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PDF version; crosstabs; website:

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Siena College Poll:

Cuomo Still Honeymooning; Record High Job Performance

Big Support for Campaign Finance Reform & Education Commission;

Mild Support for Casino Amendment & Buffalo Investment;

Significant Opposition to New Convention Center at Aqueduct

51% Say Race Relations in NY are Excellent/Good; 47% Fair/Poor

Majority of New Yorkers Think State is Headed on Right Track

Loudonville, NY. Governor Cuomo continues to have a strong favorability rating – his best since April – and voters now give him the best job performance rating he’s had in 13 months as Governor, according to a new Siena College Research Institute poll of registered New York voters released today. Several of the Governor’s State of the State proposals are strongly supported, some are narrowly supported, and his proposal for a new convention center in Queens currently faces significant voter opposition.

Voters are nearly evenly divided on the state of race relations in New York, with 51 percent rating them as excellent (7 percent) or good (44 percent), while 47 percent call them fair (36 percent) or poor (11 percent). For the first time since November 2006, a majority of voters think New York is headed on the right track.

“After a little more than a year in office, the Governor may not be a newlywed anymore, but his honeymoon with voters continues stronger than ever. At 73-20 percent, Cuomo’s favorability rating is the best it has been since April, and his 62-37 percent job performance rating is by far the best it’s ever been,” said Siena pollster Steven Greenberg. “Cuomo’s favorability rating tops 70 percent in every region of the state and his job performance rating is at least 60 percent in every region. While it’s not surprising that he does best with Democrats, he is stronger with Republicans than with independent voters in both ratings.

“The Governor may face criticism from a variety of sources on a number of issues but it doesn’t seem to matter with voters. His staying power to date stands out even more than the big numbers,” Greenberg said. “Think back to Governor Spitzer, who had a better favorability rating than Cuomo on their respective first months in office. However, by his second January Spitzer’s favorability rating was a barely positive 44-41 percent, a far cry from Cuomo’s 73-20 percent.”

Small Majorities: Cuomo Made Albany Less Dysfunctional & His Leadership will Improve Education

After Cuomo’s first year in office, 51 percent say ‘Albany is considerably less dysfunctional’ and 45 percent say ‘Albany is still way too dysfunctional.’ Majorities of Democrats, men, liberals, moderates, downstate voters, and voters 55 and older say Albany is considerably less dysfunctional. Majorities of independents, conservatives and upstaters say Albany is still too dysfunctional.

“One year ago, during Cuomo’s first month in office, Siena asked voters to look ahead a year and predict whether Albany would be considerably less dysfunctional in a year or still way too dysfunctional and at the time 49 percent said it would be considerably less dysfunctional and 46 percent said it would still be too dysfunctional,” Greenberg said. “A year ago 58 percent of Democrats, 41 percent of independents and 39 percent of Republicans said Albany would be considerably less dysfunctional today. Today, 57 percent of Democrats, 43 percent of independents and 48 percent of Republicans say Albany is considerably less dysfunctional now.”

When it comes to Cuomo on education, voters were asked to pick between two divergent choices in reaction to his State of the State claim to be the students’ lobbyist this year. Fifty-one percent said ‘I’m glad the Governor is going to be an advocate for the students. With his leadership, he will make sure that public schools do a better job of educating kids,’ while 45 percent said ‘The Governor is just grandstanding. It’s going to take a lot more than him pretending to be the students’ lobbyist to improve the achievement of students.’

“Voters are closely divided, with a small majority believing that the Governor’s leadership will improve public schools,” Greenberg said. “Interestingly, a majority of voters from union households thinks the Governor is grandstanding, while a majority from non-union households thinks his leadership will make a difference.”

Several Cuomo State of the State Proposals Supported by Voters; Aqueduct Convention Center Opposed

“The Governor has overwhelming support for his proposals for an education commission, campaign finance reform – which would include a system of public campaign financing and lower contribution limits – and public-private partnerships for capital investments in the state’s infrastructure,”

Cuomo’s State of State Proposals	Support	Oppose	No Opinion
Bi-partisan education commission for teacher evaluation system & improved achievement, efficiency	82%	16%	2%
Campaign finance reform, including lower contribution limits & a system of public campaign funding	74%	20%	6%
Public-private partnerships to leverage billions of private sector dollars to build/repair infrastructure	73%	21%	6%
Passing a constitutional amendment to allow non-Indian, Las Vegas style casinos to be built in NY	53%	42%	5%
Jumpstarting economic development in Western NY by investing \$1 billion in Buffalo	49%	41%	10%
Eliminating the requirement that food stamp recipients with children be fingerprinted	46%	50%	3%
Building a new convention center adjacent to the Aqueduct racetrack and racino near JFK Airport	38%	57%	5%
Source: Siena College Poll, January 16, 2012			

Greenberg said. “There is weaker support for a constitutional amendment to authorize non-Indian casino gambling in New York, and for investing a billion dollars in Buffalo.”

“One proposal that nearly evenly divided voters was eliminating fingerprinting for food stamp recipients with children. Republicans and suburbanites are clearly opposed, while Democrats, independents, upstaters and New York City voters are closely divided,” Greenberg said. “At this point there is strong opposition to the Governor’s proposal for a new convention center adjacent to the Aqueduct racetrack and racino. New York City voters are barely supportive, suburbanites are opposed and upstaters are strongly opposed. Clearly, the Governor has his work cut out for him to convince voters on that proposal.”

Top 2011 Albany Accomplishments: December’s Tax Code Changes & On-Time Budget Without New Taxes

When asked for the top accomplishment of Cuomo and the Legislature in 2011, 34 percent of voters said the change made to the tax code in December – raising rates on those earning more than \$2 million per year and reducing rates on those earning less than \$300,000; 31 percent said it was an on-time state budget with no new taxes; 17 percent said legalizing same sex marriages; 11 percent pointed to the property tax cap; and, 3 percent said it was the new ethics law.

“Changes to the tax code and passing an on-time budget without new taxes were the top choices of voters from every region and party,” Greenberg said. “Democrats and voters from New York City and the downstate suburbs identified the tax code changes as the number one accomplishment, while Republicans, independents and upstaters said it was the on-time budget.”

State of Race Relations in NY Not as Good as Last Year; Gap Between Views of Blacks & Whites Narrows

“As we celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr. Day in 2012, 51 percent of voters say race relations in the state are excellent or good, while a comparable 47 percent say they are only fair or poor. The percentage of voters giving a positive response is down from last year’s 55-43 percent,” Greenberg said. “The bad news is that overall New Yorkers are not feeling as good about race relations in 2012 as they did in 2011.

“The good news is that the disparity between the views of white New Yorkers and black New Yorkers has narrowed dramatically. White voters have a positive view of race relations by a 54-44 percent margin, down from 60-40 percent. Black voters have a negative view of race relations 47-53 percent, however, it is up from 36-63 percent last year. Last year’s 47-point gap between blacks and whites is now only 16 percent,” Greenberg said.

New Yorkers More Optimistic About Direction of the State than They Have Been in More than Five Years

“For the first time since Spitzer’s landslide 2006 victory, a majority of voters – 51 percent – think New York is headed on the right track, compared to only 38 percent who say the state is headed in the wrong direction. This is a major shift since Siena’s November poll when it was 42-46 percent,” Greenberg said. “While a plurality of upstate and Republican voters still thinks the state is headed in the wrong direction, clear majorities of downstaters and Democrats are positive about the direction of the state.”

Voters' Views on the Legislature & Its Leaders Have Not Changed Noticeably in the Last Six Months

The Assembly is viewed favorably by 39 percent and unfavorably by 46 percent (38-47 percent in July). The Senate's favorability rating is 39-49 percent (41-49 percent in July). Sheldon Silver's favorability rating is 24-36 percent (22-36 percent in July) and Dean Skelos is at 12-21 percent (13-20 percent in July).

"The Cuomo glow does not seem to have rubbed off on the Legislature. There is little change among voters in their views of the two houses over the last six months, although both houses are viewed noticeably more favorably today than they were a year ago," Greenberg said. "While 23 percent of voters say they have more confidence in the Legislature today than one year ago, 20 percent have less confidence and a majority of 55 percent has the same level of confidence in the Legislature."

By Two-to-One, Voters Say Any Redistricting Plan Put Forward by the Legislature Should Be Vetoed

"By a better than two-to-one, 60-28 percent, majority voters think the Governor should veto any redistricting plan put forward by the Legislature. And this is not an opinion that divides voters on a partisan basis. Voters of every political and geographic persuasion – Democrats, Republican and independents; liberals, moderates and conservatives; downstaters and upstaters –overwhelmingly want to see a legislatively produced redistricting plan vetoed by the Governor," Greenberg said.

Obama Ratings Continue Slow but Steady Climb

President Obama's favorability rating is 59-38 percent, up from 57-40 percent in November and 52-45 percent in August. His job performance rating is 46 percent positive, 53 percent negative, up from 43-57 percent in November and 36-63 percent in August. Currently, 55 percent of voters say they are prepared to re-elect the President and 40 percent prefer 'someone else,' up from 51-42 percent in November and 47-45 percent in August.

"The President's ratings with New York voters has been on a slow but steady climb during the second half of 2011," Greenberg said. "His favorability rating is the best it's been since June. His job performance rating is as high as it's been since May. And his re-elect number is the best it's been in the year Siena has been asking the question."

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

DATE	FAVORABLE	UNFAVORABLE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
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. 12 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
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 (10/11, 2/11)	36 (9/11, 5/11)	9 (11/11, etc.)	28 (1/11)
LOWEST EVER	8 (3/11)	34 (1/11)	24 (1/11)	4 (2/11, 1/11)	1 (7/11)

Q. 8 Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion about the New York State Assembly?

DATE	FAVORABLE	UNFAVORABLE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
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)

Q. 10 Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion about Sheldon Silver?

DATE	FAVORABLE	UNFAVORABLE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
January 2012	24	36	40
July 2011	22	36	41
April 2011	22	39	39
February 2011	19	41	39
HIGHEST EVER	28 (7/05)	42 (12/10)	50 (4/05)
LOWEST EVER	19 (2/11, 4/05)	30 (4/05)	36 (12/10, 6/09)

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Q. 9 Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion about the New York State Senate?

DATE	FAVORABLE	UNFAVORABLE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
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. 11 Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion about Dean Skelos?

DATE	FAVORABLE	UNFAVORABLE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
January 2012	12	21	67
July 2011	13	20	67
April 2011	11	19	69
February 2011	11	17	71
HIGHEST EVER	15 (6/09)	23 (6/09)	82 (11/08)
LOWEST EVER	9 (12/10)	8 (7/08)	62 (6/09)

Q. 5 Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion about Kirsten Gillibrand?

DATE	FAVORABLE	UNFAVORABLE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
January 2012	49	25	26
November 2011	49	25	26
October 2011	46	24	30
September 2011	46	25	29
August 2011	46	24	30
July 2011	49	21	30
May 2011	51	20	29
February 2011	57	18	25
HIGHEST EVER	57 (2/11)	34 (10/31/10)	56 (1/09)
LOWEST EVER	26 (3/09)	14 (1/09)	14 (10/31/10)

Q. 15 Kirsten Gillibrand is running for re-election as United State Senator in 2012. As things stand now would you vote to re-elect her or would you prefer someone else? ^

DATE	RE-ELECT	PREFER SOMEONE ELSE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
January 2012	53	32	16
November 2011	53	30	17
October 2011	46	34	21
September 2011	45	34	22
August 2011	49	34	18
July 2011	50	29	21
May 2011	50	30	20
February 2011	52	29	19
HIGHEST EVER	53 (1/12, 11/11)	34 (10/11, 9/11, 8/11)	22 (9/11)
LOWEST EVER	45 (9/11)	29 (7/11, 2/11)	16 (1/12)

Q. 6 Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion about George Maragos?

DATE	FAVORABLE	UNFAVORABLE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
January 2012	8	12	79
November 2011	5	14	82
HIGHEST EVER	8 (1/12)	14 (11/11)	89 (5/10)
LOWEST EVER	5 (11/11)	6 (5/10)	79 (1/12)

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Q. 7 Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion about Harry Wilson?

DATE	FAVORABLE	UNFAVORABLE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
January 2012	9	12	80
November 2011	8	16	76
HIGHEST EVER	21 (10/31/10)	18 (10/31/10)	89 (5/10)
LOWEST EVER	6 (5/10)	5 (5/10, 4/10)	60 (10/31/10)

Q. 29 If the 2012 election for United States Senator from New York were held today and the candidates were Kirsten Gillibrand on the Democratic line and George Maragos on the Republican line, who would you vote for? (Order of candidates was rotated.)

DATE	GILLIBRAND	MARAGOS	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
January 2012	63	22	15
November 2011	65	17	18
HIGHEST EVER	65 (11/11)	22 (1/12)	18 (11/11)
LOWEST EVER	63 (1/12)	17 (11/11)	15 (1/12)

Q. 30 If the 2012 election for United States Senator from New York were held today and the candidates were Kirsten Gillibrand on the Democratic line and Harry Wilson on the Republican line, who would you vote for? (Order of candidates was rotated.)

DATE	GILLIBRAND	WILSON	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
January 2012	63	23	14
November 2011	63	21	16
HIGHEST EVER	63 (11/11, 1/12)	23 (1/12)	16 (11/11)
LOWEST EVER	63 (11/11, 1/12)	21 (11/11)	14 (1/12)

Q. 4 Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion about Barack Obama?

DATE	FAVORABLE	UNFAVORABLE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
January 2012	59	38	3
November 2011	57	40	3
October 2011	55	43	3
September 2011	52	45	2
August 2011	52	45	3
July 2011	57	39	4
June 2011	59	38	4
May 2011	62	36	2
April 2011	63	34	3
March 2011	60	37	3
February 2011	62	35	3
January 2011	61	36	3
HIGHEST EVER	81 (1/09)	46 (10/31/10)	40 (11/06)
LOWEST EVER	48 (11/06)	10 (1/09)	2 (9/11, 5/11)

Q. 13 How would you rate the job that Barack Obama is doing as President? Would you rate it excellent, good, fair, or poor?

DATE	EXCELLENT	GOOD	FAIR	POOR	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
January 2012	12	34	26	27	0
November 2011	10	33	28	29	0
October 2011	9	29	32	30	0
September 2011	11	29	28	33	0
August 2011	10	26	30	33	0
July 2011	13	32	30	25	1
May 2011	16	37	24	23	0
HIGHEST EVER	16 (5/11)	37 (5/11)	32 (10/11)	33 (9/11, 8/11)	1 (7/11)
LOWEST EVER	9 (10/11)	26 (8/11)	24 (5/11)	23 (5/11)	0 (11/11, etc.)

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Q. 14 Barack Obama is running for re-election as President in 2012. I know it's a ways off, but as things stand now, would you vote to re-elect him or would you prefer someone else?^

DATE	RE-ELECT	PREFER SOMEONE ELSE	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
January 2012	55	40	5
November 2011	51	42	7
October 2011	48	45	7
September 2011	47	47	6
August 2011	47	45	8
July 2011	50	41	9
June 2011	52	44	4
May 2011	54	39	6
April 2011	52	39	9
March 2011	49	43	8
February 2011	49	43	8
January 2011	50	40	10
HIGHEST EVER	55 (1/12)	47 (9/11, 12/10)	10 (1/11, 12/10)
LOWEST EVER	43 (12/10)	39 (5/11, 4/11)	4 (6/11)

Q. 31 As we look to next week's commemoration of Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday, how would you describe the state of race relations in New York State? Would you say they are excellent, good, fair, or poor?

DATE	EXCELLENT	GOOD	FAIR	POOR	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
January 2012	7	44	36	11	2
January 2011	7	48	33	10	2
January 2010	6	45	38	8	2
January 2008	3	45	36	13	3
HIGHEST EVER	7 (1/12, 1/11)	48 (1/11)	38 (1/10)	13 (1/08)	3 (1/08)
LOWEST EVER	3 (1/08)	45 (1/10, 1/08)	33 (1/11)	8 (1/10)	2 (1/12, etc.)

Q. 2 Is the United States on the right track, or is it headed in the wrong direction?

DATE	RIGHT TRACK	WRONG DIRECTION	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION
January 2012	37	56	7
November 2011	26	66	8
October 2011	22	71	7
September 2011	26	66	8
August 2011	20	74	6
July 2011	35	55	10
May 2011	43	49	9
March 2011	34	57	9
February 2011	44	47	9
January 2011	36	54	10
HIGHEST EVER	62 (5/09)	74 (8/11)	17 (9/08)
LOWEST EVER	19 (10/08)	24 (12/09)	6 (8/11)

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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
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 (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.