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Porn: Budget, Tax Proposals Eroded Snyder Support

*Publisher's Note: The following is a regular monthly column for MIRSnews.com by Bernie **PORN**, president of the Lansing-based polling firm of EPIC/MRA.*

When Gov. Rick **SNYDER** first took office, a 59 percent majority had a favorable opinion of him, only 9 percent had an unfavorable view, and 31 percent were unsure of their feelings.

After years of voters saying the state was on the wrong track by as much as 80 percent or more, Michigan voters were optimistic again. With Snyder in office, voters were now split on the state's direction with 41 percent saying "wrong track" and 39 percent saying "right direction."

Snyder's election was clearly the driving force behind the improvement.

But after Snyder gave his State of the State message in mid-January and his Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 budget proposal presentation in February, the numbers began to change noticeably.

During a poll conducted over four days through March 1, Snyder's favorable rating dropped 10 points to 44 percent. His unfavorable rating more than doubled to 27 percent, with 29 percent undecided. His positive job rating dropped 5 points, from 37 to 32 percent, his negative job rating increased by 15 points, including an increase in his "poor" job rating by 11 points, from 5 to 16 percent. The percentage of undecided about the Snyder job rating dropped 8 points from 41 to 33 percent.

Following the budget message, there was an actual reversal in the numbers on state direction, with 42 percent saying "wrong track" (up 10 points) and 36 percent saying "right direction" (down 5 points).

There was a dramatic shift in opinion among Democrats and independent voters, and some slippage among Republicans about Snyder.

A 49 to 20 percent plurality of Democrats had an unfavorable opinion (up 23 points). A 40 to 26 percent plurality of independent voters had a favorable rating (down 15 points in favorable and up 16 points in unfavorable ratings). GOP voters continue to have a favorable opinion of Snyder by 72 percent (down 6 points).

There were several questions dealing with budget and tax issues that were commissioned by the Detroit Free Press and WXYZ TV-7, which were released over several days.

Voters were split on the Snyder budget proposal, with 41 percent opposing the plan, 39 percent favoring it, with 19 percent unsure. A 64 percent majority of Democrats and a 45 to 36 percent plurality of Independents opposed it, while a 63 percent of Republicans favored it.

While there were several budget or tax proposals voters favored, there were many others that those asked solidly opposed. A 69 percent majority favor the proposal to keep the income tax rate at 4.25 percent instead of letting it drop to 3.9 percent. It is favored by Democrats, independents and Republicans.

A 59 percent majority favors taking away "\$307 million in revenue sharing to cities, villages and townships -- nearly two-thirds of which went to Detroit -- and replac(ing) it with a new program of \$200 million that would have communities compete for money based on efforts to save money for things like employee health care, by consolidating services, or consolidating two or more communities into a new governmental unit." Democrats opposed the proposal by 43 to 42 percent, while 56 percent of independents and 77 percent of Republicans favored it.

However, the third of this funding that would be cut for communities could pose enough budgetary hardships that if cuts are made to important local services, especially police and fire protection, public opinion could easily shift against the proposal.

A 56 percent majority favors the proposal to eliminate the standard deduction for wealthy individuals, with Democrats supporting it by a narrow plurality, independents and Republicans supporting it by solid majorities.

When asked which of four statements best describes the view of respondents about the proposal that calls for \$180 million in concessions by state employees, 45 percent said the statement that comes closer to their view was "Snyder's proposal for state employees is fair and reflects the shared sacrifice that he wants to achieve," 25 percent said "Snyder's proposal goes too far and taxes should be raised on wealthy people to make up the difference."

Fourteen percent said, "Snyder's proposal goes too far. State employees already made deep concessions to balance the budget, like furlough days. Cuts should be found elsewhere." Eleven percent said, "Snyder's proposal doesn't go far enough. State employees should pay more for health insurance and other benefits and make less in wages."

A 60 percent majority of Democrats said either the proposal goes too far and taxes should be raised on the wealthy to make up the difference (40 percent), or it goes too far, they have already made concessions, and cuts should be found elsewhere (20 percent).

Independent voters said by 55 percent that it is fair and a shared sacrifice (42 percent) or does not go far enough (13 percent). Republicans said by 60 percent it is fair and a shared sacrifice, with 17 percent saying it doesn't go far enough, for 77 percent.

A 63 percent majority opposes the plan to eliminate tax credits for charitable donations to food banks, homeless shelters, universities and public broadcasting, including 83 percent of Democrats and 64 percent of Independents, with 50 to 44 percent of Republicans favoring it.

A 62 percent majority opposes proposed cuts of \$300 per pupil in K-12 funding (49 percent strongly). An 86 percent majority of Democrats and 67 percent of independents were opposed, while 58 percent of Republicans favored it, including 68 percent of GOP men, but only a 46 to 41 percent of GOP women.

A 58 percent majority opposes eliminating the Earned Income Tax Credit, including 80 percent of Democrats and 64 percent of Independents, with 63 percent of GOP voters favoring it.

A 53 to 41 percent majority opposes the plan to tax pensions and other retirement income, including 80 percent of Democrats, and 64 percent of Independents, with Republicans favoring it by 63 percent.

A 49 to 43 percent plurality disagreed with Snyder's proposal to eliminate the Michigan Business Tax and replace it with a 6 percent income tax on profits of "C" corporations, including 75 percent of Democrats and 51 to 43 percent of Independents, while 63 percent of Republicans agreed. Independent men agreed, while Independent women opposed it.

While 55 percent said they like the presence of the film and movie industry in Michigan (15 percent "loved it"), 46 percent said they thought it is a bad use of taxpayer money, with 41 percent saying it is a good use. Democrats said it is a good use by 54 percent, independents said bad use by 45 to 41 percent, while Republicans said it was a bad use by 59 percent.

It is likely that Snyder's numbers will continue to drop as debate about his proposals continue, since voters who are undecided on his favorability or job rating tend to be more strongly opposed to many of his proposals than the overall statewide results.