

For Immediate Release

February 2, 2010

Contact: Kelly Rossman-McKinney, 517-487-9320

Chuck Perricone, 269-758-3480

Dennis Denno, 517-402-2453

Mark Pischea, 517-487-9320

Capitol Insiders: Governor's State of State Address Irrelevant

Lobby Guide Litmus Test Shows Low Expectations for Speech

LANSING, Mich – Expectations are very low for Governor Jennifer Granholm's eighth and final State of the State Address Wednesday night, according to a survey of state capitol insiders, those individuals closest to the daily happenings in and around Michigan's state capitol.

According to the on-line survey conducted by Denno-Noor Research in partnership with The Rossman Group and The Perricone Group, a solid majority, 62 percent of those surveyed, indicated the Governor's speech was either "unimportant" or "useless," while only 38 percent of those surveyed called the Governor's speech "crucial" or "important" to her legacy. Democrats were most likely to consider the speech of their party leader relevant. However, only 55 percent called it "crucial" or "important," compared to 33 percent of Republicans and 34 percent of Independents who agreed with its significance.

Traditionally, a Governor's annual State of the State address is the high-profile opportunity to lay out plans for the direction of the state for the next 12 months. According to this survey, 78 percent have no confidence that the Governor will lay out a clear vision (37 percent "not very confident," 41 percent "no confidence at all"), while only 22 percent of those who responded indicated they were either "very confident" or "confident" that the Governor would lay out a clear vision for the state (three percent "very confident" and 19 percent "confident"). The responses were not a partisan thing, as only 37 percent of Democrats, nine percent of Republicans and 23 percent of Independents indicated confidence that she'll announce a plan to move Michigan forward.

"Historically, the State of the State address is a significant moment in the political calendar. It's when folks scramble to get floor tickets to attend the speech, gather in watching parties and pore over every word for a hint about the state's priorities and the new initiatives to be launched in the coming year," said Kelly Rossman-McKinney, APR, CEO and founder of The Rossman Group. "That's not the case this year. It's still a festive atmosphere, but not even members of the Governor's own political party have high expectations for this speech."

With the Governor's seat open in 2010 (Governor Granholm cannot seek re-election due to term limits) the agenda she sets forth tomorrow night for the coming year might be considered important to the current Democrat candidates for Governor. Not so, according to the survey. Only seven percent called her speech "crucial" to the eventual Democrat nominee, while 26 percent called it "important." Conversely, 48 percent called it "not very important" and 20 percent called it "useless." Even Democrats think her speech will have little relevance to the campaign, with only 45 percent calling it "crucial" or "important."

"The consensus throughout the Capitol is that it will be difficult for *any* candidate to defend against what the *public* perceives as a lack of leadership in the front office," said Chuck Perricone, former Speaker of the House and CEO of The Perricone Group. "Loyal Lt. Gov. John Cherry's early exit hit home. Deserved or not, even Dem candidates will continue to distance themselves from the current administration."

When it comes to the content of the Governor's speech, most insiders cited "job creation" or the "state budget" as the most important issue for her to cover, with both registering 34 percent. The "economy" came in as the third most important issue at 18 percent, followed by "political gridlock" at seven percent and "education" and "taxes" both at four percent.

"It's Lansing, it's politics, and it's an election year – not only is the Governor's seat open, but also the Attorney General and Secretary of State offices and nearly all legislative seats. Given the strong showing by Republicans in New Jersey, Virginia and Massachusetts elections over the past few months, 2010 is shaping up to be very competitive in Michigan," said Denno-Noor Research President Dennis Denno.

The pre-State of the State survey was the first of two to be conducted on the address, with the second to be emailed after the speech tomorrow night to evaluate her performance. 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.

###

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 625 individuals listed in The Rossman Group's 2009-2010 Michigan Legislators' Guide to Lobbyists & Reporters were eligible to participate. Of the 625 listings, 35 emails bounced back, leaving a total eligible universe of 590 participants. Of those eligible, 155 (26 percent) completed the survey. A link to the survey was emailed to participants on February 1, and they were given until 11:00 p.m. to complete the questionnaire. All numbers were rounded, and total responses for an individual question may exceed 100%.