

GRANITE STATE POLL

BENSON OFF TO MODEST START, EDUCATION FUNDING SEEN AS MAJOR PROBLEM IN NH

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FOR RELEASE

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DURHAM, NH -- Governor Craig Benson has earned only modest approval for his first 100 days as Governor of New Hampshire. Education funding continues to be the most important issue facing New Hampshire, followed by concern about taxes and the state economy.

These findings are based on the latest **Granite State Poll**, conducted by the University of New Hampshire Survey Center. The Granite State Poll is sponsored by the University of New Hampshire. Five hundred nine (509) randomly selected adults were interviewed by telephone between April 11 and April 22, 2003. The margin of sampling error for the survey is +/-4.4 percent. (For more detailed results, visit the Survey Center web site at www.unh.edu/survey-center and click on Press Releases.)

Gubernatorial Approval

After 100 days in office, and faced with a stagnant economy and a serious budget shortfall, Governor Craig Benson has had little time to enjoy his November victory and settle into the corner office. And he has not been accorded the “honeymoon” that new office holders typically enjoy in the eyes of their constituents. In the most recent Granite State Poll, Governor Benson receives only modest approval ratings from New Hampshire -- 48 percent say they approve of the job he has done as governor, 22 percent disapprove, and 30 percent are neutral. “Benson has faced the daunting tasks of assembling an administration while negotiating a budget in the midst of a fiscal crisis,” says Andrew Smith, Director of the UNH Survey Center. “Approval ratings in the 40s are a sign of political vulnerability. Office holders really want to see their approval ratings in the high 50s or more.” Both Benson’s approval and disapproval ratings have gone up since the Winter 2003 Granite State Poll when 43 percent of New Hampshire adults said they approved of his handling of his job as governor, 13 percent disapproved, and 44 percent were neutral.

Another indication of the difficulties Benson has faced is that his personal favorability ratings have dropped in recent months. Currently, 53 percent say they have a favorable opinion of Benson, 21 percent have an unfavorable opinion, 9 percent are neutral, and 17 percent don’t know enough about him to say. In the Winter Granite State Poll, 58

percent of New Hampshire adults said they had a favorable opinion of Benson, 14 percent had an unfavorable opinion, 15 percent were neutral, and 18 percent did not know enough about him to say.

Most Important Problem Facing New Hampshire

The greatest difficulty both Benson and the state Legislature face is how to bring in a balanced budget in the face of declining revenues while still grappling with how to fund primary and secondary education in the wake of the Supreme Court's Claremont decisions. How to fund education is also seen as the most important problem facing the State of New Hampshire by New Hampshire citizens. In the most recent Granite State poll, 28 percent of New Hampshire adults cite education funding as the most important problem facing the state, 16 percent cite jobs and the economy, 14 percent think it is taxes, 8 percent named some other issue related to education, and 6 percent cite the state budget. Education funding has been cited as the most important problem facing the state in UNH Survey Center polls, in good economic times and bad, since early 1999.

Subgroup Analysis

Benson's highest approval and favorability ratings come from Republicans and conservatives. Democrats, liberals, union households, and people with post-graduate degrees give Benson his lowest approval and favorability ratings.

New Hampshire adults from all demographic and geographic groups are remarkably similar in their perceptions of problems facing the state. Education funding is cited by all groups as the most important problem facing the state.

Granite State Poll Methodology

These findings are based on the most recent Granite State Poll conducted by the University of New Hampshire Survey Center from April 11 to April 22, 2003. A random sample of 509 New Hampshire adults was interviewed by telephone. In 95 of 100 cases, the statewide estimates will be accurate to plus or minus 4.4 percent. Results reported for other subgroups have potential for somewhat larger variation than those for the entire population.

The data have been weighted to adjust for numbers of adults and telephone lines within households, respondent sex, and region of the state. In addition to potential sampling error, all surveys have other potential sources of non-sampling error including question order effects, question wording effects, and non-response.

Gubernatorial Approval

“GENERALLY SPEAKING, do you approve or disapprove of the way Governor Benson is handling his job as governor?” (IF APPROVE): “Would you say that you STRONGLY approve of the way he is handling his job as governor, or that you approve only SOMEWHAT?” (IF DISAPPROVE): “Would you say that you STRONGLY disapprove of the way he is handling his job as governor, or that you disapprove only SOMEWHAT?” (IF NEITHER, NOT SURE, DK): “Would you say that you lean a little more toward APPROVING or DISAPPROVING of the way he is handling his job as governor?”

	<u>Feb. 2003</u>	<u>April 2003</u>
Approve	43%	48%
Neutral, don't know	44	30
Disapprove	13	22
	(N=618)	(N=496)

Favorability Rating - Governor Craig Benson

"Next, I'd like to get your overall opinion of some people in the news. As I read each name, please say if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of this person - or if you have never heard of him or her. Governor Craig Benson."

	<u>Feb. 2003</u>	<u>April 2003</u>
Favorable	58%	53%
Neutral	15	9
Unfavorable	14	21
Don't know enough to say	18	17
	(N=652)	(N=507)

Most Important Problem Facing New Hampshire

"Let's turn to the State of New Hampshire ... There are many problems facing the STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE today. In general, what do you think is the most IMPORTANT problem facing the STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE today?"

	Oct. 2001	Feb. 2002	Apr. 2002	June 2002	Feb. 2003	April 2003
Education Funding	42%	27%	31%	31%	29%	28%
Jobs, the economy	15	12	11	16	16	16
Taxes	11	17	24	15	16	14
Other education issue	4	21	7	12	12	8
State budget	-	3	1	5	2	6
Health care	1	0	2	2	2	4
Other / Don't Know	27	20	24	19	23	24
(N)	(519)	(312)	(684)	(424)	(644)	(497)

Gubernatorial Approval

STATEWIDE	<u>Approve</u> 48%	<u>Neutral/DK</u> 30%	<u>Disapprove</u> 22%	<u>(N)</u> 496
Registered Democrat	35	19	46	91
Registered Undeclared	42	31	27	156
Registered Republican	61	25	13	140
Not registered	48	43	9	102
Democrat	35	22	43	167
Independent	46	41	14	98
Republican	59	29	12	214
Liberal	35	25	41	96
Moderate	46	30	24	211
Conservative	62	28	11	150
Union household	32	27	40	62
Non-union	50	30	20	430
5 Years or less in NH	48	41	12	65
6 to 10 years	41	41	18	38
11 to 20 years	56	25	19	94
More than 20 years	46	28	27	294
18 to 34	42	38	20	110
33 to 49	51	27	22	181
50 to 64	51	25	23	118
65 and over	48	24	28	71
Male	49	26	24	237
Female	46	34	21	259
High school or less	51	33	16	134
Some college	52	28	20	135
College graduate	44	31	25	142
Post-graduate	39	27	34	83
Less than \$30K	53	33	14	76
\$30K to \$60K	48	29	23	160
\$60K to \$75K	42	29	29	40
\$75K to \$100K	50	29	21	67
More than \$100K	47	24	29	63
Married	47	29	24	306
Divorced/separated	54	28	18	97
Never married	45	34	22	92
Protestant	49	29	22	200
Catholic	57	25	18	160
Other	34	36	30	123
Northern NH	44	35	21	67
Western NH	42	28	30	47
Central/Lakes	44	24	32	77
Hillsborough County	51	28	21	150
Seacoast	49	34	17	155
1st Cong. District	47	32	21	265
2nd Cong. District	49	28	24	231
1st E.C. District	41	36	23	109
2nd E.C. District	54	17	29	93
3rd E.C. District	46	32	22	106
4th E.C. District	50	35	15	80
5th E.C. District	50	29	21	103

Favorability Rating - Craig Benson

STATEWIDE	<u>Favorable</u> 53%	<u>Neutral</u> 9%	<u>Unfavorable</u> 21%	<u>Don't Know</u> 17%	<u>(N)</u> 507
Registered Democrat	36	8	43	13	93
Registered Undeclared	49	9	26	15	160
Registered Republican	71	10	9	9	142
Not registered	50	7	10	33	106
Democrat	38	6	41	16	172
Independent	45	13	16	27	103
Republican	70	9	9	12	216
Liberal	37	8	39	16	99
Moderate	52	9	22	17	215
Conservative	70	9	9	12	154
Union household	45	3	36	16	64
Non-union	55	10	19	17	439
5 Years or less in NH	52	12	18	17	66
6 to 10 years	46	17	14	23	36
11 to 20 years	61	7	15	17	97
More than 20 years	52	8	24	16	301
18 to 34	46	7	24	22	112
33 to 49	57	8	20	15	185
50 to 64	57	11	20	12	120
65 and over	52	9	23	16	73
Male	55	8	23	14	244
Female	52	10	19	19	263
High school or less	55	8	13	25	139
Some college	51	9	20	20	136
College graduate	55	11	24	10	143
Post-graduate	51	8	30	11	86
Less than \$30K	54	5	17	24	76
\$30K to \$60K	54	8	23	14	159
\$60K to \$75K	47	14	25	14	42
\$75K to \$100K	50	11	21	17	68
More than \$100K	62	9	23	6	67
Married	56	10	21	14	311
Divorced/separated	56	6	19	19	101
Never married	43	10	23	24	93
Protestant	55	8	20	17	202
Catholic	60	8	16	16	165
Other	42	10	30	18	127
Northern NH	49	7	22	22	67
Western NH	40	11	24	26	48
Central/Lakes	50	8	35	8	80
Hillsborough County	56	9	17	17	153
Seacoast	58	11	16	16	159
1st Cong. District	57	8	20	15	270
2nd Cong. District	49	11	21	18	237
1st E.C. District	45	9	25	21	111
2nd E.C. District	57	7	26	10	95
3rd E.C. District	53	11	22	15	109
4th E.C. District	61	8	14	18	81
5th E.C. District	55	10	17	18	107

Most Important Problem Facing NH

	<u>Educ. Funding</u> 28%	<u>Jobs/ Economy</u> 16%	<u>Taxes</u> 14%	<u>Other Educ.</u> 8%	<u>State Budget</u> 6%	<u>Health Care</u> 4%	<u>Gov. Benson</u> 2%
STATEWIDE							
Registered Democrat	32	16	16	6	7	2	2
Registered Undeclared	33	16	9	9	4	7	2
Registered Republican	27	13	21	9	7	1	4
Not registered	17	18	9	6	9	4	0
Democrat	31	17	13	9	4	3	2
Independent	24	13	11	7	9	4	1
Republican	29	15	16	7	7	4	2
Liberal	31	17	10	10	4	4	3
Moderate	30	19	12	6	7	3	2
Conservative	26	12	19	7	7	4	2
Union household	31	15	11	12	6	7	3
Non-union	27	16	14	7	6	4	2
5 Years or less in NH	27	11	17	9	5	5	0
6 to 10 years	32	20	16	8	3	2	0
11 to 20 years	29	12	10	10	5	6	0
More than 20 years	27	18	14	7	8	3	3
18 to 34	21	20	10	8	6	2	2
33 to 49	30	16	14	8	4	4	2
50 to 64	34	13	14	7	8	7	3
65 and over	22	10	18	11	11	0	0
Male	30	14	15	5	8	3	2
Female	26	18	12	11	4	5	2
High school or less	16	19	15	5	3	4	1
Some college	28	16	11	11	2	5	1
College graduate	35	14	14	7	10	2	4
Post-graduate	35	12	14	9	13	6	1
Less than \$30K	16	15	11	11	4	4	4
\$30K to \$60K	33	16	14	5	4	5	2
\$60K to \$75K	28	13	12	7	3	7	3
\$75K to \$100K	32	18	18	11	11	0	0
More than \$100K	36	9	20	5	8	5	3
Married	29	16	17	8	6	5	2
Divorced/separated	26	13	10	7	8	4	2
Never married	26	19	7	10	5	2	1
Protestant	25	16	14	7	9	5	4
Catholic	31	18	15	9	1	3	1
Other	28	11	11	8	8	3	1
Northern NH	31	17	12	4	6	6	6
Western NH	31	11	20	7	0	2	0
Central/Lakes	24	11	14	8	11	5	3
Hillsborough County	27	18	12	7	4	6	2
Seacoast	29	16	14	10	8	2	0
1st Cong. District	27	18	14	9	6	4	1
2nd Cong. District	30	12	14	7	6	4	3
1st E.C. District	26	17	13	8	6	5	4
2nd E.C. District	28	13	18	7	9	2	2
3rd E.C. District	30	16	12	10	8	3	0
4th E.C. District	27	22	12	5	4	3	1
5th E.C. District	30	13	13	8	4	7	2