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**Rockefeller Center Completes 2nd Annual New Hampshire State of the State Poll on
Politics, Economic Issues, and Social Policies**

**Sampled registered voters oppose same-sex marriage by a small margin and choose Rep.
Hodes for U.S. Senate over Rep. Bass or Sen. Sununu by razor-thin margins**

HANOVER, NH—The Rockefeller Center's second annual State of the State poll of New Hampshire registered voters (N=403) indicates that a somewhat greater percentage of respondents oppose same-sex marriage (44.8 percent) than support it (40.8 percent), but it is within the margin of error of +/- 5 percent. In addition, Rep. Paul Hodes polls slightly better among respondents regarding the 2010 U.S. Senate race than Republican challengers former Rep. Charlie Bass and former Sen. John Sununu, but it also within the margin of error. Compared with the Rockefeller's Center 2008 poll, respondents' personal financial situations and outlook on the economy were remarkably similar.

Social policy issues before the legislature

Registered voters answered survey questions about social policy issues that have been voted on recently by the New Hampshire legislature. On the issue of same-sex marriage in the state, respondents' opinions were closely divided, and within the margin of error, with 44.8 percent opposing same-sex marriage and 40.8 percent supporting same-sex marriage. Almost half of respondents (46.9 percent) say they oppose abolishing the death penalty in the state, compared to 34.5 percent who support abolishing it. Nearly twice as many respondents (61.6 percent) support requiring adults to wear seat belts in automobiles as oppose the requirement (31.4 percent). Lastly, permitting the use of medicinal marijuana by ill New Hampshire citizens found support among 59.2 percent of respondents. Respondents opposed to medicinal marijuana (22.4 percent) narrowly edged out those who were unsure (18.4 percent).

New Hampshire politics and politicians

Callers asked the sampled registered voters about their opinions of some statewide elected officials in New Hampshire, including Governor John Lynch, Senator Judd Gregg, and Senator Jeanne Shaheen. Their ratings from the 2009 and 2008 polls are as follows:

Statewide official	opinions	percent in 2009 poll	percent in 2008 poll
Gov. John Lynch	“favorable”	54.3	56.4
	“neutral”	26.0	27.4
	“unfavorable”	9.1	8.9
	“unsure”	10.6	7.0
Sen. Judd Gregg	favorable	43.2	38.1
	neutral	26.3	27.3
	unfavorable	21.0	26.8
	unsure	9.6	7.8
Sen. Jeanne Shaheen	favorable	33.1	n/a
	neutral	24.0	n/a
	unfavorable	30.1	n/a
	unsure	12.9	n/a

The approval rating respondents give to the New Hampshire legislature is largely “unsure” (38.6 percent) and evenly split between those who “approve” (31.1 percent) and “disapprove” (30.3 percent).

2010 U.S. Senate Race

Students carrying out the poll queried the sampled registered voters regarding their vote choice if the U.S. Senate race were held today in two different candidate pairings—pitting 2nd District Representative Paul Hodes against former 2nd District Representative Charlie Bass and pitting former Senator John Sununu against 2nd District Representative Paul Hodes. Respondents pick Rep. Hodes (31.1 percent) only slightly more than former Rep. Bass (30.1 percent), with the plurality unsure (38.8 percent). Respondents choose Rep. Hodes (37.9 percent) slightly more often than former Sen. Sununu (35.4 percent), with a smaller number of unsure voters (26.7 percent) than the first pairing.

Sample demographics

The poll sample drawn appears to be representative of the voting population in New Hampshire. Approximately half of respondents were male (49.1 percent) and half were female (50.6 percent). The poll was administered evenly across the state’s congressional district: slightly more than half of respondents were in the 2nd Congressional District (56.9 percent) and slightly less than half were in the 1st Congressional District (42.9 percent). The mean and median ages of the respondents were 57.9 and 56, respectively. Respondents indicated if they were registered to vote as Democrats (27.8 percent), Republican (31.5 percent), and undeclared/independents (40.2 percent). Respondents responded with their 2008 household income: 28.8 percent report earning less than \$40,000, 35.9 percent report earning between \$40,000 and \$100,000, and 22.5 percent report earning more than \$100,000. Additionally, respondents replied with their occupational status,: almost half are employed full-time (42.6 percent), more than a third are retired (34.5 percent), 7.6 percent are employed part-time, and 6.3 percent are unemployed. The

unemployment rate of this sample of registered voters is similar to the unemployment rate of 6.6 percent the U.S. Department of Labor reports the entire state.

State of the economy: New Hampshire

When asked about their assessment of the current state of the New Hampshire economy, 52.9 percent of respondents think the economy is “weak,” 39.5 percent think the economy is “stable,” and just 2.5 percent think the economy is “strong.” Compared to a year ago, registered voters’ assessment of New Hampshire’s economy remains mostly unchanged. Respondents’ thoughts on the national economy showed more signs of the economic downturn’s effects; 58.7 percent of respondents rate the national economy as “poor,” 34.6 percent rate the national economy as “fair,” and only 5.2 percent rate the national economy as “good” or “excellent.”

State of the economy: U.S.

In response to evaluative questions about the federal governments’ reaction to the economic downturn, respondents show limited support. A majority of respondents doubt the effectiveness of the economic stimulus package, or the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act; only 4.2 percent of respondents find the stimulus package to be “very effective” while over half of the respondents find it to be “not very effective” (33.3 percent) or “not effective at all” (19.1 percent). Less than one quarter of sampled registered voters supported the federal government’s assistance to the banking and automobile industries; 23.6 percent of respondents support the assistance to the banking industry and 20.6 percent support assistance to the automobile industry.

Respondents’ personal finances

There was relative stability in respondents’ financial situation and opinions compared 2008. A plurality (48.5 percent) of New Hampshire voters believe that their personal economic situation is “about the same” as last year, which closely tracks last year’s poll response of 46.0 percent for the same question. Respondents who believe they are “worse off” this year are about as numerous as last year’s respondents, at 44.0 percent and 42.8 percent, respectively. The number of voters who report that they or a family member has been negatively affected by the mortgage crisis went up only slightly compared to last year (19.4 percent in the 2009 poll versus 14.9 percent in the 2008 poll). Responses from voters reveal the same sort of stability in regards to concerns about credit card debt, with approximately 18 percent across both years’ sampled voters indicating that it is a “top personal financial concern.”

Unfortunately, the stability of New Hampshire voters’ financial situation did not hold true for retirement savings: the number of respondents “investing in a retirement savings plan” dropped from 70.4 percent to 57.8 percent between 2008 and 2009. Respondents’ prediction for their future financial situation is slightly brighter than it was last year, with nearly one third (32.5 percent) predicting it would be “better,” compared to more than a quarter (27.0 percent) last year.

New Hampshire public policy and government

Respondents were given a list of policy issues and asked to select the most important issue for New Hampshire policymakers to focus on in Concord. Respondents had the opportunity to offer their own most important issue (7.8 percent did). The largest change from last year is that nearly half of respondents pick “relieving the property tax burdens on NH citizens.” Below is the list of policy issues and respondent choices from the 2009 and 2008 poll:

Options for most important policy Issue	percent in 2009 poll	percent in 2008 poll
building and maintaining a strong economy	38.0	28.5
improving education across the state	16.4	17.3
providing for the healthcare needs of NH citizens	15.1	12.8
relieving the property tax burdens on NH citizens	14.6	26.9
maintaining roads, highways, and bridges in the state	4.5	3.2
maintaining a clean and livable environment	3.3	4.5
Other	7.8	6.9

Respondents were then asked to identify from a list of issues the greatest threat to New Hampshire's future. Perhaps in response to the federal economic spending or the state budget difficulties, respondents choosing "increased government spending" as the greatest threat almost doubled over last year. Below is the list of issues and respondents' choices from the 2009 and 2008 poll:

Options for greatest threat	percent in 2009 poll	percent in 2008 poll
cost of health care	22.4	15.3
increased government spending	20.2	12.7
lack of high-paying jobs	14.6	15.8
availability of affordable housing	13.9	15.6
public educational system	10.8	19.0
population growth	6.8	11.6
Other	11.1	10.0

In their assessment of the level of government most important to ensure New Hampshire's future, respondents mainly (56.5 percent) identify "the state government in Concord," down slightly from last year (61.6 percent). A slightly larger proportion of respondents identify "the federal government in Washington" this year than in the 2008 poll: 21.8 percent versus 18.4 percent.

Budgetary policy

Overwhelmingly, New Hampshire voters recognize the seriousness of the state's budget problems: 28.7 percent think the problems are "very serious" and 54.1 percent think the problems are "somewhat serious." Both of these proportions are quite similar to those from last year's poll (27.1 percent and 50.3 percent). When asked about what action to take to resolve local budget problems, respondents favored "maintaining taxes, decreasing services" (47.9 percent) rather than "increasing taxes, maintaining services" (30.4 percent). These proportions are also quite similar to last year's poll (44.0 percent and 30.4 percent).

Respondents provided opinions on various taxes to fund the \$1 billion budget deficit for repairing and maintaining New Hampshire's roads and bridges. Compared with last year, approval of raising the gas tax five cents nearly doubled, accounting for a narrow majority of respondents. Also of note, even after policymakers passed an increase in the cigarette tax last

year, respondents expressed overwhelming, if slightly less, approval for this policy. Respondents say they approve or disapprove for each of the following options:

Funding options	percent “approve” 2009	percent “approve” 2008
raising the gas tax five cents/gallon	51.6	27.6
a five percent increase in annual motor vehicle tax	51.8	54.8
a two percent increase in the interest & dividends tax	34.2	36.9
increase the minimum cap on the interest & dividends tax	32.5	38.5
a one-percent sales tax	32.7	40.0
an additional 25-cent increase in the cigarette tax	72.8	81.0

Poll Methods

During the week of April 27-May 1, 2009, students from The Nelson A. Rockefeller Center at Dartmouth College conducted a telephone survey of registered voters in New Hampshire. Survey respondents were asked a wide range of questions relating to the current political, economic, and social state of affairs in New Hampshire and, to a lesser extent, the country as a whole. Calls were made between the hours of 6:30pm and 9:30pm Monday through Friday evenings. Additional call-backs were made during daytime hours on Friday and Saturday when specified by poll participants. Over the course of the week, callers made at least three attempts to contact each of the registered voters drawn in the sample. Callers made four attempts in the case of a small number of sampled voters who had been contacted by the callers but were unable to complete the survey at the time of the initial contact. A total of 403 survey interviews were completed during the week, yielding an error rate of +/- 5.0 percent at a 95 percent confidence interval.

In addition to the questions presented above, respondents were asked a series of questions regarding their civic activism and media consumption as well as a variety of demographic questions. Later reports will analyze these data as well as provide greater depth of analysis on the data presented in this news release.



Located at a busy cross-roads of campus, the Nelson A. Rockefeller Center at Dartmouth College is a lively, intellectual gathering place for students and faculty. The Center is a catalyst for public policy research, teaching and deliberation and prepares students for lives of leadership and service in a diverse and globally interdependent world. Dedicated to providing an interdisciplinary perspective on policy-related topics, the Center fosters a commitment to the ideals of public service and informed public debate exemplified by Nelson A. Rockefeller, former governor of New York and vice president of the United States.