

Humphrey Institute and MPR News Poll

Approval for Governor but Not Legislature

Report prepared by the Center for the Study of Politics and Governance

Lawrence R. Jacobs
Director, Center for the Study of Politics and Governance
Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs
University of Minnesota

Joanne M. Miller
Research Associate, Center for Study of Politics and Governance
Associate Professor, Department of Political Science
University of Minnesota

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Minnesotans approve of the performance of Governor Tim Pawlenty but are split on the legislature's job, according to a Humphrey Institute and Minnesota Public Radio News poll conducted between January 20 and January 27, 2008.

Fifty-five percent of Minnesotan residents approve of Pawlenty's job performance including 84 percent of Republicans and 53 percent of independents. In a polarized environment, it is also impressive that 37 percent of Democrats give the Republican Governor favorable marks.

Approval of Governor Pawlenty

	Approve	Disapprove	DK / Refused
All Minnesotans	55%	39%	5%
Party Identification			
Republicans (34%)	84%	14%	2%
Independents (14%)	53%	36%	10%
Democrats (52%)	37%	57%	6%

Number of Minnesotan residents interviewed, 917; Margin of Error 3.2; Number of Republican Minnesotans interviewed, 317; Margin of Error of 5.5; Number of Democratic Minnesotans interviewed, 478; Margin of Error, 4.5.

By contrast, **Minnesotans reach a split verdict regarding the legislature.** Forty-six percent approve of its performance compared to 44 percent who disapprove. In one of the few departures from the pattern of partisan polarization, a majority of Republicans approve of the performance of the Democratic controlled legislature (53% approve vs. 41% disapprove). Democrats are evenly divided (44% to 44%) and most independents disapprove (58%). In fairness, legislative approval often lags behind that of presidents and governors because American legislative bodies lack a single voice and operate by more cumbersome procedures.

Split Verdict on Legislature's Performance

	Approve	Disapprove	DK / Refused
All Minnesotans	46%	44%	10%
Party Identification			
Republican (34%)	53%	41%	7%
Independents (14%)	35%	58%	8%
Democrats (52%)	44%	44%	13%

The Problems Facing Minnesota

A Meat and Potatoes Agenda: Democrats and Republicans agree that jobs and the economy is the single most important problem facing the state of Minnesota.

Ranking of the Most Important Problems in Minnesota

	Total	Party Identification		
		Republicans (34%)	Independents (14%)	Democrats (52%)
Economy and jobs	33%	25%	34%	39%
Health Care	18%	15%	17%	21%
Taxes	15%	23%	19%	8%
Education	12%	9%	5%	15%
Transportation	8%	9%	11%	7%
Immigration	8%	12%	3%	6%
Global warming	2%	1%	5%	3%
Other / DK	4%	6%	6%	2%

But partisan differences do emerge. When Democrats are asked to identify the single most important problem facing Minnesota, health care comes in second (21%) and education third (15%). By contrast, taxes come in second among Republicans and independents. Republicans also give more attention to immigration than Democrats (or independents). The Governor's approval may be buoyed by his strong opposition to tax increases.

About the Survey

The survey is collaboration between Minnesota Public Radio and the Center for the Study of Politics and Governance at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs. The survey was analyzed by the Center. The research team was Lawrence R. Jacobs (director) and Joanne M. Miller (Department of Political Science). Melanie Burns was the team's research and data analyst.

The survey was fielded by the Center for Survey Research and Analysis (CSRA) at the University of Connecticut, which has extensive national and state experience conducting non-partisan surveys on politics and government policy. CSRA called a sample of telephone exchanges that was randomly selected by a computer from a list of active residential exchanges within the State of Minnesota. Within each exchange, random digits were added to form a complete telephone number, thus permitting access to both listed and unlisted numbers. The sample was designed to represent different regions of the state in proportion to the number of adults living in each region. Within each household, one adult was selected to be the respondent for the survey.

The results have been weighted to reflect the number of adults in a household and the number of telephone lines reaching the household as well as the demographic characteristics of Minnesota based on region, sex, age, education, and race.

917 residents of Minnesota were interviewed by telephone between January 20 and January 27, 2008; 317 identified themselves as Republican and 478 identified themselves as Democratic. The margin of error for the full sample of Minnesota residents (917) is 3.2 percentage points, 5.5 points for the sub-sample of Republicans, and 4.5. points for the sub-sample of Democrats. In theory, in 19 cases out of 20 the results among Minnesota residents will differ by no more than 3.2 percentage points in either direction from what would have been obtained by interviewing all likely voters in the state. For smaller subgroups the margin of sampling error is larger.

In addition to sampling error, the practical difficulties of conducting any survey of public opinion may introduce sources of error into the poll. Variations in the wording and order of questions, for example, may lead to somewhat different results.