At that time, 13 percent opposed abortion in all cases. "Few in New Jersey want to see abortion rights eliminated entirely," said Redlawsk. "We did not ask about the specific limits people support, but there is clearly little support for a total ban on abortions."

While Democrats are more likely than Republicans to support abortion rights, even the latter generally support access to abortion under some conditions: 52 percent of Democrats and 23 percent of GOP voters say abortion should be legal under any circumstance. Another 38 percent of Democrats and 57 percent of Republicans say abortion should be legal only under certain circumstances. Independents, too, support the procedure: 32 percent under all conditions and 57 percent in certain instances. Only 16 percent of Republicans, 8 percent of Democrats, and 9 percent of independents support banning abortion entirely.

Perhaps surprisingly, nearly equally percentages of New Jersey Catholics and Protestants favor unconditional access to abortion (30 percent and 29 percent, respectively). An additional 55 percent of each group support legal abortion only under limited circumstances. The small sample of Jewish voters, however, strongly supports abortion rights; 71 percent say abortion should be legal in all cases. Only 13 percent of Catholics, 11 percent of Protestants, and 2 percent of Jews think that abortion should be illegal under all circumstances.

Attendance at religious services has some effect on support for abortion rights, according to the poll. Those who attend most often are much less in favor: 23 percent say abortion should be legal under all circumstances, compared to 46 percent of those who attend once a month or less. Only 6 percent who attend services less regularly support banning all abortion, compared to 16 percent who attend more than once a month.

There is a very small gender gap on abortion in the Garden State. Women are slightly more likely than men (40 percent to 34 percent) to support legal abortion under any circumstance. Fifty-two percent of men and 48 percent of women support limited legalized abortion. Another 11 percent of men and 9 percent of women say abortion should be completely banned.



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Given the small number of New Jerseyans who support a ban on abortions, the governor's January pro-life speech resulted in a negative reaction from nearly one-third of respondents (31 percent), though most (54 percent) say his remarks had no effect on their opinion of the governor. Only 14 percent say they feel more positive about Christie after the speech. Of the 10 percent who oppose all abortions, 49 percent have a better opinion of Christie, while 40 percent say their feelings have not changed, and 11 percent say they feel worse. Those in the middle – the majority who believe abortion should be legal with restrictions – were overwhelmingly unaffected by Christie's speech, with 62 percent reporting that it had no effect on their feeling toward him. Seventeen percent of these voters have a better view of Christie following his speech, while 19 percent have a worse opinion.

Among the 37 percent of voters who support legal abortion in all cases, a majority (54 percent) feels worse about the governor and 45 percent say the speech had no effect. Perhaps more critically, 38 percent of strongly pro-choice voters who initially support Christie say they feel worse about him after his speech.

"Wading into the abortion issue was clearly not about winning additional votes in New Jersey," said Redlawsk. "The governor's expression of solidarity with the pro-life movement hurts him among many of the pro-choice voters who have been Christie supporters. On the other hand, it may be a good way to nail down the base and present conservative credentials nationally. But it comes with some risk here at home."

Predictably, GOP backers are more likely to say the speech improved their opinion of Christie: 29 percent say they feel better after the speech, while 16 percent say the speech made them feel worse. On the other hand, only 4 percent of Democrats say they feel better about the governor, while 39 percent say they feel worse. By about a 2-to-1 margin, independents say they feel worse. But across all parties, 54 percent say the speech had no effect on their feelings about the governor.

Protestants seem least swayed by Christie's speech, with 61 percent reporting it had no effect on their opinion, compared to 55 percent of Catholics and 36 percent of Jewish voters. Among Jewish voters, 58 percent reported feeling worse after the governor's remarks, while 25 percent of Catholics and 21 percent of Protestants say their opinion of the governor worsened. Eighteen percent of Catholics, 15 percent of Protestants, and 6 percent of Jews hold better opinions of the governor in light of his speech.

**QUESTIONS AND TABLES** Rutgers-Eagleton Poll February 24-26, 2011

The questions covered in the release of March 15, 2011 are listed below. Column percentages may not

add to 100% due to rounding. Respondents are registered voters unless otherwise stated.

Q. Recently Governor Christie addressed an anti abortion rally expressing his opposition to abortion. Does his speaking at an anti-abortion rally make you feel better about Christie, worse about Christie, or does it have no effect on how you feel?

Better 14%

Worse 31%

No effect 54%

DK 2%

N= 807

Party ID Ideology

Dem Ind Rep Lib Middle Conserv

Better 4% 14% 29% 2% 10% 35%

Worse 39% 31% 16% 52% 32% 8%

No effect 54% 54% 54% 46% 56% 56%

DK 3% 1% 1% 0% 2% 1%

N= 282 326 186 170 459 166

Employment Race Education

Full

Time

Part

Time Retire

Not

Empl White Black Asian Hisp

HS or

Less

Some

Coll

Coll

Grad

Grad

Work

Better 12% 14% 19% 13% 15% 5% 13% 8% 21% 13% 11% 10%

Worse 32% 22% 30% 37% 32% 22% 31% 28% 28% 27% 28% 41%

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No effect 55% 63% 47% 49% 52% 65% 52% 61% 45% 60% 60% 48%

DK 1% 1% 4% 1% 1% 7% 4% 3% 5% 1% 0% 1%

N= 416 107 146 135 582 71 51 82 168 206 235 194

Age Income Gender

18-29 30-49 50-64 65+ < 50K

50K-

<100K

100K-

<150K 150K+ Male Female

Better 15% 11% 11% 23% 14% 16% 9% 10% 15% 12%

Worse 32% 31% 31% 29% 27% 26% 37% 40% 30% 32%

No effect 52% 58% 55% 43% 55% 57% 54% 50% 53% 55%

DK 0% 0% 2% 5% 5% 1% 0% 0% 2% 1%

N= 133 336 200 136 199 247 127 135 396 412

Religion How often R attends religious services

Catholic Protestant Jewish Other

At least

once/wk

Almost

every wk

Once a

month

Less than

once/mo

Better 18% 15% 6% 6% 24% 23% 9% 6%

Worse 25% 21% 58% 49% 14% 19% 34% 44%

No effect 55% 61% 36% 45% 60% 56% 55% 49%

DK 1% 3% 0% 1% 2% 2% 2% 1%

N= 336 219 60 144 221 90 134 348

Abortion Attitudes Feb 2011

Rutgers-Eagleton Poll

5

Q. Do you think abortions should be legal under any circumstances, legal only under certain circumstances, or illegal in all circumstances?

Feb 2011

(RV)

Jan 2004

(RV)

Legal under any circumstances 37% 31%

Legal only under certain circumstances 50% 51%

Illegal in all circumstances 10% 13%

DK/Depends 3% 3%

N= 804 823

Impression of Gov. Christie by Abortion Position

Legal, any Legal, some Illegal

Favorable 35% 54% 48%

Unfavorable 54% 36% 42%

DK 12% 10% 10%

N= 299 401 81

Feeling about Gov. Christie after Rally by

Abortion Position

Made feel: Legal, any Legal, some Illegal

Better 0% 17% 49%

Worse 54% 19% 11%

No effect 45% 62% 40%

DK 1% 2% 0%

N= 296 399 81

Party ID Ideology Employment

Dem

Ind

Rep

Lib

Mid

Cons

FT

PT

Retire

Not  
Empl  
Legal under any circumstances 52% 32% 23% 62% 36% 16% 37% 33% 33% 46%  
Legal only under certain circum 38% 57% 57% 30% 53% 61% 53% 51% 52% 38%  
Illegal in all circumstances 8% 9% 16% 8% 8% 19% 8% 13% 13% 12%  
DK 3% 2% 4% 0% 4% 3% 3% 3% 2% 5%  
N= 282 323 186 168 457 165 412 107 147 136

Race Education

White

Black

Asian

Hisp

HS or

less

Some

Coll

Coll

Grad

Grad

Work

Legal under any circumstances 37% 42% 22% 39% 37% 35% 35% 42%  
Legal only under certain circum 50% 44% 78% 43% 45% 51% 54% 49%  
Illegal in all circumstances 10% 10% 0% 15% 15% 11% 9% 6%  
DK 3% 5% 0% 3% 3% 3% 3% 3%  
N= 580 70 51 82 166 206 234 193

**Age Income**

18-29 30-49 50-64 65+ < 50K

50K-

<100K

100K-

<150K 150K+ Male Female

Legal/any circum 37% 40% 40% 28% 34% 31% 36% 55% 34% 40%  
Legal/only certain circum 51% 48% 49% 56% 51% 56% 56% 38% 52% 48%  
Illegal/all circumstances 12% 8% 9% 15% 12% 10% 5% 6% 11% 9%  
DK 0% 5% 2% 2% 3% 3% 3% 1% 3% 3%

N= 135 334 197 137 198 248 126 135 393 411

Religion How often R attends religious services

Catholic Prot. Jewish Other

At least

once/wk

Almost

every wk

Once a

month

Less than

once/mo

Legal/any circum 30% 29% 71% 51% 23% 21% 46% 47%  
Legal/only certain circum 55% 55% 26% 39% 57% 63% 41% 46%  
Illegal/all circumstances 13% 11% 2% 8% 18% 14% 11% 4%  
DK 2% 5% 0% 3% 2% 2% 2% 3%

N= 336 217 60 142 221 88 133 349

Rutgers-Eagleton Poll February 24-26, 2011

**New Jersey Statewide Poll**

The Rutgers-Eagleton Poll was conducted by telephone from February 24-26, 2011 with a scientifically selected random sample of 912 New Jersey adults. Data are weighted to represent known parameters in the New Jersey population, using gender, age, race, and Hispanic ethnicity matching to US Census Bureau data. All results are reported with these weighted data. This telephone poll included 775 landline respondents and 137 cell phone respondents, acquired through random digit dialing. Data reported in this release are from a weighted sample of 811 registered voters drawn from the full sample of adults. 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 811

registered voters is +/-3.4 percent, 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 46.6 and 53.4 percent (50 +/-3.4) had all New Jersey voters 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, Inc., of Princeton, New Jersey. The questionnaire was developed and all data analysis was completed in house at the Eagleton Institute of Politics Center for Public Interest Polling. 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**  
(811 New Jersey Registered Voters)  
35% Democrat 49% Male 17% 18-29 74% White  
42% Independent 51% Female 41% 30-49 9% Black  
23% Republican 24% 50-64 10% Hispanic  
17% 65+ 6% Asian  
1% Other

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