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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 20, 2015

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Rauner's Job Approval: 36.5 Percent

Governor Bruce Rauner's job approval rating stands at 36.5 percent as he begins his term in office, according to a new poll of registered Illinois voters by the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

There were 31.4 percent who either strongly or somewhat disapproved and 23.1 percent who had no opinion about the newly-elected Republican chief executive.

The poll of 1,000 registered voters was taken Feb. 28 to March 10 and has a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

"The governor is making some tough and controversial decisions and that's reflected in the sizeable number of people who aren't happy with him," said David Yepsen, director of the Institute.

The poll also found President Barack Obama and Senator Dick Durbin, both Democrats won approval from majorities of voters. Republican Senator Mark Kirk, like Rauner, wasn't doing as well.

John Jackson, a visiting professor at the Institute, said these ratings aren't that bad.

"Given the popular perceptions of an angry electorate fed up with all incumbents, which was the dominant narrative of the November elections, this is a remarkably positive report card on the job that the top four leaders from Illinois, including two from each party, are doing.

"While there is some variation by region and by party, the overall results are a net positive evaluation for the president and both incumbent senators and for the newly elected governor" Jackson added.

Rauner saw his highest job approval ratings Downstate, where 43.3 percent either approved or somewhat approved and only 26.7 percent disapproved or somewhat disapproved. In the Chicago suburbs, 34.6 percent approved and 32.2 percent disapproved of his performance.

Rauner's lowest level of support was in Chicago, where 36.5 disapproved and 31.0 percent approved.

Partisanship is also strongly evident in Rauner's job approvals. He enjoys the approval of 60.6 percent of Republicans, with only 10.3 percent who disapprove or somewhat disapprove. This is followed by 36.7 percent of Independents who approve and 32.7 percent who disapprove or somewhat disapprove. There are 46.1 percent of Democrats who disapprove or somewhat disapprove while only 24.2 percent approve or somewhat approve of the governor's job performance so far.

Obama and Durbin

Obama and Durbin were virtually tied at the top, with more than a majority approving of the job both are doing. Durbin was re-elected handily in November to a fourth term. Obama is now serving the last two years of his second term in office—a period when presidents typically see a decline in their job approval ratings.

For President Obama, 53.7 percent either strongly or somewhat approved of the job he was doing as president. Those who strongly disapproved or disapproved totaled 41.8 percent. These totals mean that Obama enjoys a net positive job approval of 11.9 percent in his home state.

Durbin registered an almost identical job approval rate of 53.4 percent although his negatives of 30.8 percent were lower than for Obama. This means that Durbin's net approval rate was 22.6 percent positive.

Obama received his highest job approval ratings in Chicago (70.0 percent), the second highest in the suburban counties (55.8 percent), and lowest downstate (39.3 percent).

Not surprisingly, Obama's job approval stood highest among Democrats, next highest among Independents, and was far lower among Republicans. Eight in ten (83.3 percent) Democrats approved or strongly approved of the job he is doing, and only 14.1 percent disapproved or strongly disapproved. Among Independents 49.7 percent approved or strongly approved and 44.2 percent disapproved or strongly disapproved.

The president's job approval ratings tanked among Republicans with only 11.3 percent who approved or somewhat approved, with 84.9 percent who disapproved or strongly disapproved.

Senator Durbin's geographic pattern was similar. His highest approval ratings came from Chicago (65.5 percent), then the Chicago suburbs at 54.2 percent, and his lowest ratings were from Downstate (44.0 percent). However, even in the more Republican-leaning part of the state his 44 percent positive rating outranked his 38.3 percent negative one.

As a further reflection of the nation's deep partisan polarization, Durbin's approval ratings were very high among Democrats (74.0 percent), next highest among Independents (44.9 percent), with just over a quarter (28.8 percent) of Republicans giving the Democratic senator a positive rating.

Kirk

Kirk had a total of 44.5 percent who somewhat or strongly approved of the job he is doing, while 21.3 percent either somewhat or strongly disapproved of the job he is doing. These totals meant that Senator Kirk enjoys a net job approval rate of 23.2 percent.

Kirk's highest approval ratings were in central city Chicago where 48 percent either approved or somewhat approved of the job he is doing, followed closely by 47.0 percent in the Chicago suburbs and 38.0 percent Downstate.

Most (53.1 percent) of Kirk's fellow Republicans either approved or somewhat approved of the job he is doing with 16.4 percent who disapproved or somewhat disapproved. They were followed by 44.9 percent of Independents who approved or somewhat disapproved with 23.1 percent who disapproved or somewhat disapproved. Among Democrats, 40.5 percent approved or somewhat approved while 24.0 percent disapproved or somewhat disapproved of the job he is doing.

Right Track/Wrong Track

The bad news for Illinois' leaders is that most said that both the state and the nation are going in the wrong direction rather than the right direction.

- At the national level, 53.3 percent said the country was going in the wrong direction while 33.4 percent said the nation is on the right track. This is a net negative of almost 20 percent compared to the positive ratings.

Again this question revealed both geographic and partisan divisions among the voters. Chicago residents chose right direction over wrong direction by a 43.5 percent to 41.5 percent margin; 50.6 percent of suburbanites said wrong direction compared to 36.4 percent who said right direction; and almost two thirds of Downstate respondents (65.7 percent) chose wrong direction while only 21.7 percent chose right direction.

Exactly half (50.0 percent) of Democrats rated the nation to be going in the right direction, and 34.2 percent chose wrong direction. 58.5 percent of Independents rated the nation as going in the wrong direction while 24.5 percent chose right direction. Republicans were by far the most negative on this question with 79.5 percent rating the nation as going in the wrong direction with only 14.4 percent saying right direction.

- At the state level the news is even worse, with 63.0 percent saying that Illinois is going in the wrong direction and only 22.1 percent said we are going in the right direction. Possibly reflecting some of the budgetary difficulties the state is facing this finding is different from polls in most other states where the national rankings are usually much more negative for the nation than for the general direction of the state.

An almost identical 63 percent of Chicago residents rated the state as going in the wrong direction with 64 percent of suburbanites taking the same option and 25.0 percent of Chicago and 20.4 percent of the suburbs choosing right direction. 61.3 percent of Downstate said that Illinois is going in the wrong direction and 23.0 percent chose right direction.

- The evaluations are much more positive when voters are asked whether their city or area of the state is going in the right or wrong direction. Well over a majority of the voters

(57.9 percent) rated their local city or areas being headed in the right direction and only 30.7 percent chose wrong direction.

The Simon Institute Poll interviewed 1,000 registered voters across Illinois. It has a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level. This means that if we were to conduct the survey 100 times, in 95 of those instances the results would vary by no more than plus or minus 3 points from the results obtained here.

Live telephone interviews were conducted by Customer Research International of San Marcos, Texas. Cell phone interviews accounted for 30 percent of the sample. A Spanish language version of the questionnaire and a Spanish-speaking interviewer were made available. Field work was conducted from February 28 – March 10. Customer Research International reports no Illinois political clients. The survey was paid for with non-tax dollars from the Institute's endowment fund.

Crosstabs for the referenced questions will be on the Institute's web site, paulsimoninstitute.org.

Note: The "Paul Simon Public Policy Institute Poll," the "Simon Poll" and the "Southern Illinois Poll" are the copyrighted trademarks of the Board of Trustees of Southern Illinois University. Use and publication of these polls is encouraged- but only with credit to the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at SIU Carbondale.

Job Approval Questions

I would like for you to tell me how Governor Bruce Rauner is doing his job. Do you strongly approve, somewhat approve, somewhat disapprove, or strongly disapprove of the job Governor Rauner is doing?

Response	Percent (n=1000)
Strongly disapprove	18.9%
Somewhat disapprove	12.5%
Neither	9.0%
Somewhat approve	23.3%
Strongly approve	13.2%
Other/don't know	23.1%

Now, I'd like for you to tell me how well Senator Mark Kirk is doing his job. Do you strongly approve, somewhat approve, somewhat disapprove, or strongly disapprove of the job Senator Kirk is doing?

Response	Percent (n=1000)
Strongly disapprove	7.9%
Somewhat disapprove	13.4%
Neither	6.8%
Somewhat approve	35.1%
Strongly approve	9.4%
Other/don't know	27.4%

Next, I'd like for you to tell me how well President Obama is doing his job. Do you strongly approve, somewhat approve, somewhat disapprove, or strongly disapprove of the job President Obama is doing?

Response	Percent (n=1000)
Strongly disapprove	28.6%
Somewhat disapprove	13.2%
Neither	2.0%
Somewhat approve	27.1%
Strongly approve	26.6%
Other/don't know	2.5%

Now, I'd like for you to tell me how well Senator Dick Durbin is doing his job. Do you strongly approve, somewhat approve, somewhat disapprove, or strongly disapprove of the job Senator Durbin is doing?

Response	Percent (n=1000)
Strongly disapprove	16.8%
Somewhat disapprove	14.0%
Neither	4.0%
Somewhat approve	30.1%
Strongly approve	23.3%
Other/don't know	11.8%

“Direction” Questions

Generally speaking, do you think things in our country are going in the right direction, or are they off track and heading in the wrong direction?

Response	Percent (n=1000)
Right direction	33.4%
Wrong direction	53.3%
Don't know	13.3%

And what about the direction of the State of Illinois? Generally speaking, are things in Illinois going in the right direction, or are they off track and heading in the wrong direction?

Response	Percent (n=1000)
Right direction	22.1%
Wrong direction	63.0%
Don't know	14.9%

And how are things going in your city or area of the state? In general, are things in your city or area going in the right direction, or in the wrong direction?

Response	Percent (n=1000)
Right direction	57.9%
Wrong direction	30.7%
Don't know	11.4%

Regardless of what you think about how things are going in your part of the state, please tell me what you think about the overall quality of life in your area. Taking everything into account, would you say the overall quality of life in your area is...?

Response	Percent (n=1000)
Excellent	13.5%
Good	40.3%
Average	31.2%
Not so good	9.4%
Poor	5.6%