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Siena College Poll:

50% Say New Teacher Evaluations Will Improve Public Ed. Quality; By 2-to-1 Voters Say New Evaluation System is Fair to Teachers

*Cuomo's Favorability & Job Performance Ratings Edge Down Slightly
More Voters Say Cuomo Improved Ethics, State's Fiscal Condition; More
Voters Think He's Made Education Quality Worse Rather than Better
Support for Legalizing Casinos Slips; New Yorkers Now Evenly Divided*

Loudonville, NY. Half of New Yorkers believe the recent agreement between the State Education Department and the teachers' unions to implement a new teacher evaluation system in every school district in New York will improve the quality of education, compared to 38 percent who say it will have no effect and three percent who volunteered that it will worsen education quality, according to a new Siena College Research Institute poll of registered voters released today. By a 57-30 percent majority voters believe that the agreement is fair to teachers.

Governor Andrew Cuomo continues to have very strong favorability and job performance ratings, although both are down slightly this month. In a series of seven questions about specific aspects of Cuomo's job performance, he scores best with voters on improving the ethical standards of Albany and the fiscal condition of the state. On education, 22 percent of voters say his performance has improved the quality of education, while 27 percent say he had made it more of a problem, and a plurality, 45 percent, says his work on education has had no effect.

Support for a constitutional amendment to allow for non-Indian casinos in New York has slipped and voters are now evenly divided with 48 percent supporting and 49 percent opposing, down from 52-44 percent support last month. Support remains strong for both creating a new pension tier and building a new Queens convention center.

"A bare majority of voters thinks the new teacher evaluation system will improve the quality of education in New York, however, a sizable minority believes the new system will have no effect on the quality of education," said Siena pollster Steven Greenberg. "Clearly voters do not see the issue of teacher evaluations as being the 'be all and end all' to improving the quality of education for New York's public school students. Democrats and independents are more likely to think the evaluation system will improve education than are Republicans, while downstate suburban voters are more likely to think so than upstaters and New York City voters."

“New Yorkers are in much more agreement that the new evaluation system will be fair to teachers. In fact, voters believe that to be true by a nearly two-to-one majority,” Greenberg said. “A majority of voters from every party and region think the new system will treat teachers fairly, as do even a majority of voters from union households, 52-39 percent. Interestingly, while the Governor was publicly seen as a leader in the fight for the new evaluation system, education is one key issue area where voters are not giving the Governor high performance grades.”

Gov’s Favorability & Job Performance Ratings Down a Little; Remain Incredibly High

Cuomo is viewed favorably by 69 percent of voters and unfavorably by 25 percent (down from 74-18 percent last month). Fifty-seven percent give him a positive job performance rating compared to 42 percent negative (down from last month’s 61-37 percent).

“While Andrew Cuomo’s numbers are down a little from last month, they remain impressively high as he enters his 15th month as Governor,” Greenberg said. “Cuomo continues to have favorability and job performance ratings that would be the envy of any politician.

“He continues to be viewed favorably by three-quarters of Democrats and more than two-thirds of independents, however, his favorability rating fell among Republicans over the last month from 71-23 percent to 57-33 percent. At least two-thirds of voters in every region of the state view him favorably,” Greenberg said.

Voters Give Cuomo Best Grades on Ethics & State’s Fiscal Condition; Worst Grade on Education Quality

Governor Cuomo’s Job Performance on Specific Issues	Governor’s efforts have improved it	Governor’s efforts have made it more of a problem	Governor’s efforts have had no effect	Don’t Know/No Opinion
The ethical standards of state government in Albany	41%	14%	39%	6%
The fiscal condition of the state of New York	41%	15%	40%	4%
The pride residents have in being a New Yorker	33%	13%	49%	4%
The degree to which NY is a place businesses can succeed	33%	17%	45%	5%
The everyday economic conditions that affect all New Yorkers	30%	20%	47%	3%
The quality of our infrastructure, such as roads and bridges	26%	15%	55%	4%
The quality of public education across the state	22%	27%	45%	6%

Source: Siena College Poll, March 5, 2012

“On virtually every issue Siena asked about – from ethics and infrastructure to various economic issues to having pride as a New Yorker – far more voters think the Governor’s efforts have improved that issue in his year plus in office compared to those who say his efforts have made the issue more of a problem,” Greenberg said. “The lone exception is the quality of public education in New York. While a plurality of voters say Cuomo’s efforts have had no effect on education quality, more voters – 27 percent – say his efforts have made education quality a bigger problem than the 22 percent who say his efforts have improved education quality in the state.

“When the seven questions are looked at together and yield a progress report, 48 percent of voters give the Governor good to great grades, 33 percent say average, and only 19 percent grade him poorly,” Greenberg said.

**Support for Casino Amendment Erodes, with Voters Now Evenly Divided;
Pension Reform & New Convention Center Still Strongly Supported**

“A constitutional amendment to legalize non-Indian casinos in New York divides voters virtually down the middle. However, this is not an issue that divides voters by region, party or ideology. In fact, voters of every region, party and ideology are nearly evenly divided,” Greenberg said. “Gender and age are more predictive of voters’ positions, with men more supportive than women and young voters more supportive than older voters.

“Support remains strong – 66-29 percent – for creating a new pension system to save government employers money and ask future government employees to contribute more toward their retirement. Pension reform has the strong support of voters from every party and region, and even has majority support among voters from union households,” Greenberg said. “The Governor’s proposed new Queens convention center also continues to enjoy two-to-one support, including at least 60 percent of voters from every region and party.”

Majority Still Optimistic About Direction of the State; Economic Condition Seen as Better, Not Good

“The barometer of New Yorkers’ optimism continues to be positive, as 50 percent say the state is on the right track and 40 percent say New York is headed in the wrong direction, down slightly from 52-36 percent last month,” Greenberg said. “Downstaters remain mildly optimistic about the direction of the state, while upstaters remain virtually evenly divided. This marks three consecutive months of optimism in the state’s direction.

“While only 16 percent of voters describe the state’s fiscal condition as excellent or good, that’s the largest percentage since Siena began asking the question in the summer of 2008. Similarly, the 37 percent who describe the state’s fiscal condition as poor is the smallest it has been in the last three and a half years,” Greenberg said.

Most Don’t Know the Comptroller & Attorney General and Both Have Negative Job Performance Ratings

“Both Comptroller Tom DiNapoli and Attorney General Eric Schneiderman remain a mystery to more than half the voters. DiNapoli has 25-23 percent favorability rating with 52 percent having no opinion, and Schneiderman has a 21-23 percent favorability rating with 55 percent having no opinion,” Greenberg said. “However, when asked how Schneiderman and DiNapoli are doing in their jobs, voters are far more negative. Schneiderman has a negative 30-43 percent job performance rating, and DiNapoli’s has a negative 26-45 percent rating.”

“When it comes to the two houses of the Legislature, the Senate is viewed more favorably than the Assembly. The Senate has a 42-46 percent favorability rating, up from 39-49 percent in January, while the Assembly has a 37-49 percent favorability rating, down from 39-46 percent in January,” Greenberg said

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This Siena College Poll was conducted February 26-29, 2012 by telephone calls to 808 New York State registered voters. It has a margin of error of ± 3.4 percentage points. Data was statistically adjusted by age, party and gender to ensure representativeness. Sampling was conducted via random digit dialing to landline and cell phones weighted to reflect known population patterns. The Siena College Research Institute, directed by Donald Levy, Ph.D., conducts political, economic, social and cultural research primarily in New York State. 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, call Steve Greenberg (518) 469-9858. For survey cross-tabs and frequencies: www.Siena.edu/SRI/SNY.



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Siena College Poll Trends – March 2012

Q. 3 Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion about Andrew Cuomo?

DATE	FAVORABLE	UNFAVORABLE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
March 2012	69	25	6
February 2012	74	18	8
January 2012	73	20	7
November 2011	72	22	6
October 2011	71	22	7
September 2011	72	18	10
August 2011	69	22	8
July 2011	71	21	8
June 2011	68	21	12
May 2011	71	20	9
April 2011	73	18	8
March 2011	69	20	11
February 2011	77	16	7
January 2011	70	17	13
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)

Q. 15 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 2012	14	43	33	9	1
February 2012	14	47	31	6	2
January 2012	17	45	29	8	2
November 2011	12	44	33	9	2
October 2011	11	47	32	9	2
September 2011	12	43	36	7	2
August 2011	12	46	31	9	2
July 2011	15	43	32	8	1
June 2011	11	44	32	9	5
May 2011	9	43	36	9	3
April 2011	11	43	34	7	4
March 2011	8	43	34	7	8
February 2011	10	47	29	4	10
January 2011	10	34	24	4	28
HIGHEST EVER	17 (1/12)	47 (1/12, etc.)	36 (9/11, 5/11)	9 (3/12, etc.)	28 (1/11)
LOWEST EVER	8 (3/11)	34 (1/11)	24 (1/11)	4 (2/11, 1/11)	1 (3/12, 7/11)

Q. 11 Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion about the New York State Assembly?

DATE	FAVORABLE	UNFAVORABLE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
March 2012	37	49	14
January 2012	39	46	15
July 2011	38	47	15
June 2011	26	56	18
May 2011	32	54	14
March 2011	30	56	14
January 2011	29	57	14
HIGHEST EVER	40 (2/09)	61 (7/10)	18 (6/11, 2/09)
LOWEST EVER	25 (7/10)	42 (2/09)	12 (1/10)

Siena College Poll Trends – March 2012

Q. 12 Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion about the New York State Senate?

DATE	FAVORABLE	UNFAVORABLE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
March 2012	42	46	12
January 2012	39	49	13
July 2011	41	49	10
June 2011	30	56	14
May 2011	33	56	12
March 2011	32	60	8
January 2011	33	56	11
HIGHEST EVER	43 (2/09)	74 (7/09)	14 (6/11)
LOWEST EVER	20 (7/09)	43 (2/09)	6 (7/09)

Q. 13 Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion about Thomas DiNapoli?

DATE	FAVORABLE	UNFAVORABLE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
March 2012	25	23	52
February 2012	24	18	58
May 2011	21	25	54
January 2011	28	21	51
HIGHEST EVER	30 (11/10, 10/20/10)	36 (10/31/10)	80 (6/07)
LOWEST EVER	7 (6/07, 5/07)	10 (12/09, 11/08)	37 (10/31/10)

Q. 18 How would you rate the job that Tom DiNapoli is doing as State Comptroller – excellent, good, fair, or poor?

DATE	EXCELLENT	GOOD	FAIR	POOR	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
March 2012	5	21	33	12	29
HIGHEST EVER	5 (3/12)	22 (4/08)	33 (3/12)	12 (3/12)	59 (3/07)
LOWEST EVER	1 (3/07)	12 (3/07)	24 (1/08)	3 (3/07)	29 (3/12)

Q. 14 Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion about Eric Schneiderman?

DATE	FAVORABLE	UNFAVORABLE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
March 2012	21	23	55
February 2012	21	16	63
May 2011	17	18	65
January 2011	26	14	60
HIGHEST EVER	29 (10/31/10)	27 (10/31/10)	86 (11/09)
LOWEST EVER	8 (11/09)	6 (5/10, 11/09)	44 (10/31/10)

Q. 30 Do you support or oppose passing an amendment to the state constitution to allow non-Indian, Las Vegas style casinos to be built in New York?

DATE	SUPPORT	OPPOSE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
March 2012	48	49	3
February 2012	52	44	4
January 2012	53	42	5
HIGHEST EVER	53 (1/12)	49 (3/12)	5 (1/12)
LOWEST EVER	48 (3/12)	42 (1/12)	3 (3/12)

Q. 31 Do you support or oppose building a new convention center – which would be the nation's largest convention center – adjacent to the Aqueduct racetrack and racino near JFK Airport, completely paid for by the private company that runs the Aqueduct racino?

DATE	SUPPORT	OPPOSE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
March 2012	64	32	4
February 2012	61	33	6
HIGHEST EVER	64 (3/12)	33 (2/12)	6 (2/12)
LOWEST EVER	61 (2/12)	32 (3/12)	4 (3/12)

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Q. 32 Do you support or oppose creating a new pension system for future state and local government employees that will save money for government employers going forward and have employees make a larger contribution toward their retirement plan?

DATE	SUPPORT	OPPOSE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
March 2012	66	29	5
February 2012	69	28	4
HIGHEST EVER	69 (2/12)	29 (3/12)	5 (3/12)
LOWEST EVER	66 (3/12)	28 (2/12)	4 (2/12)

Q. 35 The State Legislature recently made public its proposed new legislative district lines that are required as a result of the 2010 census. Based on what you know, do you believe the Governor should approve those new district lines drawn by the Legislature, or do you think he should veto the lines which could move the issue into the courts?

DATE	APPROVE	VETO	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
March 2012	29	40	31
February 2012	26	44	31
HIGHEST EVER	29 (3/12)	44 (2/12)	31 (3/12, 2/12)
LOWEST EVER	26 (2/12)	40 (3/12)	31 (3/12, 2/12)

Q. 22 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 2012	1	15	46	37	1
October 2011	0	11	38	50	1
September 2011	1	11	36	50	1
August 2011	1	11	39	48	1
July 2011	1	8	40	51	1
May 2011	0	9	33	57	1
April 2011	1	8	32	58	0
March 2011	1	7	30	62	1
February 2011	0	7	26	66	1
HIGHEST EVER	1 (many)	15 (3/12)	46 (3/12)	67 (3/22/10)	4 (9/08)
LOWEST EVER	0 (many)	6 (3/22/10, etc.)	25 (3/22/10)	37 (3/12)	0 (4/11, etc.)

Q. 1 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 2012	50	40	10
February 2012	52	36	12
January 2012	51	38	11
November 2011	42	46	12
October 2011	40	48	12
September 2011	45	44	10
August 2011	44	47	10
July 2011	48	40	12
June 2011	38	47	15
May 2011	40	49	11
April 2011	46	41	13
March 2011	43	45	12
February 2011	47	39	14
January 2011	36	50	14
HIGHEST EVER	52 (2/12, 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 2011.

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

^ Inconsequential wording change.