



**Paul Simon
Public Policy Institute**

Southern Illinois University Carbondale



Simon Institute Poll

The Paul Simon Public Policy Institute

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NO CLEAR DIRECTION ON THE BUDGET

The people of Illinois offer unclear guidance to their leaders on what should be done about the growing deficit in the state budget, according to the latest poll from the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

On the one hand a majority opposes new taxes, on the other hand majorities do not want cuts in some of the most expensive services the state provides. Those findings remain consistent with previous polls taken by the Institute in 2008 and 2009.

“These results show that the current campaigns for governor and other state offices have completely failed to educate the Illinois public about the size of the deficit and what steps are realistic to address a problem of this magnitude,” said John Jackson, a Visiting Professor at the Institute and one of the designers of the poll. “People seem to want simple and easy solutions to a problem which has been growing for years and a deficit which is of such a size that no easy solutions are left,” Jackson continued.

David Yepsen, the director of the Institute, said “something’s got to give here. People can’t have it both ways. Republicans who favor cutting spending have work to do to convince voters to cut the places where the big money is spent. Democrats who support raising taxes haven’t convinced people that’s a good idea.”

When asked what should be done about the state’s \$13 billion deficit, 57 percent said the state has plenty of money and needs to cut waste and fraud. 26.6 percent said more revenue is needed along with budget cuts, and 9.3 percent said the state needs a tax increase to balance the budget. There were 7.1 percent who said they had not thought much about the issue or had no opinion.

When presented with specific proposals that could lead to substantial revenue increases for the state, increasing the income tax was the most popular option, with 40.9 percent favoring it. But 56.2 percent were opposed.

Some shifting of opinion is taking place. Support for increasing the income tax rose by 8.8 percentage points and opposition declined by 9.3 percent when compared to a similar question asked in a Simon Institute poll taken a year ago.

The statewide poll of 1,000 registered voters was taken September 30 through October 10, 2010 and has a margin of error of 3 percentage points.

The other revenue increase options garnered the following results:

- Increasing the state sales tax was favored by 24.5 percent and opposed by 72.9 percent with 2.9 percent undecided.
- Extending the sales tax to include services, e.g. haircuts and dry cleaning, which are not now covered was favored by 45.2 percent and opposed by 51.4 percent with 3.4 percent undecided.
- Extending the state sales tax to cover financial services and legal work was favored by 38.3 percent and opposed by 53.6 percent, with 8.1 percent undecided.
- Selling state assets, such as the lottery and the Illinois toll road system to private investors was the least favored option. It was favored by 30.4 percent and opposed by 60.1 percent.

In sum, all the means of raising significant new revenue were rejected by a majority although the income tax proposed increase proposal drew the most support and the least opposition. The only new revenue source to achieve near majority support was the proposal to increase gambling in the state. It was favored by 49.9 percent and opposed by 46.3 percent.

Overall, when potential tax revenue sources are compared between the 2009 and the 2010 polls, there is a gain of from two to five percent in favor of the increases and a similar decline of two to five percent in opposition to each proposal.

The respondents were also asked whether they supported or opposed cuts in a number of state services. The results below indicate that a substantial majority opposed service cuts in any of these areas. The list of services and those in favor or opposed is provided from the most to the least supported service.

- Cuts to services and spending for people with mental or physical disabilities were opposed by 83.5 percent and supported by 12.4 percent of the respondents with 4.5 percent undecided.
- Cuts to K-12 public education in K-12 were opposed by 82.1 percent and favored by 14.0 percent with 3.9 percent undecided.
- Cuts to public safety, such as state police and prison operations, opposed by 74.5 percent and favored by 21.0 percent with 4.5 percent undecided.
- Cuts to state spending on programs for poor people were opposed by 66.3 percent and favored by 24.9 percent with 8.8 percent undecided.
- Cuts to state universities were opposed by 57.4 percent and favored by 34.0 percent with 8.6 percent undecided.
- Cuts in state spending on natural resources, such as state parks or environmental regulation, were opposed by 53.1 percent and favored by 40.0 percent with 6.9 percent undecided.

- Cuts in state spending on pension benefits for state workers' retirement funds were opposed by 47.3 percent and favored by 45.5 percent with 7.2 percent undecided.

Jackson said "there is a small increase this year of one to five percent in the number of voters who are favorable to each cut and a similar one to five decrease in the percent who are opposed to each cut. It is especially notable that the only cut not favored by a majority of voters was state contributions to the public employees' retirement systems.

"Several candidates have made a target out of the state employees' retirement systems this year, and these results show that they have had an impact. A political campaign can have consequences if the candidates try to use it as a public education opportunity," he said.

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The mission of the non-partisan Paul Simon Public Policy Institute polling is to provide citizens, policy-makers and academic researchers with objective information about trends and issues facing society.

Telephone interviews were conducted by Issues & Answers Global Media Research of Virginia Beach, VA. It reports no Illinois political clients and was paid with non-tax dollars from the Institute's endowment fund.

Political scientist Dr. Charles Leonard directs the poll for the Institute. He is assisted by Drs. John Jackson and J. Tobin Grant, also political scientists.

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**Poll Results of Likely Voters in Illinois
Conducted September 30-October 10, 2010
*Released October 18, 2010***

There have been a number of proposals to address the state's budget problems by making cuts in state programs and services. I'm going to read several areas where people have suggested that the state could make cuts. For each one that I read, I'd like you to tell me whether you favor or oppose budget cuts in that area, OK?

1. Do you favor or oppose cuts in state spending on programs for people with mental or physical disabilities?

Favor	12.4%
Oppose	83.2%
Other/Don't know	4.4%

2. Do you favor or oppose cuts in state spending on kindergarten through high school education?

Favor	14.0%
Oppose	82.1%
Other/Don't know	3.9%

3. Do you favor or oppose cuts in state spending on public safety, such as state police and prison operations?

Favor	21.0%
Oppose	74.5%
Other/Don't know	4.5%

4. Do you favor or oppose cuts in state spending on programs for poor people?

Favor	24.9%
Oppose	66.3%
Other/Don't know	8.8%

5. Do you favor or oppose cuts in state spending on state universities?

Favor	34.0%
Oppose	57.4%
Other/Don't know	8.6%

6. Do you favor or oppose cuts in state spending on natural resources, such as state parks or environmental regulation?

Favor	40.0%
Oppose	53.1%
Other/Don't know	6.9%

7. Do you favor or oppose cuts in state spending on pension benefits for state worker's retirement?

Favor	45.5%
Oppose	47.3%
Other/Don't know	7.2%

**Some columns do not add up to exactly 100% due to rounding.*

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