



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
May 25, 2007

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## Misery Loves Company — Granholm, Engler, Economy Share Blame for Budget Mess

*MIRS/Rossman Group/Denno-Noor Poll Shows Plenty of Blame to Go Around*

**LANSING, Mich.** — When it comes to our current budget mess, there's lots of blame to go around — so much so that the public isn't sure where to direct its anger.

“The public is sick and tired of the budget mess we're in, and the inability of ‘Lansing’ to figure it out. They're angry, but not sure who to blame,” said Kelly Rossman-McKinney, CEO of The Rossman Group. “In difficult times such as these, public blame is directed generally at those legislators in opposing political parties and at those leaders with whom the public is most familiar.”

This according to a recent state-wide survey conducted by Denno-Noor Research, in partnership with The Rossman Group, one of Michigan's top public relations and issue management consulting firms, and Michigan Information & Research Services, Michigan's leading daily legislative and state government newsletter. MIRS was recently voted the preferred newsletter of Lansing's political insiders.

The question was worded as follows:

*“Currently the State of Michigan is facing a one-to-three billion dollar deficit. Who do you think is most to blame for the current budget problem the state is in: (ROTATE) Governor Jennifer Granholm, former Governor John Engler, the Michigan legislature, political partisanship, lagging Michigan economy, term limits, the federal government or local governments?”*

According to the results, former Governor John Engler was singled out the most, with 19 percent of the electorate blaming him for our current budget condition. Following Engler was current Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm with 16 percent, and the lagging Michigan economy also with 16 percent. The rest of the responses were all in single digits.

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“When people are upset about our state government, they want to blame someone,” said MIRS President John T. Reurink. “However, this year’s unprecedented budget dilemma is so perplexing to voters, they aren’t sure who is at fault. As a result, blame tends to fall on party lines and toward those who are expected to lead the state through these difficult times.

“After Governors Engler and Granholm and the economy,” added Reurink, “voters next pointed their fingers at ‘all of the above’ (12 percent), the state legislature (eight percent), the federal government (eight percent), political partisanship (five percent) and local governments (three percent).”

The following chart demonstrates where responses landed on the issue of blame for Michigan’s budget woes among the state’s geographic regions\*:

	<u>SE MI</u>	<u>Central MI</u>	<u>West MI</u>	<u>Tri Cities/ Thumb</u>	<u>Upper L.P.</u>	<u>U.P.</u>	<u>Oakland</u>	<u>Macomb</u>	<u>Detroit</u>	<u>Balance of Wayne</u>
<b>Governor Granholm</b>	23%	23%	11%	16%	13%	16%	22%	18%	3%	17%
<b>Former Governor Engler</b>	11%	16%	26%	18%	16%	16%	14%	18%	<b>39%</b>	15%
<b>Michigan Legislature</b>	9%	11%	10%	4%	9%	11%	4%	8%	5%	<b>14%</b>
<b>Political Partisanship</b>	<b>9%</b>	5%	6%	7%	0%	0%	<b>9%</b>	2%	3%	2%
<b>Michigan Economy</b>	9%	8%	<b>20%</b>	10%	8%	2%	11%	9%	10%	16%
<b>Term Limits</b>	0%	<b>2%</b>	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Federal Government</b>	5%	5%	6%	12%	<b>13%</b>	11%	9%	12%	10%	3%
<b>Local Governments</b>	5%	0%	2%	3%	0%	<b>11%</b>	5%	4%	3%	3%
<b>All of the Above</b>	11%	<b>20%</b>	15%	10%	13%	11%	9%	10%	8%	14%
<b>None of the Above/Unsure</b>	14%	7%	10%	<b>16%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>16%</b>	14%	12%	8%	11%

\*All numbers rounded. Thus, totals may exceed 100 percent.

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“It’s also interesting to note, and not surprising,” said Denno-Noor President Dennis Denno, “that partisanship is an important determinant responses to this question. Only five percent of Democrats blamed Governor Granholm, while 68 percent of Democrats blamed former Governor Engler. Only 11 percent of Republicans blamed Engler for today’s budget problems, while Granholm was blamed by 62 percent of Republicans. Independent voters spread their blame across the board – and rank ‘all of the above’ highest at 17 percent.”

“The voters are delivering a clear message – ‘we’re mad as hell and we’re not going to take it anymore!’” added Rossman-McKinney. “Republicans blame Democrats, Democrats blame Republicans, and Independents are blaming everyone. What the public is really looking for is leadership, and in the absence of that, they instead look for someone to blame. This is a huge issue for voters — the fiscal year is coming to a close and we still don’t have a budget resolution.

“If legislators don’t think this is going to bite them on the posterior come election time,” added Rossman-McKinney, “then they are smoking something – probably something they haven’t taxed yet. It’s time to settle on a plan and move forward.”

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**Methodology:**

**This survey was part of the Rossman Group/MIRS/Denno-Noor Quarterly Survey of the Michigan electorate. 600 respondents were surveyed between May 14 and May 17, 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.**