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Capitol Insiders: State of the State Speech Failed on Key Issues *Lobby Guide Litmus Test Reveals Governor's Missed Opportunity to Boost Democrats*

LANSING, Mich – Governor Granholm's State of the State speech failed to address the key issues or provide confidence to state residents that Michigan is on the right economic track, according to the Lobby Guide Litmus Test, an online survey of state Capitol insiders.

According to the on-line survey conducted by Denno-Noor Research in partnership with The Rossman Group and The Perricone Group, 64 percent of those surveyed – nearly two-thirds – felt that the Governor failed to address their "most important issue." Additionally, when asked to rate on a five-point scale (five being the highest rating) the Governor's effectiveness in giving folks confidence that Michigan is on the right economic track, only 14 percent rated her a "4" or "5," while 59 percent rated her a "1" or a "2." Not surprisingly, Democrats (at 32 percent) were most likely to rate her speech a success, while only two percent of Republicans agreed.

This was Governor Granholm's eighth and final State of the State speech. The State of the State is traditionally the incumbent Governor's opportunity to report on Michigan's current condition, and lay out plans and priorities for the coming year. Granholm cannot seek re-election as Governor because of term limits.

"In our pre-speech survey, 34 percent of insiders said they wanted to hear details about the state budget – it tied with job creation for the top issue. Despite a nearly 60-minute speech, Capitol insiders, those most informed on political happenings in Michigan, were still waiting for budget detail," said Kelly Rossman-McKinney, APR, CEO and founder of The Rossman Group. "While the Governor laid out many critical job creation initiatives, she avoided providing numbers on what her programs will cost or how they'll be funded – instead deferring to next week's budget address. At a time when legislators are staring at a \$1.7 billion budget hole, many folks are skeptical that the money is there to fund anything new."

The survey also asked, on a five-point scale with five being the highest, if capitol insiders thought Granholm's speech helped the eventual Democratic gubernatorial nominee, and they responded with a

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resounding “no.” Only seven percent of Capitol insiders felt Granholm boosted the Democrats’ chances to retain the Michigan governorship (one percent gave her speech a “5,” the highest rating, and another six percent rated her a “4”), while 66 percent felt she failed to help (29 percent rated her a “5,” 37 percent rated her a “4”).

“While one would expect Republicans to reject the notion that the Governor’s performance boosted the campaign of the eventual Democrat nominee for Governor – and they did reject the notion, only four percent in the GOP called her speech helpful to the Democrats – she was actually sunk by her own party in the survey,” said Chuck Perricone, former Speaker of the House and CEO of The Perricone Group. “Only 19 percent of Democratic insiders thought Granholm’s speech was helpful to the Party’s efforts to retain the Governor’s office.”

“I think it’s safe to say that Capitol insiders, Republicans and Democrats alike, were skeptical going into the speech about hearing anything substantive,” said Denno-Noor Research President Dennis Denno. “Well, after listening to a speech that provided few bold ideas after a terrible economic year, we wouldn’t have expected to see much of an opinion shift. In fact, the only shift we saw among Capitol insiders from the first to the second survey was from skeptical to cynical.”

Respondents were also asked if the Governor’s speech would help strengthen her legacy as Governor. Expectations were low going into the speech, as only 38 percent called it important or very important to her legacy and 45 percent indicated it was not at all important. Following the speech, 28 percent of insiders said her final State of the State address strengthened her legacy, 10 percent felt her legacy was weakened while 70 percent felt her speech made no difference either way.

The post-State of the State survey was the second of two conducted on the address. Of those who responded to the survey, 36 percent self-identified themselves as Republicans, 25 percent as Democrats and a whopping 40 percent of Capitol insiders called themselves Independents.

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Attention Media:

For attribution purposes, please recognize all three organizations involved in this project:

- The Rossman Group
- The Perricone Group
- Denno Noor Research

Methodology

The Lobby Guide Litmus Test was conducted on-line by Denno-Noor Research in partnership with The Rossman Group and The Perricone Group. All individuals listed in The Rossman Group’s 2009-2010 Michigan Legislators’ Guide to Lobbyists & Reporters were eligible to participate. Of the total universe of 551 potential interviews, 150 (27 percent) completed the survey. A link to the survey was emailed to participants after the Governor’s speech on February 3, and they were given until Thursday, February 5 at 8:00 p.m. to complete the questionnaire. All numbers were rounded, and total responses for an individual question may exceed 100%.