



# CAROLINA OPINION SURVEY

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Carolina Strategy Group

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## **NC voters see state economy getting worse, Don't trust General Assembly to solve problems**

RALEIGH -- A clear majority of North Carolina voters believe the state's economy is getting worse rather than better and they do not have confidence in state legislators to solve problems by proposing tax increases as the leading budget solution.

The survey of 1,000 voters taken June 17 shows that 66 percent of all voters believe the economy is getting worse while 24.5 percent said it was improving. Among the highlights:

- Democrats were more optimistic, but still a majority of Democrats polled said they believed the economy was getting worse. Among Democratic voters, 33.9 percent said the economy was improving compared to 55.8 percent who said the economy was getting worse. Only 14.5 percent of Republican voters and 20.5 percent of Unaffiliated voters said the economy was improving.
- African American voters were more optimistic than white voters. 41.3 percent of African American voters said the economy was getting stronger compared to only 20.5 percent of white voters. The 41.3 percent for African American voters represented the highest positive response to opinions regarding an improving economy among all demographic subsets.

Asking a specific question about the recently passed N.C. House of Representatives budget, the poll queried voters on whether the \$18.6 billion budget, which includes \$780 million dollars in new taxes, would hurt or help the economy in the long term. The survey was underway when Governor Beverly Perdue announced plans to seek a larger tax increase, so the poll could not test on the impact of that statement.

Voter reaction to the \$780 million proposed tax increase by the House indicates that winning support for any additional taxes will present challenges for state leaders.

- 63.7 percent of the voters surveyed said the House budget would hurt the economy while only 22.7 percent of voters said budget would help.
- A majority of self-described moderates and conservatives thought the budget would hurt the economy. 80.8 percent of conservatives and 53.9 percent of moderates

indicating potential harm to the economy, while 49.2 percent of self-described liberals said the budget would help the economy.

- The poll spotlights a potential problem for Democrat leaders selling the value of the budget to their own party. Only 35.2 percent of Democrats think the new taxes will help the economy while 47.4 percent think they are going to hurt, 17.4 percent were not sure.

### **Sales and Entertainment taxes**

Testing the political impact of voting for to support new taxes, the survey asked voters if they would be more or less likely to vote for a candidate for the state legislature if they knew the candidate voted to raise the state sales tax.

- 67.2 percent of all voters said they were less likely to vote for a state legislative candidate who voted to raise the state sales tax; only 17.9 percent said they were more likely with 14.9 percent saying they were not sure.
- Republicans were united with 83.1 percent saying they were less likely and nearly two-thirds of Unaffiliated voters, 64 percent saying they were less likely.
- A majority of Democrats – 55.6 percent – said they were less likely to vote for a state legislative candidate who voted to raise the state sales tax. This is another signal that Democratic legislative leaders have challenges winning support among their own party members.

The survey also tested on the proposed new tax on entertainment items such as movie tickets and digital music downloads. A majority of voters were still less likely to vote for a candidate who supported these tax increases as well.

- 54.2 percent of all voters said they were less likely compared to 31 percent who said they were more likely while 14.8 percent were not sure.
- A majority of Republican and Unaffiliated voters remained less likely to vote for a candidate who voted for these increases with 62.7 percent of GOP and 55.3 percent of Unaffiliated saying less likely.
- 47 percent of Democratic voters said they were less likely to vote and 35.4 percent said more likely with 17.6 percent stating they did not know.

### **Trend line on reason behind the budget crisis**

Over the period of two polls in May and June, the Carolina Opinion Survey showed that voters continue to think the state budget crisis is due to the government spending too much – not the slow economy. This opinion was reflected in our May survey as well as this current poll.

- 61.6 percent of all voters said too much government spending to only 29 percent who said the slow economy.

- Republicans and Unaffiliated voter clearly indicate their belief that the government spends too much with 79.6 percent of Republicans and 60.2 percent of Unaffiliated. Democrats are split on the issue with 47.6 percent believing too much spending and 41.8 percent pointing to the slow economy.

In a generic ballot test for state legislative races, the numbers continued to improve for Republicans. Among all voters, 46 percent said they preferred a Republican candidate to 36.2 percent who said Democratic. This 10-point advantage for Republican candidates stands in contrast to the findings in May when the Republican advantage stood at 2.3 and fell well within the margin of error of that poll.

The current movement of nearly 8 points represents a significant shift in voter attitudes from the two previous election cycles. This movement appears to be driven by a united Republican Party on the issues of taxes and government spending and a growing concern from Unaffiliated voters on the impact new spending and new taxes will have on their household budgets.

### **About the Carolina Opinion Survey**

The Carolina Opinion Survey is a survey of 1,000 North Carolina voters with a margin of error of 3.16 percent. The survey was conducted on June 17, 2009 through an automated phone system. Phone surveys are a snapshot of voters' opinions and are subject to other factors that may influence the margin of error not present in personal interviews surveys. However, they are an effective measure of public opinion and provide valuable insight into the opinions of all voters.

The Carolina Opinion Survey is designed to provide insight into the opinions of voters on federal, state and local issues facing North Carolina. The surveys are conducted by an automated phone system using a random sample generated by a file of North Carolina voters. The survey is a snapshot of voters' opinion on the key issues of the day. It is important to remember that public opinion is fluid and is subject to change over time. Polls are not predictors of the future. They are a reflection of opinion based upon the current set of information available in the public arena at a given point in time.

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**Crosstab information**

**Which best describes your opinion on the current state of our economy? Do you think North Carolina's economy is improving or is it getting worse?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Improving	245	24.5	24.5	24.5
	Getting Worse	660	66.0	66.0	90.5
	Don't Know	95	9.5	9.5	100.0
	Total	1000	100.0	100.0	

**Last week the North Carolina House passed an 18.6 Billion dollar budget which included 780 million dollars in new taxes. Do you think these new taxes will help or hurt the economy in the long term?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Help	227	22.7	22.7	22.7
	Hurt	637	63.7	63.7	86.4
	Not Sure	136	13.6	13.6	100.0
	Total	1000	100.0	100.0	

**Would you be more or less likely to vote for a candidate for the state legislature if you knew that candidate voted to increase the state sales tax?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	More Likely	179	17.9	17.9	17.9
	Less Likely	672	67.2	67.2	85.1
	Don't Know	149	14.9	14.9	100.0
	Total	1000	100.0	100.0	

**Would you be more or less likely to vote for a candidate for state legislature if you knew that candidate voted to impose a new tax on entertainment items such as movie tickets and digital music downloads?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	More Likely	310	31.0	31.0	31.0
	Less Likely	542	54.2	54.2	85.2
	Don't Know	148	14.8	14.8	100.0
	Total	1000	100.0	100.0	

**Which of the following do you think has contributed most to creating the budget crisis in Raleigh, the slow economy or too much government spending?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Slow Economy	290	29.0	29.0	29.0
	Too Much Spending	616	61.6	61.6	90.6
	Don't Know	94	9.4	9.4	100.0
	Total	1000	100.0	100.0	

**All things being equal, are you likely to vote for a democratic candidate or republican candidate for state legislature?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Democrat	362	36.2	36.2	36.2
	Republican	460	46.0	46.0	82.2
	Undecided	178	17.8	17.8	100.0
	Total	1000	100.0	100.0	

**Do you consider yourself to be a liberal, moderate or conservative in your political beliefs?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Liberal	120	12.0	12.0	12.0
	Moderate	453	45.3	45.3	57.3
	Conservative	427	42.7	42.7	100.0
	Total	1000	100.0	100.0	

**Sex**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	532	53.2	53.2	53.2
	Male	468	46.8	46.8	100.0
	Total	1000	100.0	100.0	

**Party Affiliation**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Democrat	466	46.6	46.6	46.6
	Republican	373	37.3	37.3	83.9
	Unaffiliated	161	16.1	16.1	100.0
	Total	1000	100.0	100.0	

**Race**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	White	771	77.1	77.1	77.1
	African-American	179	17.9	17.9	95.0
	Hispanic	5	.5	.5	95.5
	Asian	3	.3	.3	95.8
	Other	42	4.2	4.2	100.0
	Total	1000	100.0	100.0	

**Age Category**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18 to 25	29	2.9	2.9	2.9
	25 to 40	107	10.7	10.7	13.6
	41 to 55	279	27.9	27.9	41.5
	56 to 65	249	24.9	24.9	66.4
	Over 65	336	33.6	33.6	100.0
	Total	1000	100.0	100.0	

**Area Code**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	252	129	12.9	12.9	12.9
	336	163	16.3	16.3	29.2
	704	195	19.5	19.5	48.7
	828	170	17.0	17.0	65.7
	910	172	17.2	17.2	82.9
	919	171	17.1	17.1	100.0
	Total	1000	100.0	100.0	

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