

# Wisconsin Public Radio & St. Norbert College Survey Center

## THE WISCONSIN SURVEY Spring 2003

### Survey Information:

**Number of Adult Wisconsin Resident Respondents: 401**

**Interview Period: March 6-14, 2003**

**Margin of Error: +/- 4.9% at the 95% confidence level.**

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### Most important problem facing Wisconsin today

- When respondents were asked what the most important problem facing the state of Wisconsin today is, the number one issue cited was the state budget and deficit. Thirty-seven percent of respondents said this. The second most mentioned problem was the economy and jobs with 20% of respondents saying they felt this was the most important problem. Taxes and spending was cited by 17% of respondents, followed by education with 9% of respondents saying this was the most important problem.
- Compared to October of 2002 responses, mentions about taxes and spending was down slightly and economy and jobs cites went up. In October of 2002, 26% cited taxes as the most important problem, while only 17% did so in March of 2003. In October of 2002, 13% cited economy and jobs and the most important problem, while in March, 2003, 20% cited it as the most important problem. Compared to last March, economy and jobs is considerably higher. In March, 2002, only 7% cited economy and jobs as the most important problem compared to 20% this year.
- Over the past year, budget/deficit remained important to respondents. Last March, 31% said the state budget deficit was the most important problem and was the number one cited problem. In October of 2002, while taxes and spending was the most often cited problem, the budget deficit was a close second at 23%. This March signaled the highest percentage of respondents on budget and deficit with 37% of respondents saying they felt this was the most important problem
- This year, we added a second open-ended question asking people what they felt was the second most important problem. These answers were much more varied than the first question. The top response for second most important problem was economy and jobs, with 16% of respondents citing this. This was closely followed by taxes and spending at 15% and Education at 10%. Even asking this second question, issues such as welfare and poverty, environment, and crime and drugs seem to have fallen off the radar screen for the most part with the people of Wisconsin.

### Is the State going in the right direction or the wrong direction?

- Fifty-two percent of respondents said they felt the state was going in the right direction, compared to 38% saying they felt it was going in the wrong direction and 9% not sure.
- This assessment is closely related to how satisfied they were with the job the Governor and the legislature is doing. It was also related to how people felt the Indian Gaming Compact negotiations are going and to some extent the Governor's policies on the University of Wisconsin system.
- Those who were in favor of the compacts and wanted to keep the power to negotiate these compacts with the Governor, were more likely to say they felt the state was going in the right direction.
- Similarly, those who were in favor of the Governor's cuts in the UW system were more likely to feel the state is going in the right direction. When given a choice between tuition hikes or enrollment decreases to deal the funding cuts, those who favored tuition increases were more likely to feel the state is going in the right direction.
- The ratings of the direction of the state is highly related to party identification and assessments of Governor Doyle. Democrats and those more favorable toward Governor Doyle more generally, also tended to say they felt the state is going in the right direction
- Interestingly, unlike we find for most national opinion polls on the president, there was not significant relationship between whether people were worried about unemployment and their assessments of their future financial well-being with the direction the state is going. Demographics such as age, income, education, and gender were also not significant, meaning for example, there was no difference between men and women and their assessment of the direction the state is going

### **Doyle Approval Rating**

- Governor Doyle's approval rating was 68%, with 15% of respondents saying they were very satisfied and 53% saying they are somewhat satisfied. Twenty-four percent said they were dissatisfied with the job Governor Doyle is doing, with 15% being somewhat dissatisfied and 9% being very dissatisfied.
- Unlike the question about the direction of the state and its relation to a person's perception of their own future financial status, there is a relationship between these personal economic factors and approval ratings of Governor Doyle. Those less concerned about becoming unemployed in the near future were more likely to be favorable toward the Governor. Similarly those who felt they would be better off next year, were more likely to rate the Governor highly.
- Not surprisingly, the Governor's ratings were highly related to the respondents' views on the how he is dealing with the budget, the gaming compacts, and the UW system. Respondents who favored the gaming compacts, and more specifically, wanted to keep the negotiation and approval power with the Governor, were more highly satisfied with the job the Governor is doing than those who do not approve of the compacts or decision making authority.

### **Doyle Approval Ratings on Handling the Budget Deficit**

- Respondents were somewhat less approving of how they feel the Governor is handling the budget than they were as an overall assessment of how he is doing as governor. Fifty-four percent of respondents said they were very or somewhat satisfied with the job the Governor is doing on the budget and 31% were dissatisfied. Only 9% said they were very satisfied and 14% said they were very dissatisfied.
- Similarly, while party identification was still highly related to approval ratings, 25% of Democrats said they were very satisfied with the overall job the Governor is doing, only 12% of Democrats said they were very satisfied with the job he is doing on the budget. Among Republicans, 4% said they were very satisfied overall with the job the Governor is doing, while 6% said they were very

satisfied with his handling of the budget.

- Again, personal economic circumstances were not related to respondents' assessment of Doyle's handling of the budget, nor were there other significant demographic variables.
- Budget approval was related to the Gaming Compacts and the UW funding cuts. As with overall approval, those who favored the compacts and favored keeping negotiation and approval in the hands of the Governor tended to also rate the Governor's handling of the budget more highly. Those who favored the cuts in UW system funding were also much more satisfied with the Governor's handling of the budget than those who did not favor this policy.

### **Approval of the Job the State Legislature is Doing**

- Approval of the state legislature rated significantly lower than the overall approval rating of the Governor. Forty-nine percent of respondents said they approved of the job the state legislature is doing, with 6% being very satisfied and 43% being somewhat satisfied. Thirty-eight percent of respondents disapproved of the job the state legislature is doing, with 25% being somewhat dissatisfied and 12% being very dissatisfied.
- For the most part, there is a positive correlation between approval ratings for both Governor Doyle and for the state legislature, but there is a definite partisan undercurrent which explains why approval ratings are higher for the Governor than the legislature. For example, 63% of those who said they were somewhat satisfied with the state legislature were also somewhat satisfied with Governor Doyle. However, those at the extremes (very satisfied, or very dissatisfied) tended to have a negative relationship between the two ratings, meaning for example if they rated the Governor highly, they tended to be very dissatisfied with the state legislature and vice-versa. The relationship between legislative approval and Doyle's handling of the budget tended toward the same type of relationship.
- Approval for the legislature was much less partisan than Doyle's approval ratings. While 25% were very satisfied with Doyle overall compared to just 4% of Republicans, 3% of Democrats were very satisfied with the state legislature, compared to 9% of Republicans.
- Personal economic indicators are related to rating of the legislature. Satisfaction with the legislature was much more likely among those less concerned that they may become unemployed in the near future. Similarly, Those who felt they would be better off financially in the next year were also more favorable toward the state legislature.
- While there was no significant relationship between the UW funding cut approval and state legislature approval (meaning those who favored the funding cuts to the UW system were not more likely to approve or disapprove of the state legislature than those who opposed the policy), those who favored giving the state legislature voting power over the Indian Gaming Compacts tended to also rate the state legislature more generally higher. Similarly, those who opposed the compacts tended to rate the legislature more highly.

### **Indian Gaming Compacts**

- When asked about whether they approved of the Governor's plans to extend hours and increase the number of games allowed at the casinos, respondents were nearly evenly split on approval. Forty-seven percent said they favored the policy, while 48% said they opposed it. On the other hand, over two-thirds of the sample said they wanted the state legislature to be able to vote on the approval of these compacts, while 28% said it should remain the sole power of the Governor. Those who felt it should be left in the hands of the Governor were more likely to be supportive of the compacts than those who wanted the legislature to vote.
- As mentioned above, there was a significant relationship between approval of the compacts and the Governor's handling of the budget and Governor Doyle's overall approval ratings and on whether the state is heading in the right direction or not. Ninety-percent of those either somewhat

dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the job the Governor is doing said they favored allowing the legislature to vote on the compacts.

- Party identification is also a significant factor here, in that 58% of Democrats favored the compacts compared to 34% of Republicans. Sixty percent of Democrats said they felt the legislature should vote on the compacts compared to 83% of Republicans.
- Younger people were much more likely to support the compacts than older people. Of 18 to 24 year olds, 71% said they approved of the compacts compared to 59% of 25 to 34 year olds, and average of about 45% favored the compacts for 35 to 55 year olds, and only 38% of those over 65 said they approved of the compacts.
- Personal economic situations were not related to approval or not of the compacts.

### **University of Wisconsin (UW) System Policies**

- The majority of respondents said they were opposed to Governor Doyle's plan to cut \$250 million from the UW system budget, while 36% said they were in favor. When given a choice between a tuition increase or an enrollment decrease to deal with the funding cuts, the majority (52%) said they favored a tuition hike. Thirty-eight percent said they favored enrollment decreases.
- Of those very satisfied with the overall job the Governor is doing, 59% said they favored the UW budget cuts. Only 32% of those somewhat satisfied with the Governor's overall job said they favored this policy.
- For these questions, party identification was not significant, meaning Democrats were not more or less in favor of the UW system cuts than were Republicans.
- Not surprisingly, older people were more in favor of cuts than younger people, and those with higher incomes were also more likely to be supportive of cuts. College graduates were also more likely to favor cuts than were those with less than a college degree, or who had technical college degrees. However, college grads were much more likely to favor tuition increases instead of enrollment cuts than were those with high school or technical college degrees only. Men were much more in favor of cuts than women. Forty-five percent of men favored the cuts compared to 29% of women.
- Personal economic assessments were also related to favorability of the cuts. Those who are concerned about becoming unemployed in the near future generally did not favor the cuts, whereas those who felt they were worse off this year than last financially were more favorable toward cuts. The supposition here would be that those who fear unemployment may want to reserve education as a possibility, so would not want cuts which may result in tuition increases (or may have children going soon). However those not necessarily in fear of unemployment, but do not feel they are doing as well financially, may favor the cuts in lieu of any possible increases in taxes.

### **Are We Better Off?**

- Fourteen percent of respondents said they were very concerned that they may become unemployed within the next year, another 14% said they were somewhat concerned, 16% said they were not too concerned and 50% said they were not at all concerned.
- When asked if they felt they were better off financially this year than they were a year ago, 36% said they were better off compared to 31% in October of 2002 and 35% in March of 2002. Forty-three percent felt they were the same financially as last year compared to 50% in October, and 28% last March. This year, 20% said they were worse off this year compared to last, whereas 18% said this in October, and 36% said this a year ago.
- When asked whether they felt they would be better off financially next year or not, 53% said they felt they would be, compared to 56% in October and 54% last spring. So, generally we are a bit more skeptical about our financial futures (though well within the margin of error, meaning it

could well be that our assessments are the same as October's and last March's).

- Not surprisingly, younger people are more worried about becoming unemployed than older people, but they feel they are somewhat better off this year than last (more so than older people) and are more optimistic about next year's finances despite the fears of unemployment.

### • **Historical Comparisons**

"What is the most important problem facing the State of Wisconsin today?"

	10/94	10/95	10/96	10/97	10/98	10/99	10/00	3/02	10/02	3/03
Budget & Deficit								31%	23%	37%
Taxes	21	21	14	18	30	29	26	20	26	17
Education	5	7	12	11	20	13	14	11	10	9
Economy & Jobs	7	5	11	5	5	6	13	7	13	20
Health Care	3	5	2	2	2	4	8	1	4	4
Environment	1	2	1	5	2	3	7	2	<1	<1
Welfare Issues	21	14	15	10	6	5	5	3	<1	1
Farm Issues	1	2	1	2	1	3	4	<1	0	<1
Crime/Drugs	27	15	16	15	7	9	4	1	3	1

"Would you say you are financially better off now than you were a year ago, or financially worse off now?"

	10/94	10/95	10/96	10/97	10/98	10/99	10/00	3/02	10/02	3/03
Better Off	38	36	47	47	45	55	57	35	31	36
Same	34	31	26	28	30	23	23	28	50	43
Worse Off	28	32	25	25	25	21	19	36	18	20
Not Sure	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

"Do you expect that at this time next year you will be financially better off than now or worse off than now?"

	10/94	10/95	10/96	10/97	10/98	10/99	10/00	3/02	10/02	3/03
Better Off	50	46	56	54	56	63	64	54	56	53
Same	31	21	19	25	21	15	20	22	22	26
Worse Off	15	26	15	14	17	20	9	15	13	17
Not Sure	5	8	9	7	6	1	7	9	9	5

## FREQUENCY DATA

First, I would like to ask you some questions about the State of Wisconsin.

Generally speaking, would you say that things in the State of Wisconsin are going in the right direction, or are they going in the wrong direction?

Right Direction	52%
Wrong Direction	38
Not Sure	9
Refused	1

What is the most important problem facing the State of Wisconsin today?

<b>1. State Budget &amp; Deficit</b>	<b>37%</b>
2. Economy & Jobs	20
3. Taxes & State Spending Priorities	17
4. Education	9
5. Health Care/prescription drug coverage	4
6. Government Ethics	2
7. War/Iraq	2
8. Gambling/Gaming Compacts	1
9. Poverty Issues	1
10. Elderly Care Crime/drugs	1
12. Gas Prices Street/highway repair & transportation	1
Other	3
None	1
Don't Know	2
Refused	<1

What is the second most important problem?

<b>1. Economy &amp; Jobs</b>	<b>16%</b>
2. Taxes & State Spending Priorities	15
3. Education	10
4. Health Care/prescription drug coverage	7
5. State Budget & Deficit	6
6. Government Ethics	3
7. Crime/drugs EnvironmentWar/Iraq	3

9. Gambling/Gaming Compacts Poverty Issues	3
11. War/Iraq Gas Prices Street/highway repair & transportation	2
14. Racism/Diversity Elderly Care Public Morality Governor Doyle Chronic Wasting Disease	1
Other	4
None	9
Don't Know	12
Refused	<1

How satisfied are you with the way Governor Doyle is doing his job overall. Would you say you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied?

Very Satisfied	15%
Somewhat Satisfied	53
Somewhat Dissatisfied	15
Very Dissatisfied	9
Not Sure	9
Refused	<1

How satisfied are you with the Governor's budget plans to deal with the budget deficits. Would you say you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied?

Very Satisfied	9%
Somewhat Satisfied	45
Somewhat Dissatisfied	20
Very Dissatisfied	11
Not Sure	14
Refused	2

How about the way the state legislature is doing its job. Would you say you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied?

Very Satisfied	6%
Somewhat Satisfied	43
Somewhat Dissatisfied	25
Very Dissatisfied	13
Not Sure	12

Refused	1
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Governor Doyle is currently negotiating with the Indian tribes in the state to include more games and to extend the hours of operations for the casinos. Do you favor or oppose these gaming compacts?

Favor	47%
Oppose	48
Not Sure	5
Refused	1

The State Legislature wants the right to vote on whether to approve or disapprove of the Indian Gaming Compacts. Currently, the Governor is solely responsible for their approval or disapproval. Do you think the state legislature should be able vote on whether to approve the compacts, or do you think it should remain up to the Governor?

State Legislature should vote	69%
Should Remain with Governor	28
Not Sure	3
Refused	0

Governor Doyle has proposed cutting \$250 million from the University of Wisconsin system's budget, but allows for a tuition increase to partially offset this cut. Do you favor or oppose this proposal?

Favor	36%
Oppose	55
Not Sure	8
Refused	1

If you had to choose between a tuition hike in the University of Wisconsin system or a decrease in services and enrollment, which would you choose?

Tuition Hike	52%
Service and Enrollment Decreases	38
Not Sure	8
Refused	2