

**SUBJECT:** The Fair Share Tax Concept: An Overview of Survey Findings

**DATE:** March 23, 2009

**KEY FINDINGS**

**A survey of registered voters – conducted March 20-22 – demonstrates that there is broad and deep support for raising state income taxes for high-income earners in New York State.**

- The majority of New York State voters (73%) support increasing the state income tax for those who earn more than \$500,000 per year in order to help address the current New York State fiscal crisis.
  - Even when the target population for the tax increase is re-framed as “those who make more than \$250,000 per year,” the measure still receives the approval of 65% of voters.

|                                | <i>Support/Oppose raising the state income tax for those who earn <u>more than \$500k</u>?</i> | <i>Support/Oppose raising the state income tax for those who earn <u>more than \$250k</u>?</i> |
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| Strongly support raising taxes | 53%  | 45%  |
| Somewhat support raising taxes | 20%  | 20%  |
| Somewhat oppose raising taxes  | 6%   | 8%   |
| Strongly oppose raising taxes  | 17%  | 21%  |

*Question Wording: There is a proposal to raise the state income tax paid by people who earn more than \$500,000 / \$250,000 per year to help address the current New York State fiscal crisis. Do you support or oppose this proposal? [IF SUPPORT/OPPOSE, ASK:] Would you say you strongly support/oppose or somewhat support/oppose the proposal?*

- Support for the tax extends to voters of all partisan backgrounds and regions of residence in New York State – with the exception of self-identified Republicans when the tax increase is for those who earn \$250,000 or more per year.
  - Support for increasing the tax for those earning more than \$500,000 – 83% of self-identified Democrats, 80% of Independents, and 53% of Republicans; 74% of New York City residents, 65% of Suburban residents, and 75% of Upstate residents; 73% of those with a household income of \$100k or more, 72% of those with less than \$100k in household income.
  - Support for increasing the tax for those earning more than \$250,000 – 79% of self-identified Democrats, 66% of Independents, and **42% of Republicans**; 73% of New York City residents, 59% of Suburban residents, and 61% of Upstate residents; 66% of those with a household income of \$100k or more, 64% of those with less than \$100k in household income.
- Even when confronted with a counter-argument for the tax – “taxing those who contribute to the bulk of the state’s revenue stream is the wrong thing to do right now when the state is facing an economic crisis” – most voters remain supportive of the tax increases.
  - Just 24% of all voters (and 11% of those who support the tax increase) are more likely to oppose the tax increase for \$500k+ earners after hearing the counter-argument.
  - 28% of all voters (and 13% of those who support the tax increase) are more likely to oppose the tax increase for \$250k+ earners after hearing the counter-argument.

*Question Wording: Now, please tell me whether the following makes you more likely to support raising the state income tax for people who earn more than \$500,000 / \$250,000 per year, more likely to oppose it, or does it not make a difference to you one way or the other? “Some argue that raising taxes on those who make \$500,000 / \$250,000 or more per year – those who contribute the bulk of the state’s revenue stream – is the wrong thing to do right now when the state is facing an economic crisis.” [IF SUPPORT/OPPOSE ASK: Would that make you much more likely to support/oppose raising the state income tax or somewhat more likely to support/oppose it?*

**In this context, voters express general disapproval with the way Governor David Paterson is handling the state budget.**

- More than half (54%) either “strongly disapprove” (33%) or “somewhat disapprove” (21%) of the Governor’s management of the budget, while just 29% approve of his performance.
  - While Republicans are most inclined to disapprove of the Governor’s budget performance (64% disapprove, 25% approve), Independents (57% disapprove, 26% approve) and Democrats (49% disapprove, 32% approve) are also critical of the Governor.
  - Regionally, the Governor faces similar levels of disapproval across the state – in New York City (53% disapprove, 26% approve), the Suburbs (56% disapprove, 25% approve), and Upstate (53% disapprove, 32% approve).
  - Those with household incomes above and below the \$100k mark also have similar approval/disapproval numbers – less than \$100k (54% disapprove, 29% approve), \$100k or more (58% disapprove, 30% approve).

*Question Wording: Do you approve or disapprove of the way Governor David Paterson is handling the state budget? Do you approve/disapprove strongly or somewhat?*

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| <b>A NOTE ON METHODOLOGY</b> |
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*The findings described in this memo are based on a survey conducted March 20 through 22, 2009 among a representative sample of 400 registered voters in New York State. The margin of error on the total sample of 400 is +/- 4.9%. Sampling error increases as the sample size decreases, so statements based on various population subgroups, such as Republicans, Independents or Democrats, are subject to more error than are statements based on the total sample.*

*The study was conducted by telephone and respondents were drawn from a list of registered voters in New York State. All respondents were screened to ensure that they are currently 18 years or older and registered to vote. The overall sample results were weighted demographically and geographically.*

*All the numbers are presented as percentages and, due to rounding, may not add up to 100%. The “New York City” region includes all 5 boroughs of New York City, the “Suburban” region includes Westchester, Nassau, Suffolk, Rockland, and Putnam Counties, and the “Upstate” region includes all remaining counties in New York State.*

*The study was conducted by Gotham Research Group, a New York-based research and consulting firm advising non-profit organizations, companies, government agencies, and electoral campaigns on issues of communication, reputation, and strategy. For more information about Gotham Research Group, please visit our website, [www.gothamresearchgroup.com](http://www.gothamresearchgroup.com).*