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Contact:

PATRICK MURRAY, 732-263-5858 (office), 732-979-6769 (cell)

pdmurray@monmouth.edu

Follow on Twitter: @PollsterPatrick

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NEW JERSEY: PUBLIC SPLIT ON MURPHY'S FIRST YEAR

Most support minimum wage hike, but no clear “winners” in agenda so far

West Long Branch, NJ – With just over a year under his belt, New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy earns a split decision on his job performance so far. Public opinion tends to be more negative than positive about his agenda's impact on property tax payers and the middle class, while views are divided on whether he has helped poorer residents of the state. The **Monmouth University Poll** finds widespread support for the recently enacted minimum wage hike, though. The public is largely unaware of other issues that have been the talk of Trenton – namely legislative hearings into the administration's hiring practices and the governor's relationship with legislative leaders.

Currently, 43% of New Jersey adults approve of the job Murphy is doing as governor, which is similar to the 44% rating he earned in April 2018. However, his current 40% disapprove rating is higher than the 28% negative rating he received last year. Another 17% have no opinion of the governor, down from 28%. Murphy's current rating is less positive than his two immediate predecessors at the same point in their terms. A February 2011 Monmouth poll gave then-Governor Chris Christie a 47% approve to 40% disapprove rating and a February 2007 Monmouth poll gave then-Governor Jon Corzine a 44% approve to 34% disapprove rating. Murphy, is doing better than Jim McGreevey, though – a February 2003 Eagleton poll gave the then-governor a 34% approve to 45% disapprove rating.

Murphy's rating among political independents has flipped since last year – he currently holds a net negative 39% approve and 43% disapprove rating with this group compared to a net positive 41% approve and 33% disapprove rating in April 2018. Republicans have become more negative – 11% approve and 85% disapprove now, compared with 17% - 59% last year. Democrats, on the other hand, are largely positive, but a sizable percentage say they still have no opinion of Murphy's job performance after one year on the job. Currently, the governor earns a 66% approve and 9% disapprove rating from his fellow Democrats, which is nearly identical to his 65% approve and 7% disapprove rating in April

2018. Fully 1-in-4 Democrats (25%), though, do not have an opinion of the governor, which is similar to the number from last year (28%).

“Murphy started his term with greater public goodwill than his recent predecessors, but he has now fallen behind them. The most troubling result may be the large number of his fellow Democrats who continue to take a wait-and-see attitude. It seems he has yet to score a defining win with his base despite spending a significant amount of energy pushing a progressive agenda,” said Patrick Murray, director of the independent Monmouth University Polling Institute.

One signature achievement for the Murphy administration has been enacting a minimum wage hike. Two-in-three New Jerseyans (66%) approve of the move which will increase the minimum wage for most workers to \$15 an hour by 2024. Just 29% oppose it. However, other poll results suggest that the governor has yet to win voter sentiment on the benefits of his agenda overall.

Murphy has cast a particular focus on building a “fair economy” for those who have been left behind, but he currently gets mixed reviews for how his policies have affected poorer residents. While 27% say his policies have helped the poor, a similar 28% say they have actually hurt this group and 27% say they have had no impact. Expectations were slightly higher last April when 38% of the public expected that Murphy’s policies would help poor residents of the state while 29% expected his policies would hurt this group. Transit riders are another constituency for whom the governor’s policies receive mixed reviews. Just 14% say Murphy has helped transit riders, 25% say his policies have hurt them, and 23% say there has been no impact. Last year, 28% expected his policies would help transit riders and 19% said they would hurt this group.

The poll also finds that few New Jerseyans feel the middle class – property tax payers in particular – have benefitted from Murphy’s time as governor. Just 18% say Murphy’s policies have helped middle class residents in the state. More than twice as many (39%) say his policies have hurt the middle class, while 27% say his policies have had no impact on this group. Ratings are even lower for property tax payers; only 6% say Murphy’s policies have helped this group while nearly half (48%) say they have been hurt by his policies. Another 29% say property tax payers have felt no impact either way from Murphy’s policies. These results are in line with New Jerseyans’ expectations for how his policies would affect these groups according to Monmouth’s April 2018 poll.

Garden State residents are divided on whether wealthy residents have been helped (22%), hurt (21%), or felt no impact (30%) from Murphy’s policies. There is somewhat more negativity regarding the administration’s effect on businesses in the state – 20% say businesses have been helped by Murphy’s policies and 33% say they have been hurt, with 24% who say state businesses have felt no impact either way. The results for wealthy residents are in line with expectations last year although the current findings for Murphy’s impact on businesses are slightly less positive than expectations last April.

“New Jersey residents don’t seem to have a clear read on Phil Murphy. A key question is whether the public feels he is truly focused on his current job. It wasn’t too long ago that the state felt burned by his predecessor’s political ambitions. That’s worth keeping in mind as Murphy’s national profile with the Democratic Governors Association is on the rise,” said Murray.

Currently, more New Jerseyans feel that Murphy is more concerned with his own political future (46%) than he is with governing the state (33%). Another 4% say he is concerned with both equally and 16% are unsure where his focus lies. This perception was evenly divided last April when 39% said Murphy was more concerned with his future and 40% said he was more concerned with the state.

Nearly half the public (45%) name property taxes when asked to identify the most important issues facing New Jersey, far surpassing any other issue on the top of residents' minds. About 1-in-4 name other taxes, such as income (9%), sales (6%), or taxes in general (8%). Other issues mentioned include the economy and cost of living (16%), jobs (11%), transportation and infrastructure (10%), public education (9%), health care (9%), crime, drugs, and guns (8%), illegal immigration (7%), marijuana legalization (7%), housing (6%), government spending (6%), and the environment (4%). These results are basically in line with polls taken over the past two years. Independents (50%) and Republicans (49%) are more likely than Democrats (33%) to mention property taxes as one of the top issues facing New Jersey. People of color (20%) are more likely than non-Hispanic white residents (6%) to mention jobs.

“Surprise! Property taxes continue to be the issue that irks the largest number of New Jerseyans. It seems the governor and legislative leaders are at odds in terms of what, if anything, should be done. The solution may not be clear, but it’s certainly not a good idea to be perceived as ignoring the problem entirely,” said Murray.

The governor’s uncertain relationship with legislative leadership has been the talk of Trenton insiders but hasn’t made much of an impression among the broader public. Currently, 20% say Murphy has a good relationship with top Democrats in the legislature and 19% say he has a bad relationship, but most (54%) have not heard anything about this. The state legislature as a whole receives a 37% approve and 42% disapprove rating from New Jersey residents, which is in line with results from Monmouth’s poll last April.

The Murphy administration’s hiring of someone who was accused of rape while working on the governor’s 2017 campaign is another issue that has kept the State House abuzz but has barely made a dent in the public consciousness. Just 4-in-10 New Jerseyans (41%) have heard anything about the legislative hearings into this situation. Interestingly, Republicans (61%) are more likely than Democrats (37%) or independents (37%) to have tuned into this. Among those who have heard something about the hearings – keeping in mind that this group is less than half of all state residents – 68% say that the administration mishandled the hiring, while just 12% feel the hiring was handled properly based on what was known at the time. On the point that we still do not know exactly who authorized the hiring, just over half of those aware of the hearings (51%) think that the Murphy administration is trying to cover something up, while 34% think the administration is really unsure about how the hiring occurred.

“The legislature’s focus on this situation certainly hasn’t helped the governor’s standing, but I’m not convinced this is the primary reason for Murphy’s rising negatives. The public seems to be a little hazy on his core aims and he has yet to sew up base support among his fellow Democrats,” said Murray.

The *Monmouth University Poll* was conducted by telephone from February 8 to 10, 2019 with 604 New Jersey adults. The question results in this release have a margin of error of +/- 4.0 percentage points. The poll was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute in West Long Branch, NJ.

QUESTIONS AND RESULTS

(* Some columns may not add to 100% due to rounding.)

[Q1 held for future release.]

2. Do you approve or disapprove of the job Phil Murphy is doing as governor?

	Feb. 2019	April 2018

TREND: <i>All adults</i>		
Approve	43%	44%
Disapprove	40%	28%
(VOL) No opinion	17%	28%
(n)	(604)	(703)

TREND: <i>Registered voters</i>		
	Feb. 2019	April 2018
Approve	42%	43%
Disapprove	43%	30%
(VOL) No opinion	16%	27%
(n)	(549)	(632)

3. Do you approve or disapprove of the job the state legislature is doing?

TREND: <i>All adults</i>		
	Feb. 2019	April 2018
Approve	37%	36%
Disapprove	42%	39%
(VOL) No opinion	21%	24%
(n)	(604)	(703)

TREND: <i>Registered voters</i>	Feb. 2019	April 2018	July 2017	May 2016	July 2015	May 2015	Feb. 2015	Sept. 2014	June 2014	April 2014	Feb. 2014	Jan. 2014
Approve	35%	34%	23%	29%	32%	33%	37%	35%	36%	38%	38%	47%
Disapprove	45%	42%	62%	53%	51%	48%	46%	46%	48%	46%	47%	35%
(VOL) No opinion	20%	24%	15%	19%	17%	19%	17%	19%	17%	15%	14%	18%
(n)	(549)	(632)	(758)	(703)	(453)	(441)	(712)	(680)	(717)	(690)	(690)	(470)

TREND: <i>Registered voters continued</i>	Dec. 2013	Sept. 2013	April 2013	Feb. 2013	Dec. 2012	Sept. 2012	July 2012	April 2012	Feb. 2012	Oct. 2011	Aug. 2011	May 2011	Feb. 2011	Sept. 2010	July 2010	April 2010	Feb. 2010
Approve	44%	38%	41%	40%	69%	55%	53%	50%	55%	55%	50%	46%	49%	44%	45%	42%	31%
Disapprove	38%	36%	42%	35%	22%	36%	35%	38%	37%	37%	41%	49%	41%	40%	43%	44%	15%
(VOL) No opinion	19%	27%	17%	25%	9%	10%	12%	12%	9%	8%	8%	5%	9%	16%	12%	13%	53%
(n)	(698)	(674)	(694)	(697)	(726)	(715)	(678)	(692)	(709)	(693)	(730)	(725)	(718)	(726)	(747)	(719)	(716)

TREND: <i>Registered voters continued</i>	July 2009	Feb. 2009	Sept. 2008	July 2008	April 2008	March 2008	Oct. 2007	Feb. 2007
Approve	31%	23%	29%	27%	28%	25%	32%	34%
Disapprove	48%	55%	50%	47%	55%	53%	43%	42%
(VOL) No opinion	22%	22%	21%	26%	17%	22%	25%	23%
(n)	(792)	(721)	(709)	(889)	(720)	(719)	(688)	(681)

[Q4-6 held for future release.]

7. In your opinion, what are the most important one or two issues facing the state of New Jersey right now? [LIST WAS NOT READ. IF "TAXES" MENTIONED, INTERVIEWER ASKED FOR SPECIFIC TYPE.] [Note: Results add to more than 100% because multiple responses were accepted.]

TREND:	Feb. 2019	April 2018	July 2017	December 2013	December 2012	February 2012	July 2009*
Property taxes	45%	45%	48%	25%	31%	42%	45%
Income tax	9%	9%	8%	7%	6%	8%	7%
Sales tax	6%	8%	7%	2%	3%	4%	4%
Other tax, general taxes	8%	8%	5%	12%	6%	3%	5%

Jobs	11%	14%	14%	35%	30%	42%	18%
Economy, cost of living	16%	14%	10%	10%	19%	19%	27%
State budget, govt. spending	6%	7%	8%	4%	5%	8%	18%
Education/public schools	9%	16%	14%	21%	10%	20%	12%
Higher education	1%	3%	3%	3%	2%	3%	n/a
Transportation, infrastructure	10%	14%	10%	2%	3%	2%	1%
Environment	4%	4%	4%	2%	2%	1%	2%
Health insurance, care	9%	6%	10%	11%	8%	5%	18%
Crime, guns, drugs	8%	12%	9%	6%	4%	5%	2%
Public pensions/benefits	1%	3%	5%	2%	2%	2%	n/a
Housing	6%	5%	6%	3%	2%	1%	n/a
Illegal immigration	7%	7%	3%	1%	1%	1%	2%
Auto insurance	0%	1%	3%	0%	1%	1%	n/a
Legalize marijuana	7%	5%	2%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Opioid crisis	2%	4%	2%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Other	9%	8%	12%	17%+	27%+	8%	11%
Nothing/no answer	4%	4%	3%	4%	4%	4%	3%
(n)	(604)	(703)	(800)	(802)	(816)	(803)	(792)

[*July 2009 question for registered voters only: was "In your opinion, what are the most important one or two issues that the candidates for governor should talk about?" + "Other" includes Superstorm Sandy recovery.]

8. Do you think Phil Murphy is more concerned with governing the state of New Jersey or more concerned about his own political future? [CHOICES WERE ROTATED]

TREND:	Feb. 2019	April 2018
Governing the state of NJ	33%	40%
His own political future	46%	39%
(VOL) Both equally	4%	3%
(VOL) Don't know	16%	18%
(n)	(604)	(703)

9. As far as you know, do Governor Murphy and the Democratic leaders in the legislature have a good or bad working relationship, or haven't you heard anything about this?

TREND:	Feb. 2019
Good relationship	20%
Bad relationship	19%
Not heard anything	54%
(VOL) Don't know	7%
(n)	(604)

10. I'd like to get your opinion on how Governor Murphy's policies have affected different groups of New Jerseyans. Have his policies helped, hurt, or had no impact on [READ ITEM]? [ITEMS WERE ROTATED] [Note: In April 2018, poll question asked "how Governor Murphy's policies will affect different groups..."]

Middle class residents

TREND:	Feb. 2019	April 2018
Help	18%	26%
Hurt	39%	41%
No impact	27%	17%
(VOL) Both help and hurt	1%	2%
(VOL) Don't know	15%	14%
(n)	(604)	(703)

Poor residents

TREND:	Feb.	April
	2019	2018
Help	27%	38%
Hurt	28%	29%
No impact	27%	14%
(VOL) Both help and hurt	1%	2%
(VOL) Don't know	18%	17%
(n)	(604)	(703)

Wealthy residents

TREND:	Feb.	April
	2019	2018
Help	22%	24%
Hurt	21%	29%
No impact	30%	30%
(VOL) Both help and hurt	1%	1%
(VOL) Don't know	26%	17%
(n)	(604)	(703)

Property tax payers

TREND:	Feb.	April
	2019	2018
Help	6%	17%
Hurt	48%	51%
No impact	29%	14%
(VOL) Both help and hurt	1%	1%
(VOL) Don't know	16%	17%
(n)	(604)	(703)

Transit riders

TREND:	Feb.	April
	2019	2018
Help	14%	28%
Hurt	25%	19%
No impact	23%	18%
(VOL) Both help and hurt	1%	1%
(VOL) Don't know	37%	34%
(n)	(604)	(703)

Businesses

TREND:	Feb.	April
	2019	2018
Help	20%	30%
Hurt	33%	33%
No impact	24%	15%
(VOL) Both help and hurt	1%	1%
(VOL) Don't know	21%	21%
(n)	(604)	(703)

11. New Jersey recently raised the minimum wage so that it will gradually go up to \$15 an hour for most workers over the next five years. Have you heard about this or not?

	Feb.
	2019
Heard	94%
Not heard	6%
(n)	(604)

12. Do you approve or disapprove of New Jersey raising the minimum wage to \$15 for most workers?

	Feb. 2019
Approve	66%
Disapprove	29%
(VOL) Don't know	5%
(n)	(604)

[Q13-17 held for future release.]

18. Have you heard anything about legislative hearings on the Murphy administration's hiring of someone who was accused of rape while he was working on the Murphy campaign in 2017, or haven't you heard about this?

	Feb. 2019
Heard	41%
Not heard	59%
(n)	(604)

[Questions 19A/19B were asked only of those who HAVE HEARD of the hearings: n=282, moe=+/-5.8%]

19A. Based on the information they had at the time, do you think the Murphy administration handled this hiring properly or did they mishandle it?

Among those aware:	Feb. 2019
Handled this hiring properly	12%
Mishandled the hiring	68%
(VOL) Don't know	19%
(n)	(282)

19B. As you may know it is still not clear who authorized the hiring. Do you think people in the Murphy administration are trying to cover something up or is the administration really unsure about what happened with this hiring during the transition period?

Among those aware:	Feb. 2019
Trying to cover something up	51%
Unsure about what happened	34%
(VOL) Both	2%
(VOL) Don't know	13%
(n)	(282)

[Q20-37 held for future release.]

METHODOLOGY

The *Monmouth University Poll* was sponsored and conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute from February 8 to 10, 2019 with a random sample of 604 New Jersey adults age 18 and older, in English. This includes 301 contacted by a live interviewer on a landline telephone and 303 contacted by a live interviewer on a cell phone. Telephone numbers were selected through random digit dialing and landline respondents were selected with a modified Trol Dahl-Carter youngest adult household screen. Monmouth is responsible for all aspects of the survey design, data weighting and analysis. Final sample is weighted for region, age, education, gender and race based on US Census information. Data collection support provided by Braun Research (field) and SSI (RDD sample). For results based on this sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling has a maximum margin of plus or minus 4.0 percentage points (unadjusted for sample design). Sampling error can be larger for sub-

groups (see table below). In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

<i>DEMOGRAPHICS</i>	
<i>(weighted)</i>	
<i>Self-Reported</i>	
<i>20% Republican</i>	
<i>45% Independent</i>	
<i>34% Democrat</i>	
<i>48% Male</i>	
<i>52% Female</i>	
<i>29% 18-34</i>	
<i>37% 35-54</i>	
<i>34% 55+</i>	
<i>58% White</i>	
<i>13% Black</i>	
<i>18% Hispanic</i>	
<i>10% Asian/Other</i>	
<i>64% No college degree</i>	
<i>36% College graduate</i>	

<i>MARGIN OF ERROR</i>			
		<i>unweighted sample</i>	<i>moe (+/-)</i>
<i>TOTAL</i>		<i>604</i>	<i>4.0%</i>
<i>REGISTERED VOTER</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>549</i>	<i>4.2%</i>
	<i>No</i>	<i>55</i>	<i>13.2%</i>
<i>SELF-REPORTED PARTY ID</i>	<i>Republican</i>	<i>135</i>	<i>8.4%</i>
	<i>Independent</i>	<i>257</i>	<i>6.1%</i>
	<i>Democrat</i>	<i>196</i>	<i>7.0%</i>
<i>GENDER</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>300</i>	<i>5.7%</i>
	<i>Female</i>	<i>304</i>	<i>5.6%</i>
<i>AGE</i>	<i>18-34</i>	<i>152</i>	<i>8.0%</i>
	<i>35-54</i>	<i>225</i>	<i>6.5%</i>
	<i>55+</i>	<i>226</i>	<i>6.5%</i>
<i>RACE</i>	<i>White non-Hispanic</i>	<i>386</i>	<i>5.0%</i>
	<i>Other</i>	<i>190</i>	<i>7.1%</i>
<i>COLLEGE GRADUATE</i>	<i>No degree</i>	<i>264</i>	<i>6.0%</i>
	<i>4 year degree</i>	<i>335</i>	<i>5.4%</i>
<i>INCOME</i>	<i><\$50K</i>	<i>110</i>	<i>9.4%</i>
	<i>\$50 to <100K</i>	<i>194</i>	<i>7.0%</i>
	<i>\$100K+</i>	<i>240</i>	<i>6.3%</i>
<i>REGION</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>270</i>	<i>6.0%</i>
	<i>Central</i>	<i>163</i>	<i>7.7%</i>
	<i>South</i>	<i>154</i>	<i>7.9%</i>

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