

CAR Polling Report

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The most recent Quinnipiac Poll, released July 22 and 23, shows Connecticut voters would support tax increases; the battle over the state budget is taking a toll on Governor Rell; and while Senator Dodd still trails a Republican challenger, his approval ratings are improving.

The State

A majority of Connecticut's voters, 52%, say they are somewhat or very dissatisfied with the way things are going in their state, a ten-point increase since a survey released on May 27th.

Increased dissatisfaction could be due to Governor Jodi Rell and State Legislature battles over Connecticut's budget. In fact, the poll found that 88% of voters called the failure to pass a state budget by the July 1 deadline a "very" or "somewhat" serious problem. Connecticut residents spread the blame for the State's economic situation. Twenty-nine percent say Democrats in the legislature are mostly to blame, while 16% blame Governor Rell; 14% blame Republicans and 26% blame the three equally.

Most Connecticut voters (60%) would rather cut programs and services than raise taxes to balance the state budget. Still, there has been a rise in support for including tax increases in the budget solution. In February 67% picked cuts in services over raising taxes. But, 48% believe raising taxes is necessary to balance the budget. Nearly three-quarters of those surveyed (71%) support raising the state income tax for individuals making at least \$265,000 per year and couples making at least \$500,000; raising the cigarette tax an additional 75 cents a pack half (72%); and half (51%) support raising taxes on corporations.

The Governor

While most voters do not blame the Governor primarily for the budget failure, many (42%) disapprove of how she's been handling the state budget. Fifty percent of voters approve of Rell's handling of the State's budget situation, which is down 16 percentage points from a survey done in February. The poll also shows a significant drop in Rell's approval rating to 65%. This is her lowest rating and 8 points lower than in a Quinnipiac poll released on May 27th. A 65% approval rating is good, especially considering the economic challenges facing Connecticut, but an eight point drop in two months time is significant. When you also consider the sizeable number of voters who disapprove of how the Governor is handling the budget and that more than half of the State's voters are dissatisfied with the way things are going, it is clear that the budget battle has eroded some of the Governor's support.

Senator Christopher Dodd

The Quinnipiac survey also offered a bit of good news for Senator Christopher Dodd. The Senator's approval rating, while still in the red, is up four points from the poll Quinnipiac released in May and nine points from an April survey. Forty-two percent of Connecticut's voters say they approve of the job Sen. Dodd is doing while 52% say they disapprove.

In a 2010 senate horse-race question Dodd still trails former U.S. Rep. Rob Simmons, a potential Republican challenger 48% to 39%. A May 27th poll had Dodd trailing 45% to 39%. When you consider the two polls' margins of error (each $\pm 2.5\%$) there has been little to no movement in these numbers. In this poll, Senator Dodd wins the majority of Democrats (74%) while Simmons takes Republicans (87%) and slightly more than half of the independent voters (56%). According to Quinnipiac pollsters, Dodd has gained among Democrats, but lost independent support since May 27.

When matched against other potential Republican challengers like Sam Caligiuri or Tom Foley, Dodd wins with 42% of the vote. Against businessman Merrick Alpert, Dodd leads 52% to 18%. This compares to a 44% to 24% lead over Alpert in the May 27th poll indicating a decrease in the "anybody but Dodd" vote.

In this latest survey, Simmons gets 42% in a Republican primary matchup while no other Republican receives more than five percent, and 45% of Republican voters are undecided. In a Democratic Primary match up Dodd wins with 52% of Democratic voters.

Clearly Dodd has some significant challenges to overcome if he is going to hold onto his place in the U.S. Senate. Fifty-five percent of Connecticut voters say he is not honest and trustworthy and 49% believe he does not share their views on important issues. BUT, the steady increase in approval ratings along with his gain among Democrats when matched against Simmons and his ability to win against other Republican challengers demonstrates that the Senator is beginning to regain his base and should not be counted out in 2010.