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For Immediate Release:

Monday, February 14, 2011

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Siena College Poll:

Cuomo Ratings at All-time High & 72% Support His Budget
Voters Oppose Education Cuts; Divided on Whether Students will Suffer
Strong Support for Continuing Income Tax Surcharge on Wealthy
Plurality of Voters, 47%, Say State is on 'Right Track' for 1st Time Since 2007

Loudonville, NY. Governor Andrew Cuomo is viewed favorably by more than three-quarters of New York voters and overall nearly three-quarters support his proposed budget, according to a new Siena (College) Research Institute poll of registered voters released today. While several specific proposals in the Executive Budget have strong to overwhelming support, reducing spending for SUNY and CUNY is opposed by 56 percent of voters, and reducing state aid to school districts by \$1.5 billion is opposed by 64 percent.

Nearly two-thirds of voters think the personal income tax surcharge on those earning more than \$200,000 per year should be continued. When asked, as many voters would prefer continuing the surcharge be the first step in closing the state's budget gap as would prefer cuts in Medicaid, the state workforce and education combined. And in a dramatic turnaround, for the first time since 2007, more voters now believe the state is headed on the right track than those who believe the state is headed in the wrong direction.

Cuomo Viewed More Favorably Than Ever, Even as Voters Digest His Proposed Budget

"The honeymoon continues. Despite what Governor Cuomo described as a painful budget – or maybe because of it – 77 percent of voters say they have a favorable view of Cuomo, compared to only 16 percent who view him unfavorably," said Siena College pollster Steven Greenberg. "Even 70 percent of Republicans and 68 percent of conservatives have a favorable view of the Democratic governor. It certainly seems that his traveling the state to talk to voters about his budget has helped his favorability rating, which is up from 70-17 percent last month."

A majority of voters, 57 percent, say he's doing an excellent or good job as governor, compared to 33 percent who say he's doing a fair or poor job, up from last month's 44-28 percent job performance rating.

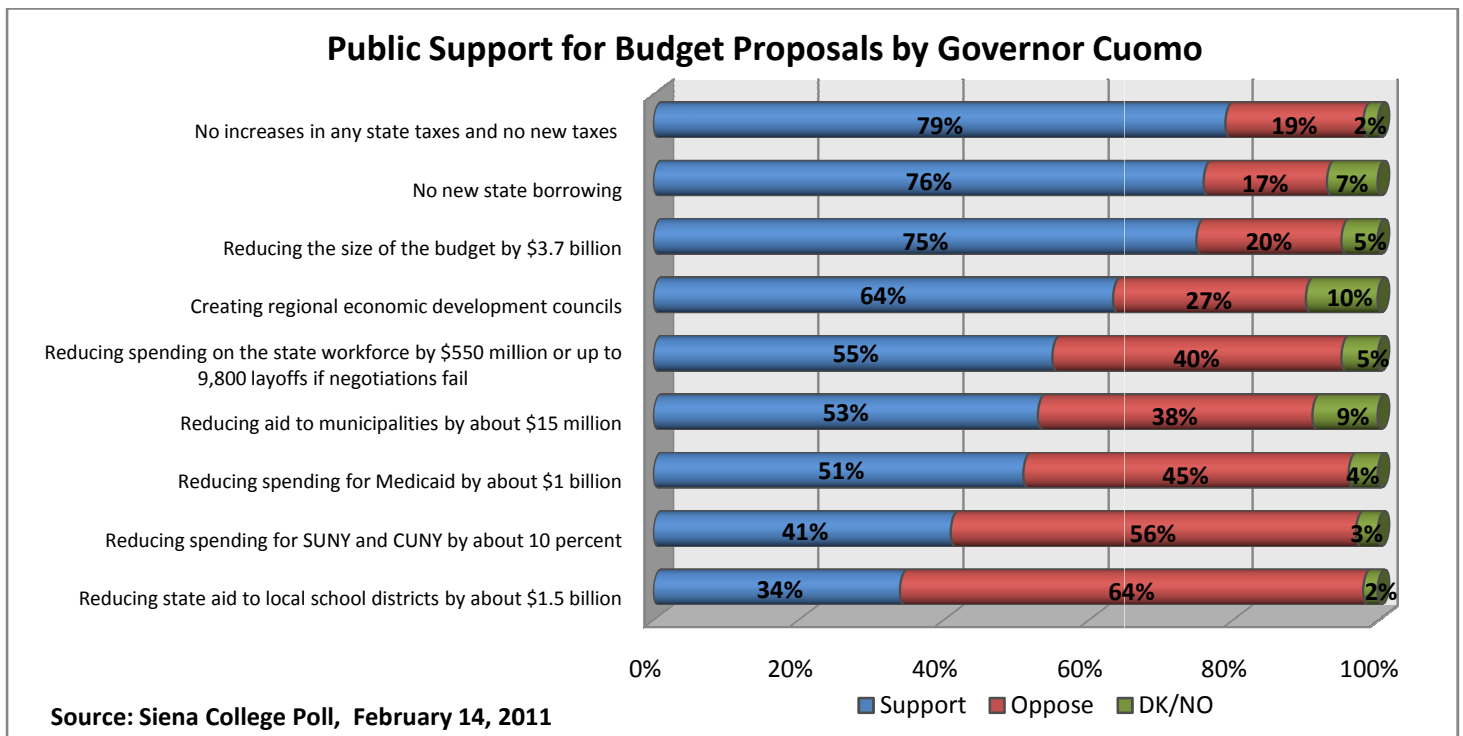
"After six weeks in office, New Yorkers like the man, and the job that he's doing as Governor. Most voters continue to view Cuomo as an ideological moderate, and by a four-to-one margin, they continue to trust the Governor more than the Legislature to do the right thing for New York," Greenberg said.

Nearly Half of Voters Give Cuomo Budget an ‘A’ or ‘B’ Grade & 72 Percent Say They Support His Budget

“When asked to grade the Governor’s proposed budget, eight percent gave it an ‘A’ and 39 percent gave it a ‘B,’ while 27 percent said it earned a ‘C,’ and six percent a ‘D.’ Only three percent gave the budget a failing grade,” Greenberg said. “Then, after going through a series of specific questions about the Governor’s budget proposals, voters were asked whether they support or oppose the Cuomo budget, and 72 percent said they support it – 21 percent strongly – while 25 percent oppose it – eight percent strongly.

“At least two-thirds of voters from every party and region currently say they at least somewhat support Cuomo’s budget, with Republicans more supportive than Democrats and upstaters more supportive than New York City voters,” Greenberg said.

Voters Support Seven Cuomo Budget Proposals, Four Strongly; Oppose Ed. & Higher Ed. Cuts



“On the \$1.5 billion cut to local school districts, voters give a resounding ‘no.’ And while voters from every region and demographic group oppose that cut, Democrats are much more opposed than Republicans and independents, and younger voters are much more opposed than are older voters,” Greenberg said.

“Reducing Medicaid spending produced the closest divide among voters with 51 percent of voters supporting the cut – including majorities of Republicans and independents, upstate voters and those with household incomes of more than \$50,000 – and 45 percent opposing it – including majorities of Democrats, liberals, African American voters and those with household incomes below \$50,000,” Greenberg said.

Education is Voters' Least Favorite Cut but They Are Divided on Whether It Will Hurt Education Quality

Voters were given four choices and asked which would be their first step to help close the budget deficit. Nearly half, 49 percent, said retaining the income tax surcharge on New Yorkers earning more than \$200,000; 22 percent said enacting changes to the Medicaid program to save \$3 billion; 20 percent said freezing state worker wages and potentially reducing the state work force by nearly 10,000; and, five percent said reducing school aid by \$1.5 billion. When asked which they would least like to see enacted, 45 percent said the school aid cut.

“Of four large-dollar proposals to help close the state’s budget deficit, cutting aid to school districts is clearly the voters’ least favorite,” Greenberg said. “On the other hand, voters are nearly evenly divided when asked to decide whether the Governor’s proposal will hurt education or not. With the proposed cut ‘the quality of students’ education will be seriously hurt,’ 49 percent of voters say. However, 47 percent say that there’s ‘plenty of waste and duplication’ in school districts that can ‘absorb the cuts and students will not suffer.’ A majority of Democrats, African Americans, voters from New York City and voters under 35-years-old think the cuts will hurt education, while a majority of Republicans and voters 55-years-old and older think students will not suffer.

“Although voters were closely divided on whether or not they support the Governor’s proposed cut in Medicaid, an overwhelming 70 percent of voters say ‘we can tighten our belt and find savings without people suffering.’ Only 27 percent said that the Medicaid cost cutting proposals ‘would have disastrous health care consequences.’ And while 36 percent of voters want the Legislature to reject both the Governor’s health care and education cuts even if it means raising taxes, 31 percent want the Governor’s cuts in both enacted and another 28 percent want the cuts enacted in one area and rejected in the other,” Greenberg said.

Voters Overwhelmingly Favor Extending the Income Tax Surcharge on NYers Earning At Least \$200,000

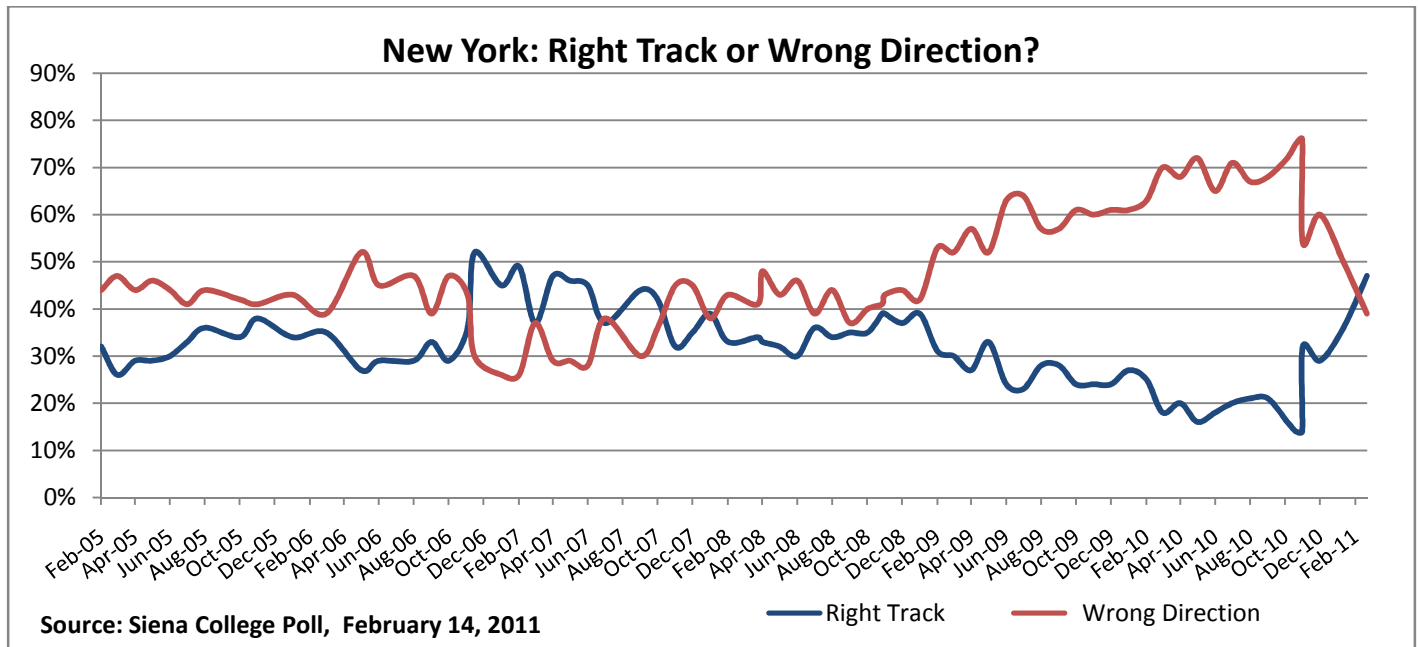
“By a nearly two-to-one margin – 65-33 percent – voters want the tax rate increase on those earning at least \$200,000 a year continued, rather than see the surcharge expire at the end of this year as it is scheduled to do,” Greenberg said. “While 71 percent of Democrats and 63 percent of independents want to see the tax continued, so do 53 percent of Republicans and 50 percent of conservatives.

“And it’s not just low earners who want the tax extended on ‘the other guy.’ While 64 percent of voters with household incomes of less than \$50,000 want the tax continued, a similar 61 percent of voters with household incomes of more than \$100,000 want the tax extended as well,” Greenberg said.

“Additionally, 49 percent of voters want the income tax on wealthier New Yorkers continued as a first step in closing the deficit, compared to the 47 percent combined who chose either Medicaid cuts, state workforce savings or education cuts as their preferred first step,” Greenberg said.

After More than Three Years, More Voters Now Say State is Headed on the Right Track

“For the first time since October 2007, more voters are optimistic than pessimistic about the direction of New York, with 47 percent saying the state is on the right track and 39 percent saying the state is headed in the wrong direction. Just two months ago, only 27 percent said the state was on the right track and 60 percent said it was headed in the wrong direction,” Greenberg said. “By a narrow 44-42 percent margin, even upstate voters say the state is headed on the right track, up from 28-59 percent last month.”



Voters Have Mixed – But Slightly Favorable – View of Three Big Unions & Business Council

“Three unions opposed to cuts in the Governor’s budget and large historic spenders on ads attacking previous budgets all have slightly more voters viewing them favorably than unfavorably,” Greenberg said. “CSEA has a 38-35 percent favorability rating, NYSUT’s is 43-39 percent and 1199/SEIU’s is 37-31 percent. On the other side of the budget fight, the Business Council of New York State has a similar 31-25 percent favorability rating.”

Gillibrand Hits Highest Favorability Rating & Has Strong ‘Re-elect’ Number

“Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, after her first statewide win, has a 57-18 percent favorability rating, up from 50-24 percent in November, and her highest rating ever,” Greenberg said. “And a year and a half away from facing voters again, this time for a full six-year term, 52 percent of voters, including a plurality of Republicans, say they are prepared to re-elect her, while 29 percent would prefer ‘someone else.’ and 19 percent are undecided.”

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This SRI survey was conducted February 7-10, 2011 by telephone calls to 801 New York State registered voters. It has a margin of error of ± 3.5 percentage points. Data was statistically adjusted by age, party, gender, and region to ensure representativeness. Sampling was conducted via random digit dialing 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.



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Siena College Poll Trends – February 2011

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

DATE	FAVORABLE	UNFAVORABLE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
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
HIGHEST EVER	77 (2/11)	42 (10/06)	24 (1/06, 2/06, 9/07)
LOWEST EVER	44 (8/06, 10/06)	14 (8/09)	3 (10/20/10)

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
February 2011	10	47	29	4	10
January 2011	10	34	24	4	28
HIGHEST EVER	10 (2/11, 1/11)	47 (2/11)	29 (2/11)	4 (2/11, 1/11)	28 (1/11)
LOWEST EVER	10 (2/11, 1/11)	34 (1/11)	24 (1/11)	4 (2/11, 1/11)	10 (2/11)

Who do you trust more to do the right thing for New York – Governor Cuomo or the State Legislature? (Choices were rotated)

DATE	CUOMO	LEGISLATURE	(NEITHER)	(BOTH)	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
February 2011	70	17	8	1	4
January 2011	68	17	6	2	7
HIGHEST EVER	70 (2/11)	17 (2/11, 1/11)	8 (2/11)	2 (1/11)	7 (1/11)
LOWEST EVER	68 (1/11)	17 (2/11, 1/11)	6 (1/11)	1 (2/11)	4 (2/11)

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
February 2011	21	57	15	7
January 2011	25	55	10	10
HIGHEST EVER	25 (1/11)	57 (2/11)	15 (2/11)	10 (1/11)
LOWEST EVER	21 (2/11)	55 (1/11)	10 (1/11)	7 (2/11)

One year from today, which of the following two statements about New York State government do you think you will most likely be able to make: Albany is considerably less dysfunctional; Governor Cuomo has succeeded in getting Republicans and Democrats to work together for the benefit of New Yorkers, OR Albany is still way too dysfunctional; while his intentions were good, Governor Cuomo failed in getting Democrats and Republicans to cooperate? (Choices were rotated)

DATE	ALBANY IS LESS DYSFUNCTIONAL	ALBANY IS STILL TOO DYSFUNCTIONAL	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
February 2011	46	46	8
January 2011	49	46	5
HIGHEST EVER	49 (1/11)	46 (2/11, 1/11)	8 (2/11)
LOWEST EVER	46 (2/11)	46 (2/11, 1/11)	5 (1/11)

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Thinking about the state's personal income tax. Two years ago, the tax rate for those earning more than \$200,000 a year was increased from about seven percent to about nine percent. That increase is scheduled to expire at the end of 2011. Do you think that the tax rate on those earning more than \$200,000 a year should expire, as Governor Cuomo argues, OR do you think that the tax rate increase on those earning more than \$200,000 a year should be continued, as many legislators argue? (Choices were rotated)

DATE	LET TAX INCREASE EXPIRE	CONTINUE TAX INCREASE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
February 2011	33	65	2
January 2011	42	55	3
HIGHEST EVER	42 (1/11)	65 (2/11)	3 (1/11)
LOWEST EVER	33 (2/11)	55 (1/11)	2 (2/11)

Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion about Sheldon Silver?

DATE	FAVORABLE	UNFAVORABLE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
February 2011	19	41	39
December 2010	22	42	36
July 2010	20	40	41
HIGHEST EVER	28 (7/05)	42 (12/10)	50 (4/05)
LOWEST EVER	19 (2/11, 4/05)	30 (4/05)	36 (12/10, 6/09)

Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion about Dean Skelos?

DATE	FAVORABLE	UNFAVORABLE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
February 2011	11	17	71
December 2010	9	19	71
HIGHEST EVER	15 (6/09)	23 (6/09)	82 (11/08)
LOWEST EVER	9 (12/10)	8 (7/08)	62 (6/09)

Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion about Kirsten Gillibrand?

DATE	FAVORABLE	UNFAVORABLE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
February 2011	57	18	25
November 2010	50	24	26
October 31, 2010*	52	34	14
October 20, 2010*	51	31	18
September 2010	43	26	30
August 2010	40	29	31
July 2010	34	29	37
June 2010	36	27	36
May 2010	42	24	34
April 2010	34	25	41
March 22, 2010	32	29	39
February 2010	34	28	38
January 2010	30	32	38
HIGHEST EVER	57 (2/11)	34 (10/31/10)	56 (1/09)
LOWEST EVER	26 (3/09)	14 (1/09)	14 (10/31/10)

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

DATE	FAVORABLE	UNFAVORABLE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
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
HIGHEST EVER	81 (1/09)	46 (10/31/10)	40 (11/06)
LOWEST EVER	48 (11/06)	10 (1/09)	3 (2/11, etc.)

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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
February 2011	49	43	8
January 2011	50	40	10
December 2010	43	47	10
HIGHEST EVER	50 (1/11)	47 (12/10)	10 (1/11, 12/10)
LOWEST EVER	43 (12/10)	40 (1/11)	8 (2/11)

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
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
HIGHEST EVER	62 (5/09)	69 (10/08)	17 (9/08)
LOWEST EVER	19 (10/08)	24 (12/09)	7 (5/09)

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
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
HIGHEST EVER	1 (many)	14 (9/08)	43 (10/08)	67 (3/22/10)	4 (9/08)
LOWEST EVER	0 (many)	6 (3/22/10, etc.)	25 (3/22/10)	41 (9/08)	0 (5/09, 2/09)

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
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
HIGHEST EVER	52 (11/06)	76 (10/31/10)	30 (1/07)
LOWEST EVER	14 (10/31 & 20/10)	26 (1/07)	9 (7/10)

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.