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Legislature Beats Governor in Battle for Lowest Job Performance Rankings

29 percent of voters say their legislator's tax vote will likely affect their vote in upcoming election.

LANSING, Mich. — A poor economy, two years of drawn out budget negotiations and constant partisan bickering have combined for record-low job approval rankings for Michigan's elected leaders. But when the legislative and executive branches of Michigan's government are compared, the legislature is found to have the most egg on its collective face.

The latest poll from Denno Noor Research, The Rossman Group and MIRS indicates 43 percent of Michigan voters give the state legislature a poor approval rating, while 37 percent give a fair grade and another 15 percent give the legislature high marks. Voters view Governor Granholm's job performance only slightly better with 37 percent giving her a poor approval rating, 23 percent giving a fair rating and 38 percent giving her high marks.

Neither the legislature nor the governor are above 50 percent, which as an incumbent is where you want to be," said Kelly Rossman-McKinney, CEO of The Rossman Group. "Incumbent legislators running for re-election to the state house in November will have to work extra hard if they want to return to office."

The questions were worded as follows:

On a scale of one to ten, with one being the lowest and ten being the highest, what do you think of the job performance of Governor Jennifer Granholm?

On a scale of one to ten, with one being the lowest and ten being the highest, what do you think of the job performance of the Michigan legislature?

Among age groups, the legislature received the most support from the 18-35 year old category, with 24 percent giving high approval rankings. The governor's job performance, on the other hand, received the most favorable rankings from those aged 65 and older with 47 percent giving high job performance rankings.

"The legislature and the governor both should be disappointed in their performance rankings," said MIRS President John T. Reurink. "The governor is lucky she doesn't have to worry about re-election. The incumbents in the state house, on the other hand, should be very concerned."

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The legislature will also need to worry about the highly visible tax increase that led anti-tax advocates to target several legislators – both Democrats and Republicans – for recall this past year. Overall, 29 percent of voters say last October’s tax increase will likely affect their vote for state representative. This compares to the 26 percent who say the tax increase will possibly affect their vote and the 39 percent who say the tax increase will have no affect.

The question was worded as follows:

To what degree are Michigan tax increases last October going to influence your vote for Michigan state representative? Will it seriously affect your vote for state representative, affect your vote for state representative, possibly affect your vote for state representative or not affect your vote for state representative?

Macomb County voters are most likely to punish candidates who voted for tax increases. Thirty-six percent said the tax increase would influence their vote for state representative – a seven percent increase over the state average.

“Macomb County has long been a bastion of anti-tax partisans,” said Denno Noor Research President Dennis Denno. “And considering that anti-tax activist Leon Drolett hails from Macomb County, these numbers are no surprise.”

Denno Noor Research conducted the survey in partnership with The Rossman Group and Michigan Information & Research Services (MIRS). The Rossman Group was recently named Lansing’s Most Effective Public Relations Firm by a survey of political insiders, and MIRS is Michigan’s leading daily legislative and state government newsletter.

Methodology:

This survey was part of the Rossman Group/MIRS/Denno Noor Research Quarterly Survey of the Michigan electorate. 600 respondents were surveyed between October 1 and October 4, and the participation was stratified based on census data and past voter behavior. A screen was employed to include only those participants who said they intended on voting, either at the polls or by absentee ballot, in the November 2008 Election. The margin of error is plus/minus four percent.

Survey respondents ranked the job performance of the governor and state legislature on a scale of one to ten. The responses were then categorized into categories *poor*, *fair*, and *high*. Low rankings are those from 1-4; moderate rankings are those from 5-6; and high performance are those from 7-10.

Voters were given four categories to indicate the level of influence the legislature’s tax increase of October 2007 would have on their vote for state representative. The categories given – *seriously affect*, *affect*, *possibly affect*, and *not affect*. For the purpose of the news release, The Rossman Group grouped the *seriously affect* and *affect* category to create a measure of *likely affect*.

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