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Siena New York Poll:

Voters to NYS: Cut Spending, Don't Raise Taxes

Health & Education Are Not the Programs Voters Want Cut

Optimism for Obama Administration Runs Deep; Voters' View of Country's Direction Improves Dramatically

Loudonville, NY. New Yorkers overwhelmingly think that to close the budget gap the Governor and Legislature should principally cut spending rather than raise taxes or borrow money, according to a new Siena (College) Research Institute poll of registered voters released today. Voters provide little guidance to lawmakers on what to cut, other than they don't want to see education and health care cut. President-Elect Barack Obama has brought a wide sense of optimism to New York voters, who have dramatically changed their view on whether the United States is headed in the right track or in the wrong direction.

Three-quarters of voters think the state budget gap should be closed by cutting spending, while 10 percent support increasing taxes and nine percent favor borrowing money. At least two-thirds of voters from every region and party support spending cuts. When given a choice of five areas for the state to cut, 23 percent chose aid to local government, 18 percent transportation/infrastructure, seven percent education, six percent health care, and the winner was 44 percent for "something else." When matched head-to-head regarding what to cut, voters are evenly divided – 39 percent for each – between cutting health care and education.

"Voters are loud and clear about opposing tax increases to close the state budget gap. Read our lips, 'no new taxes,' is the message to the Governor and Legislature," said Steven Greenberg, spokesman for the Siena New York Poll. "On the other hand, when asked whether Governor David Paterson would be able to hold to his current position of opposing tax increases only 19 percent of voters thought he would, compared to 77 percent who believe he will wind up supporting a tax increase.

"When it comes to the issue of what to cut, voters don't have a lot of good advice for the Governor and lawmakers. It's clear, however, that they don't want cuts in the two largest areas of the state budget – education and health care," Greenberg said. "And when it comes to which tax to raise, nearly two-thirds of voters say raise business taxes, one-quarter say sales tax, and only eight percent say raise the income tax."

The mood of voters about the direction New York State is headed in remains divided, with 39 percent saying the state is headed on the right track and 43 percent saying it is headed in the wrong direction. New York City voters are optimistic, while upstaters are pessimistic and downstate suburbanites are nearly evenly divided.

There is no geographic gap, however, when it comes to the state of the state’s fiscal condition: nobody thinks it is excellent, seven percent think it is good, 31 percent say fair and an overwhelming 62 percent (up from 43 percent last month) think it is poor, including a majority of every region and every political party.

Voters have moved dramatically concerning the direction of the United States. They are evenly divided, with 44 percent saying the country is on the right track and 44 percent saying the country is headed in the wrong direction. Three weeks ago, voters said wrong direction by a 69-19 percent margin. Democrats are optimistic 53-35 percent. Republicans are pessimistic 27-62 percent and independent voters are split 44-41 percent.

“Since Election Day, Democrats and independents, as well as voters of every age and from every region, are much more optimistic about the direction of the country,” Greenberg said. “There is no doubt that in New York, with far more Democrats than Republicans, the election of Barack Obama has brought a sense of optimism about the country and about his incoming Administration.”

Less than two weeks after his election, voters overwhelmingly are proud that Obama and his family will be our nation’s First Family. They overwhelmingly believe America will not be a divided country, that Obama will be up to the job of protecting America from terrorism and that he will successfully

Statements About President-Elect Obama		
Statement	Agree (Strongly)	Disagree (Strongly)
With Barack Obama as President, the War in Iraq will be brought to a successful conclusion by 2010	48% (7%)	44% (7%)
I believe under an Obama Administration, America will be a deeply divided country	26% (7%)	71% (16%)
Once he takes office, President Obama will be successful in revitalizing the American economy	63% (10%)	31% (8%)
I'm afraid that Obama will not be up to the job of protecting America from terrorist attacks	30% (10%)	65% (22%)
It makes me proud that the Obama family will represent the United States as our First Family	74% (27%)	19% (4%)
Despite all the excitement, Barack Obama is just another politician whose policies will not make my life better	39% (12%)	58% (16%)

revitalize the country’s economy. Voters disagree that Obama is just another politician who won’t make their lives better, and a small plurality believe that he will successfully end the Iraq War by 2010.

“New York voters are very optimistic about President-Elect Obama and what an Obama Administration will be able to accomplish. Democrats are incredibly optimistic. Independent voter optimism is generally closer to the Democrats than to the Republicans. A majority of Republican voters don’t believe Obama will successfully end the war, revitalize the economy, or protect America from terrorist attacks. A majority of Republicans are, however, proud of the Obamas as First Family and don’t believe the country will be deeply divided,” Greenberg said.

Obama has the highest favorable rating – 70 percent – he has ever had in New York, with only 23 percent of voters having an unfavorable view. President George Bush has his lowest favorable rating (22 percent) and highest unfavorable rating (75 percent) ever. Paterson (64 percent) and Attorney General Andrew Cuomo (61 percent) also have the highest favorable ratings they have ever had.

“Among state officials, Governor Paterson and Attorney General Cuomo both have their highest favorable ratings ever, with more than 60 percent of voters viewing both of them favorably. State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli continues to be largely unknown to voters,” Greenberg said.

“Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver is the only legislative leader known by more than half of the voters, and by a three-to-two margin, those who have an opinion of him are unfavorable,” Greenberg said. “The other three legislative leaders are unknown to more than three-quarters of New York voters.

“Both United States Senators from New York – Hillary Clinton and Charles Schumer – are viewed favorably by three-fifths of voters, as is New York City Mayor Mike Bloomberg. Former Mayor Rudy Giuliani has his highest favorable rating (57 percent) in a year and a half,” Greenberg said.

Paterson’s job performance rating is 55 percent positive, 41 percent negative, virtually unchanged from last month. If the election for Governor were tomorrow, 42 percent of voters (a high) said they would vote for Paterson, with 32 percent (also a high) preferring “someone else.” In a potential Democratic primary matchup against Cuomo, Paterson wins 53-25 percent. In general election gubernatorial matchups, Paterson beats Giuliani 49-43 percent (down from 51-40 percent last month), while Giuliani beats Cuomo 46-44 percent (a reversal from July, when Cuomo was ahead 47-42 percent).

“Overall, a majority of voters believe that it is positive for New York that Democrats have a majority in the State Senate, and a plurality think Democratic control of all of state government will make Albany function more effectively,” Greenberg said. “There are, however, huge partisan differences on both of these questions, with Democrats overwhelmingly calling the election results positive and thinking state government will be more effective. Republicans call it a major negative and believe Albany will be less effective.”

Favorable/Unfavorable Ratings			
Elected Official	Favorable	Unfavorable	Don't Know/ No Opinion
David Paterson	64%	19%	17%
Andrew Cuomo	61%	19%	20%
Thomas DiNapoli	18%	10%	72%
Sheldon Silver	24%	36%	40%
James Tedisco	12%	10%	78%
Dean Skelos	10%	11%	79%
Malcolm Smith	10%	11%	79%
Hillary Clinton	61%	35%	4%
Charles Schumer	60%	27%	13%
Mike Bloomberg	60%	26%	14%
Rudy Giuliani	57%	39%	4%
Barack Obama	70%	23%	8%
George Bush	22%	75%	3%

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Siena New York Poll Trends – November 2008

Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion about David Paterson?

DATE	FAVORABLE	UNFAVORABLE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
November 2008	64	19	17
October 27, 2008	62	19	18
September 2008	59	13	28
August 2008	59	16	26
July 2008	57	15	28
June 2008	57	17	25
May 2008	48	17	35
April 2008	48	18	34
March 24, 2008	58	10	31
January 2007	17	8	76

How would you rate the job that David Paterson is doing as Governor – excellent, good, fair, or poor?

DATE	EXCELLENT	GOOD	FAIR	POOR	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
November 2008	9	46	34	7	4
October 27, 2008	7	48	35	5	5
September 2008	7	44	33	4	12
August 2008	7	45	30	5	12
July 2008	7	41	34	5	13
June 2008	6	38	31	6	19
May 2008	5	35	28	4	29
April 2008	4	30	30	4	32

I know it's a long way off, but if David Paterson runs for Governor in 2010, would you vote to elect him or would you prefer someone else?

DATE	ELECT	PREFER SOMEONE ELSE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
November 2008	42	32	26
October 27, 2008	40	29	31
September 2008	35	25	39
August 2008	35	26	40
July 2008	34	27	40
June 2008	30	30	40
May 2008	29	25	47

(DEMS ONLY): Looking ahead to 2010 and the next election for Governor. If the Democratic primary for governor were held today and the candidates were David Paterson or Andrew Cuomo, who would you vote for? (CANDIDATE CHOICES WERE ROTATED) (NOTE: In April 2008, Tom Suozzi was included as a choice)

DATE	PATERSON	CUOMO	SUOZZI	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
November 2008	53	25	NA	22
July 2008	51	21	NA	28
June 2008	43	31	NA	26
May 2008	42	29	NA	29
April 2008	35	30	7	28

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If the 2010 election for governor were held today and the candidates were David Paterson on the Democratic line and Rudy Giuliani on the Republican line, who would you vote for? (CANDIDATE CHOICES WERE ROTATED)

DATE	PATERSON	GIULIANI	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
November 2008	49	43	8
October 27, 2008	51	40	9
September 2008	50	40	10
August 2008	48	38	15
July 2008	47	40	13

If the 2010 election for governor were held today and the candidates were Andrew Cuomo on the Democratic line and Rudy Giuliani on the Republican line, who would you vote for? (CANDIDATE CHOICES WERE ROTATED)

DATE	CUOMO	GIULIANI	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
November 2008	44	46	10
July 2008	47	42	11

Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion about Andrew Cuomo?

DATE	FAVORABLE	UNFAVORABLE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
November 2008	61	19	20
October 27, 2008	59	25	16
September 2008	54	24	22
August 2008	54	25	21
July 2008	57	23	21
June 2008	57	22	21
May 2008	56	25	20
April 2008	55	24	21
March 24, 2008	53	25	22
January 2008	51	29	20
December 2007	52	29	19
November 2007	56	27	17
October 2007	54	29	17
September 2007	51	26	24
July 2007	55	26	19
June 2007	49	31	20
May 2007	51	32	18
April 2007	52	31	18
March 2007	50	32	19
February 2007	45	35	20
January 2007	48	29	23
November 15, 2006	50	36	15
November 3, 2006	49	36	15
October 2006	44	42	15
September 2006	50	35	15
August 2006	44	35	21
June 2006	47	29	24
January 2006	45	31	24

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Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion about Michael Bloomberg?

DATE	FAVORABLE	UNFAVORABLE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
November 2008	60	26	14
October 27, 2008	64	22	14
September 2008	63	16	21
August 2008	64	18	18
July 2008	64	20	16
June 2008	64	21	16
May 2008	65	19	16
April 2008	63	21	16
March 24, 2008	67	18	15
January 2008	59	24	17
October 2007	68	20	12
July 2007	65	19	17
June 2007	62	20	18

Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion about Rudy Giuliani?

DATE	FAVORABLE	UNFAVORABLE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
November 2008	57	39	4
August 2008	51	42	7
July 2008	51	39	10
January 2008	44	48	8
December 2007	48	46	6
November 2007	49	41	11
September 2007	53	39	9
July 2007	53	40	7
June 2007	50	42	8
May 2007	51	43	6
April 2007	56	38	6
March 2007	60	33	8
February 2007	59	34	7
January 2007	63	29	9
November 15, 2006	63	32	5
April 2005	63	26	10
February 2005	61	28	11

Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion about Thomas DiNapoli?

DATE	FAVORABLE	UNFAVORABLE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
November 2008	18	10	72
October 27, 2008	17	14	69
July 2008	18	12	70
April 2008	14	12	74
January 2008	11	16	73
November 2007	15	11	74
July 2007	14	12	74
June 2007	7	13	80
May 2007	7	18	75
April 2007	11	14	76
March 2007	9	14	78
February 2007	9	15	76

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Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion about Sheldon Silver?

DATE	FAVORABLE	UNFAVORABLE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
November 2008	24	36	40
July 2008	22	32	47
March 24, 2008	24	31	44
October 2007	22	37	42
July 2007	24	34	42
March 2007	23	35	42
January 2007	20	37	43
May 2006	24	31	45
July 2005	28	34	38
April 2005	19	30	50

Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion about Dean Skelos?

DATE	FAVORABLE	UNFAVORABLE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
November 2008	10	11	79
July 2008	10	8	82

Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion about Charles Schumer?

DATE	FAVORABLE	UNFAVORABLE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
November 2008	60	27	13
May 2008	61	24	15
January 2008	60	26	14
October 2007	65	24	11
June 2007	64	23	13
February 2007	66	24	11
November 15, 2006	68	20	11
July 2005	70	22	9
February 2005	63	20	17

Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion about George Bush?

DATE	FAVORABLE	UNFAVORABLE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
November 2008	22	75	3
September 2008	29	65	6
May 2008	23	73	4
April 2007	29	65	6
January 2007	26	67	8
November 15, 2006	28	65	7
September 2006	36	61	3

Is the United States on the right track, or is it headed in the wrong direction?

DATE	RIGHT TRACK	WRONG DIRECTION	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
November 2008	44	44	13
October 27, 2008	19	69	12
September 2008	28	56	17
September 2007	23	64	13

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Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion about Barack Obama?

DATE	FAVORABLE	UNFAVORABLE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
November 2008	70	23	8
October 27, 2008	67	28	5
October 2, 2008	64	29	7
September 2008	56	32	12
August 2008	54	34	12
July 2008	57	32	12
June 2008	58	30	13
May 2008	55	34	11
April 2008	54	34	12
March 24, 2008	56	32	13
March 3, 2008	56	31	13
February 2008	60	30	10
January 2008	57	28	15
December 2007	55	30	15
September 2007	56	24	20
June 2007	53	24	23
May 2007	58	22	20
April 2007	55	23	22
March 2007	52	20	28
February 2007	52	21	28
January 2007	50	17	34
November 15, 2006	48	12	40

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Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion about Hillary Clinton?

DATE	FAVORABLE	UNFAVORABLE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
November 2008	61	35	4
October 27, 2008	65	33	2
September 2008	56	39	5
August 2008	51	43	6
July 2008	55	38	7
June 2008	56	38	6
May 2008	52	43	5
April 2008	48	46	6
March 24, 2008	52	43	5
March 3, 2008	54	39	7
February 2008	53	43	4
January 2008	60	35	5
December 2007	51	44	5
November 2007	55	39	6
October 2007	53	41	6
September 2007	57	37	7
July 2007	59	35	6
June 2007	54	39	7
May 2007	56	39	5
April 2007	50	42	7
March 2007	56	37	8
February 2007	56	40	5
January 2007	60	33	7
November 15, 2006	65	29	6
November 3, 2006	61	33	6
October 2006	56	38	6
September 2006	60	37	4
August 2006	54	38	7
June 2006	54	38	8
May 2006	58	36	6
March 2006	55	39	6
January 2006	60	37	3
November 2005	60	34	6
October 2005	59	35	6
August 2005	59	37	4
July 2005	60	34	6
June 2005	60	33	7
May 2005	58	35	7
April 2005	60	33	6
March 2005	58	34	8
February 2005	61	33	6

How would you describe the fiscal condition of New York State right now? Would you describe it as excellent, good, fair, or poor?

DATE	EXCELLENT	GOOD	FAIR	POOR	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
November 2008	0	7	31	62	1
October 27, 2008	0	12	43	43	2
September 2008	1	14	41	41	4
August 2008	0	13	37	48	1

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Is New York State on the right track, or is it headed in the wrong direction?

DATE	RIGHT TRACK	WRONG DIRECTION	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
November 2008	39	43	18
October 27, 2008	39	41	19
October 2, 2008	35	40	25
September 2008	35	37	28
August 2008	34	44	22
July 2008	36	39	25
June 2008	30	46	23
May 2008	32	43	26
April 2008	33	48	20
March 24, 2008	34	41	26
February 2008	33	43	24
January 2008	39	38	23
December 2007	35	45	21
November 2007	32	45	23
October 2007	42	36	22
September 2007	44	30	26
July 2007	37	38	25
June 2007	45	28	27
May 2007	46	29	25
April 2007	47	29	24
March 2007	37	37	26
February 2007	49	26	25
January 2007	45	26	30
November 15, 2006	52	30	18
November 3, 2006	36	43	21
October 2006	29	47	23
September 2006	33	39	28
August 2006	29	47	25
June 2006	29	45	26
May 2006	27	52	21
March 2006	35	39	26
January 2006	34	43	24
November 2005	38	41	22
October 2005	34	42	24
August 2005	36	44	20
July 2005	33	41	26
June 2005	30	44	26
May 2005	29	46	25
April 2005	29	44	27
March 2005	26	47	27
February 2005	32	44	24

Poll Notes: All surveys are of registered voters except for the polls of September 2008, October 2008, September 2006, and October 2006, which are polls of likely registered voters.