



# SIENA RESEARCH INSTITUTE

SIENA COLLEGE, LOUDONVILLE, NY

[www.siena.edu/sri](http://www.siena.edu/sri)

For Immediate Release:

Monday, March 28, 2011

Contact:

Steven Greenberg, 518-469-9858

PDF version; crosstabs; website:

[www.Siena.edu/SRI/SNY](http://www.Siena.edu/SRI/SNY)

## Siena College Poll:

### **If Budget Is Late, Voters Want Gov. Budget Over State Shutdown**

**Voters Continue to Like, Trust Cuomo Far More than Legislature**  
***Millionaires Tax and LIFO Reform Strongly Supported; Voters Support More \$ for Education, Property Tax Cap & Rent Regulations in Budget***  
***Ethics Can Wait Till After Budget; Only 55% Say Most Legislators Are "Honest"***

**Loudonville, NY.** If the state budget is not passed on time, voters, by a large 67-27 percent margin, would rather see the Legislature pass an emergency appropriation bill from the Governor – even if it contains his proposed budget and cannot be amended by the Legislature – rather than see the Legislature not pass it, shutting down state government, according to a new Siena (College) Research Institute poll of registered voters released today.

Governor Andrew Cuomo continues to receive a very strong favorability rating and a positive job performance rating from voters, although both are down from Siena's February poll. Each house of the Legislature continues to be viewed unfavorably by nearly twice as many voters as view them favorably, while the leaders of the two houses both get overwhelmingly negative ratings for their efforts to enact a new state budget. Nearly three-quarters of voters say they most trust Cuomo on the budget, compared to seven percent for Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver and five percent for Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos.

Voters strongly support including a millionaires tax in the new budget, as well as strongly support including a property tax cap and the extension and expansion of rent regulation legislation in the budget. A small majority of voters support the Governor's proposed cap on pain and suffering awards in malpractice suits. Less than one-quarter of voters wants to see the Governor's proposed school district cuts enacted as is, while half would like to see an even larger restoration than the Legislature has publicly proposed. By a nearly four-to-one margin, voters want to see teacher evaluation replace seniority if teacher layoffs are required.

About one-third of voters say ethics reform should be the top priority but a majority, 61 percent, say it can wait till after the budget. And while 55 percent of voters say most state legislators are "honest," 42 percent say that most are "corrupt." Nearly three-quarters of voters say they are concerned about the safety of New York's nuclear power plants and a majority opposes building new nuclear power plants in the state.

**On-time Budget Important; Voters Tell Legislature if it is Late, “Don’t Shut Down State Government”**

By 90-10 percent, voters say an on-time budget is important, with 58 percent saying it’s very important.

“Voters think an on-time budget is important by a nine-to-one margin. Three days to go and the clock is ticking,” said Siena College pollster Steven Greenberg. “If the budget deadline passes and the Governor sends the Legislature an emergency appropriation bill that not only keeps government running but also includes his entire proposed budget, voters strongly urge the Legislature to pass that budget and not let state government shut down.

“By a 67-27 percent margin, voters say the Legislature should pass the Governor’s budget even though they cannot change it at all. At least 60 percent of every party, region, ideology, and gender urge the Legislature not to shut down state government,” Greenberg said. “And when it comes to the blame game, only 17 percent say the Governor will be most to blame if the budget is late, while the Senate will be responsible for most of the blame, according to 32 percent of voters and the Assembly will be the chief villain according to 30 percent.”

**Voters Continue to View Cuomo Very Favorably, Down from Last Month; Legislature Seen Unfavorably**

Cuomo is viewed favorably by 69 percent of voters and unfavorably by 20 percent, down from 77-16 percent last month. Fifty-one percent of voters say he is doing an excellent/good job as Governor (down from 57 percent last month) and 41 percent say he’s doing a fair/poor job (up from 33 percent).

“While Cuomo has fallen below 70 percent, more than two-thirds of voters still view him favorably, including two-thirds of Republicans and more than half of conservatives,” Greenberg said. “His biggest drop in favorability since February was recorded by voters younger than 35, conservatives, African Americans, and voters earning less than \$50,000. And it was largely among those same groups where his job performance rating fell the most.

“Voters have very similar views of the Assembly and Senate and they’re not pretty. Both houses have nearly two-to-one unfavorable ratings. And both Silver and Skelos have more than three times as many people saying they’re doing a fair or poor job on the state budget as say they are doing an excellent or good job,” Greenberg said.

“Who do voters most trust to do the right thing for New York in crafting a responsible state budget? It’s not even close, with 72 percent saying they trust Cuomo, and Skelos and Silver both getting single digits,” Greenberg said.

“In fact both legislative leaders have less support than ‘none of the above.’

“Cuomo enjoys the trust of the voters and a strong favorability rating despite the fact that voters strongly disagree with him on two of the most publicly discussed and contentious parts of the budget negotiations – the millionaire’s tax and funding for education,” Greenberg said.

### **Support for the Millionaire’s Tax is Stronger than Ever**

“Now that the proposal to continue the personal income tax surcharge on the wealthiest New Yorkers is a true millionaire’s tax, support has continued to grow, with 71 percent agreeing with Assembly Democrats that the surcharge on millionaires should be continued and 27 percent agreeing with Cuomo and Senate Republicans that it should expire,” Greenberg said. “A majority of every demographic group – including Republicans, conservatives and those earning more than \$100,000 a year – supports a higher tax for millionaires.”

### **Capping Pain & Suffering Awards in Malpractice Cases Supported by Majority**

“After hearing the argument of supporters and opponents for capping malpractice pain and suffering awards at \$250,000, a majority of voters, by a relatively close 53-42 percent, support the cap,” Greenberg said.

“Republicans, downstate suburbanites, voters 55 and older, and those earning more than \$100,000 are most supportive, while African American and Latino voters and those younger than 35 oppose the cap.”

### **Voters Want the Legislature to Restore Even More Money to Education than They Have Proposed**

“No spending cut Cuomo has proposed is more unpopular than his education cut. Only 21 percent of voters – with Republicans leading the way at 34 percent – want to see his full cuts enacted. One-quarter of voters want to see the Legislature add back a few hundred million dollars, as each house did in its one-house budget resolutions. And 50 percent of voters want to see the Legislature restore even more money for education,” Greenberg said.

“A majority or plurality of every demographic group says the Legislature should restore more than a few hundred million dollars in aid to school districts, including a majority of Democrats, women, union households, New York City voters, African American and Latino voters, and voters under 55-years-old,” Greenberg said.

### **Teacher Layoffs Should be Based on Performance, Not Seniority, Voters Strongly Say**

“By a nearly four-to-one margin, 78-20 percent, voters want any teacher layoffs to be based on an evaluation of the teachers’ performance in the classroom and not based on seniority,” Greenberg said. “Voters are clear and strong in their belief that LIFO must go despite teachers’ union support and any concern over arbitrary firings. At least 70 percent of every demographic group, with only one exception, says teacher performance is the criteria that should be used for layoffs. The exception is union households, where voters still favor performance over seniority by a commanding 65-34 percent margin.”

### **Voters Strongly Support Including Property Tax Cap & Rent Regulation Legislation in the Budget**

“A property tax cap continues to be wildly popular, with 73 percent of voters saying it should be included in the budget, while 22 percent oppose that,” Greenberg said. “A slightly smaller 63-27 percent majority supports the continuation and expansion of rent regulations being in the budget. The Speaker and Governor have both talked about these issues together. The public agrees. They support both and want them enacted as part of the budget.”

**Ethics is Important but Can Wait Until After Budget; Many Voters Don't Hold Legislators in High Esteem**

“Only 34 percent of voters think that a new ethics reform law is such a priority that it needs to be enacted as quickly as possible. The majority, 61 percent, says that while it's important it can wait until after the budget. At least 57 percent of voters from every region, party and ideology agree that it can wait,” Greenberg said.

“At the same time, only a small majority of voters, 55 percent, believe that ‘most state legislators are honest, working hard for their constituents.’ But more than two in five voters, 42 percent, believe that ‘most legislators are corrupt, it's surprising more haven't been caught.’ Sen. Carl Krueger's indictment is only the latest in a fairly long line of legislative indictments and convictions over the last several years,” Greenberg said. “Is it any wonder that so many voters believe their elected representatives are in it for themselves more than their constituents?”

**NY's Nuclear Power Plants Concern Voters; They Don't Want New Nuclear Plants**

“In light of the tragedy in Japan, 72 percent of voters say they are concerned – 40 percent very concerned – about the safety of New York's nuclear power plants in Westchester, Oswego and Wayne Counties. Only 26 percent say they are not concerned about nuclear power plant safety. Democrats and downstaters are a little more concerned than are upstaters, Republicans and independents,” Greenberg said.

“When it comes to building new nuclear power plants in New York to provide a domestic and economical source of electricity, voters say no by a 57-38 percent margin. A small majority of Republicans, conservatives and men support new plants, however, Democrats, women, liberals, moderates and downstaters are strongly opposed. Independent voters and upstaters are virtually evenly divided,” Greenberg said.

**Upstate Voters Move Back to Being Decidedly Negative on the Direction of the State**

“Last month, when upstate voters were nearly evenly divided on the direction of the state, overall statewide voters were more optimistic than pessimistic on New York's direction for the first time in more than three years. Now, with upstate voters more pessimistic again, 43 percent of statewide voters think New York is headed on the right track, compared to 45 percent who say the state is headed in the wrong direction. In addition to upstaters, young voters and Democrats are now decidedly less optimistic than they were in February,” Greenberg said.

###

This SRI survey was conducted March 20-23, 2011 by telephone calls to 802 New York State registered voters. It has a margin of error of  $\pm 3.5$  percentage points. Data was statistically adjusted by age, party, gender, and region to ensure representativeness. Sampling was conducted via random digit dialing to landline and cell phones weighted to reflect known population patterns. SRI, an independent, non-partisan research institute, subscribes to the American Association of Public Opinion Research Code of Professional Ethics and Practices. For more information, please call Steven Greenberg at 518-469-9858. Survey cross-tabulations and frequencies can be found at: [www.Siena.edu/SRI/SNY](http://www.Siena.edu/SRI/SNY).



# SIENA RESEARCH INSTITUTE

SIENA COLLEGE, LOUDONVILLE, NY

[www.siena.edu/sri](http://www.siena.edu/sri)

## Siena College Poll Trends – March 2011

Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion about Andrew Cuomo?

DATE	FAVORABLE	UNFAVORABLE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
March 2011	69	20	11
February 2011	77	16	7
January 2011	70	17	13
December 2010	66	25	8
November 2010	64	26	9
October 31, 2010*	57	38	5
October 20, 2010*	62	34	3
October 5, 2010*	56	37	7
September 2010	60	31	9
August 2010	61	27	13
July 2010	62	25	13
June 2010	59	26	15
May 2010	67	21	12
April 2010	66	18	15
March 22, 2010	63	22	15
March 8, 2010	63	25	12
February 2010	66	21	13
January 2010	67	21	12
<b>HIGHEST EVER</b>	<b>77 (2/11)</b>	<b>42 (10/06)</b>	<b>24 (1/06, 2/06, 9/07)</b>
<b>LOWEST EVER</b>	<b>44 (8/06, 10/06)</b>	<b>14 (8/09)</b>	<b>3 (10/20/10)</b>

How would you rate the job that Andrew Cuomo is doing as Governor? Would you rate it excellent, good, fair, or poor?

DATE	EXCELLENT	GOOD	FAIR	POOR	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
March 2011	8	43	34	7	8
February 2011	10	47	29	4	10
January 2011	10	34	24	4	28
<b>HIGHEST EVER</b>	<b>10 (2/11, 1/11)</b>	<b>47 (2/11)</b>	<b>34 (3/11)</b>	<b>7 (3/11)</b>	<b>28 (1/11)</b>
<b>LOWEST EVER</b>	<b>8 (3/11)</b>	<b>34 (1/11)</b>	<b>24 (1/11)</b>	<b>4 (2/11, 1/11)</b>	<b>8 (3/11)</b>

Based on what you've seen of him as Governor so far, would you describe Andrew Cuomo as a liberal, a moderate or a conservative?

DATE	LIBERAL	MODERATE	CONSERVATIVE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
March 2011	20	60	11	9
February 2011	21	57	15	7
January 2011	25	55	10	10
<b>HIGHEST EVER</b>	<b>25 (1/11)</b>	<b>60 (3/11)</b>	<b>15 (2/11)</b>	<b>10 (1/11)</b>
<b>LOWEST EVER</b>	<b>21 (2/11)</b>	<b>55 (1/11)</b>	<b>10 (1/11)</b>	<b>7 (2/11)</b>

Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion about the New York State Assembly?

DATE	FAVORABLE	UNFAVORABLE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
March 2011	30	56	14
January 2011	29	57	14
July 2010	25	61	13
January 2010	29	59	12
<b>HIGHEST EVER</b>	<b>40 (2/09)</b>	<b>61 (7/10)</b>	<b>18 (2/09)</b>
<b>LOWEST EVER</b>	<b>25 (7/10)</b>	<b>42 (2/09)</b>	<b>12 (1/10)</b>

# Siena College Poll Trends – March 2011

Page 2

Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion about the New York State Senate?

DATE	FAVORABLE	UNFAVORABLE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
March 2011	32	60	8
January 2011	33	56	11
July 2010	25	66	8
January 2010	30	61	9
<b>HIGHEST EVER</b>	<b>43 (2/09)</b>	<b>74 (7/09)</b>	<b>13 (2/09)</b>
<b>LOWEST EVER</b>	<b>20 (7/09)</b>	<b>43 (2/09)</b>	<b>6 (7/09)</b>

Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion about Barack Obama?

DATE	FAVORABLE	UNFAVORABLE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
March 2011	60	37	3
February 2011	62	35	3
January 2011	61	36	3
December 2010	55	42	3
November 2010	58	37	5
October 31, 2010*	51	46	3
October 20, 2010*	56	41	3
September 2010	60	36	4
July 2010	60	37	3
April 2010	59	35	6
February 2010	61	35	4
January 2010	64	32	4
<b>HIGHEST EVER</b>	<b>81 (1/09)</b>	<b>46 (10/31/10)</b>	<b>40 (11/06)</b>
<b>LOWEST EVER</b>	<b>48 (11/06)</b>	<b>10 (1/09)</b>	<b>3 (3/11, etc.)</b>

I know it's a long way off, but if Barack Obama runs for re-election as President in 2012, would you vote to re-elect him or would you prefer someone else?

DATE	RE-ELECT	PREFER SOMEONE ELSE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
March 2011	49	43	8
February 2011	49	43	8
January 2011	50	40	10
December 2010	43	47	10
<b>HIGHEST EVER</b>	<b>50 (1/11)</b>	<b>47 (12/10)</b>	<b>10 (1/11, 12/10)</b>
<b>LOWEST EVER</b>	<b>43 (12/10)</b>	<b>40 (1/11)</b>	<b>8 (3/11, 2/11)</b>

Is the United States on the right track, or is it headed in the wrong direction?

DATE	RIGHT TRACK	WRONG DIRECTION	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
March 2011	34	57	9
February 2011	44	47	9
January 2011	36	54	10
December 2010	30	59	11
November 2010	39	51	10
July 2010	41	52	8
April 2010	45	47	9
March 22, 2010	36	54	11
<b>HIGHEST EVER</b>	<b>62 (5/09)</b>	<b>69 (10/08)</b>	<b>17 (9/08)</b>
<b>LOWEST EVER</b>	<b>19 (10/08)</b>	<b>24 (12/09)</b>	<b>7 (5/09)</b>

# Siena College Poll Trends – March 2011

Page 3

How would you describe the fiscal condition of New York State right now? Would you describe it as excellent, good, fair, or poor?

DATE	EXCELLENT	GOOD	FAIR	POOR	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
March 2011	1	7	30	62	1
February 2011	0	7	26	66	1
November 2010	0	7	27	65	1
March 22, 2010	1	6	25	67	1
January 2010	1	9	27	62	1
<b>HIGHEST EVER</b>	<b>1 (many)</b>	<b>14 (9/08)</b>	<b>43 (10/08)</b>	<b>67 (3/22/10)</b>	<b>4 (9/08)</b>
<b>LOWEST EVER</b>	<b>0 (many)</b>	<b>6 (3/22/10, etc.)</b>	<b>25 (3/22/10)</b>	<b>41 (9/08)</b>	<b>0 (5/09, 2/09)</b>

Is New York State on the right track, or is it headed in the wrong direction?

DATE	RIGHT TRACK	WRONG DIRECTION	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
March 2011	43	45	12
February 2011	47	39	14
January 2011	36	50	14
December 2010	29	60	11
November 2010	32	54	15
October 31, 2010*	14	76	10
October 20, 2010*	14	75	12
October 5, 2010*	16	72	11
September 2010	21	68	11
August 2010	21	67	12
July 2010	20	71	9
June 2010	18	65	17
May 2010	16	72	12
April 2010	20	68	11
March 22, 2010	18	70	12
February 2010	25	63	12
January 2010	27	61	12
<b>HIGHEST EVER</b>	<b>52 (11/06)</b>	<b>76 (10/31/10)</b>	<b>30 (1/07)</b>
<b>LOWEST EVER</b>	<b>14 (10/31 &amp; 20/10)</b>	<b>26 (1/07)</b>	<b>9 (7/10)</b>

**Poll Trend Notes:** \* All surveys are of registered voters except for the polls of October 2010, September and October 2008, and September and October 2006, which are polls of likely voters.

Trends reflect questions asked at least twice since the first Siena College Poll in February 2005.

Results listed here include all times questions have been asked since January 2010.

“Highest Ever” and “Lowest Ever” is provided at the bottom of each question.