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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 12, 2015

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Southern Illinois Voters Unhappy with State's and Nation's Direction, Half Disapprove of Governor's Performance

Southern Illinois voters are unhappy with the direction of governments and the performance of political leaders, according to a new poll by the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

- Almost 80 percent of registered voters in the region think the state and the nation are headed in the wrong direction. Fewer than 15 percent think Illinois and the U.S. are on the right track.

“These results probably reflect some of Illinois’ current conflicts. Most polls show that more people feel their state is doing better than the nation. Not here.” said John Jackson, a visiting professor at the Institute.

- Political leaders are also getting lukewarm reviews. Only 37.4 percent approve of Gov. Bruce Rauner’s performance in office, while 50.7 percent disapprove. About one in eight (11.9 percent) had no opinion about the Republican chief executive.
- Senator Mark Kirk’s job-approval rating is 30.4 percent, with 22.9 percent disapproving. A plurality of voters in the region – 46.6 percent – don’t know how they feel about the GOP lawmaker.
- Senator Richard Durbin has approval ratings that exceed his disapprovals, but not by much. Half (50.6 percent) approve of the Democrat’s performance and a third (33.5 percent) disapprove. There are 16 percent who don’t know.

“Voters here have been in a bad mood and they continue to be,” said David Yepsen, director of the Institute.

“The only surprise is how many people don’t have an opinion about Senator Kirk. For a statewide Republican incumbent to have such ambivalent ratings down here isn’t a good sign for

him as he heads into a tough re-election campaign. He needs to be running well in this area to offset Democratic strengths elsewhere in the state,” he said.

Charlie Leonard, one of the Institute’s visiting professors supervising the poll, said “though Democrats and Republicans are evenly distributed in our southern Illinois sample, this is still a conservative area, and one might have thought of it as fertile ground for Gov. Rauner. For his approval ratings to be ‘upside down’ in southern Illinois this early in his administration may not bode well for the pro-business agenda he’s been trying to push.”

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The Simon Institute’s Southern Illinois Poll interviewed 401 registered voters across the 18 southernmost counties in Illinois. The counties are: Alexander, Franklin, Gallatin, Hamilton, Hardin, Jackson, Jefferson, Johnson, Massac, Perry, Pope, Pulaski, Randolph, Saline, Union, Washington, White and Williamson.

It has a margin of error of plus or minus 4.9 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 4.9 percentage 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 September 22 – October 2. No auto-dial or “robo” polling is included. 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 polling web site, simonpoll.org.

Simon Institute polling data are also archived by three academic institutions for use by scholars and the public. The three open source data repositories are: the University of Michigan’s Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (OpenICPSR; <http://openicpsr.org/repoEntity/list>), the University of North Carolina’s Odum Institute Dataverse Network (<http://arc.irss.unc.edu/dvn/dv/PSPPI>), and the Simon Institute Collection at OpenSIUC (<http://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/ppi/>).

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Frequency Tables

Direction of Country, State, and Area

First, we'd like to know what you think about the direction of the United States of America. 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? (IF UNSURE: Well, on balance, are things going in the right direction or the wrong direction?)

Response	Percent (n=401)
Right direction	13.2%
Wrong direction	78.8%
Don't know	8.0%

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? (IF UNSURE: Well, on balance, are things going in the right direction or the wrong direction?)

Response	Percent (n=401)
Right direction	11.0%
Wrong direction	79.8%
Don't know	9.2%

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? (IF UNSURE: Well, on balance, are things going in the right direction or the wrong direction?)

Response	Percent (n=401)
Right direction	50.9%
Wrong direction	37.2%
Don't know	12.0%

Note: these percentages do not sum to 100% due to rounding

Frequency Tables

Politicians' Job Performance

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=401)
Strongly approve	11.0%
Somewhat approve	26.4%
Neither (not read)	2.7%
Somewhat disapprove	16.0%
Strongly disapprove	34.7%
Other/don't know (not read)	9.2%

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=401)
Strongly approve	5.0%
Somewhat approve	25.4%
Neither (not read)	3.5%
Somewhat disapprove	13.7%
Strongly disapprove	9.2%
Other/don't know (not read)	43.1%

Note: these percentages do not sum to 100% due to rounding

Next, 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=401)
Strongly approve	14.2%
Somewhat approve	36.4%
Neither (not read)	3.5%
Somewhat disapprove	13.5%
Strongly disapprove	20.0%
Other/don't know (not read)	12.5%

Note: these percentages do not sum to 100% due to rounding