

The WMUR / CNN Poll

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EDUCATION FUNDING DOMINATES PROBLEMS FACING GRANITE STATE

DURHAM, NH-The continuing problem of how to fund public education remains the most important problem facing the Granite State. Governor Jeanne Shaheen remains a popular Governor, apparently untouched by the education funding debate.

These findings are based on the latest **WMUR / CNN Poll**, conducted by the University of New Hampshire Survey Center. The WMUR / CNN Poll is sponsored by WMUR-TV, Channel 9 in Manchester, New Hampshire and CNN. We ask users to properly attribute this copyright information to the "WMUR/CNN Poll", conducted by the University of New Hampshire Survey Center.

Education Funding Debate Won't Go Away

The State of New Hampshire Supreme Court's decision in the Claremont lawsuit has dominated the political landscape in New Hampshire for almost two years. The decision, which found that New Hampshire's reliance on local property taxes to fund public education to be unconstitutional, has forced lawmakers to find a way of raising hundreds of millions of dollars to equalize education funding in the state. While legislation was

passed "solving" the education funding crisis in May, the lingering problem of how to close the budget deficit brought on by state funding of public education continues to be on the minds of New Hampshire voters.

Among New Hampshire voters, 41% specifically mentioned education funding as the most important problem facing New Hampshire, while another 21% mentioned related issues such as "education", "schools", or "Claremont". In the May 1999 WMUR / CNN Poll, school funding was named as the most important problem facing the state by 45% of voters and 27% cited "education", "schools", or "Claremont".

The major stumbling block solving the education funding crisis is to find a politically acceptable way of increasing taxes. This has proven a tough nut to crack, with many New Hampshire voters believing their taxes are too high already. In the latest poll, 16% of New Hampshire voters already say that taxes are the most important problem facing the state, the same percentage cited taxes in the May, 1999 WMUR / CNN Poll.

The only other issues mentioned by more than 1% of New Hampshire residents was the economy (3%) and problems with health care (3%), while 12% cited some other problem and 4% said there were no problems or that they could not think of a problem.

Impact on Governor Shaheen

Although she is the most visible politician in the State, Governor Jeanne Shaheen has not been hurt by the education funding battle. A substantial 66% of New Hampshire voters say they approve of the way Governor Shaheen is handling her job as Governor, 27% disapprove, and 7% are neutral. Governor Shaheen's approval ratings have actually increased since May 1999 when 64% of Granite State voters said they approved of her job performance.

Sub-Group Analysis

Education funding is thought to be the most important problem facing the state across all demographic groups.

Governor Shaheen's approval rating is highest among her traditional supporters, Democrats and liberals. It is lower, but still favorable, among Republicans and conservatives.

Most Important Problem Facing State of New Hampshire

	<u>May '99</u>	<u>Sept. '99</u>
School Funding	45%	41%
"Education", "schools", "Claremont"	27	21
Tax related issues	16	16
Economy, Jobs	2	3
Health care	1	3
Other	7	12
No problems, don't know	3	4

(N=657) (N=643)

Approval Rating, Governor Shaheen

	<u>May '99</u>	<u>Sept. '99</u>
Approve	64%	66%
Neutral, don't know	6	7
Disapprove	31	27

(N=669) (N=674)

WMUR-TV / CNN Poll Methodology

These findings are based on the most recent WMUR / CNN Poll conducted by the University of New Hampshire Survey Center from September 5 through September 11, 1999.

A random sample of 702 likely voters from throughout New Hampshire was interviewed by telephone. In 95 of 100 cases, statewide estimates will be accurate to plus or minus 3.7 percent. Results reported for subgroups have potential for somewhat larger variation than those for the entire population.

In addition to sampling error, all surveys have other potential sources of non-sampling error including question order effects, question wording effects, and non-response.

Respondents to the WMUR-TV / CNN Poll were asked:

"There are many problems facing the State of New Hampshire today. In your opinion, what is the most important problem facing the State of New Hampshire today?"

"Generally speaking, do you approve or disapprove of the way Governor Shaheen is handling her job as Governor?"