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Poll reports more NJ voters support Obama's re-election

By Aleks Tzatzev / Associate News Editor | Posted: Wednesday, October 12, 2011 12:00 am

Half of N.J. voters polled believe President Barack Obama deserves a second term in office, according to the Eagleton Institute of Politics.

Obama's ratings in New Jersey made a rebound since August, and nearly two-thirds of voters are happy with Gov. Chris Christie's decision not to run for president, according to the poll.

Results show the percent of people backing Obama for a second term increased 43 percent from two months ago, and 47 percent of state residents agree with Christie staying home.

"I think there are a couple reasons for this change," said David Redlawsk, poll director and professor of political science at the University. "With Christie out of the picture, New Jerseyans don't have to think about him as a potential candidate."

Redlawsk also said Obama has been defending his positions more so than before.

A major issue Democrats and some independents agree with is Obama's American Jobs Act, and his aggressive defense of it, Redlawsk said.

Additionally, the poll found residents of the state consistently did not want Christie to run for president, which Redlawsk said was due to a variety of reasons.

"Those who like [Christie] want him to stay in the state and do his job," he said. "Those who don't like him — they are a different story. They, mostly Democrats, are afraid he might be a strong challenger to President Obama."

Had the governor jumped into the race, voters would have a difficult decision: supporting the "home" guy or a Democratic president, Redlawsk said.

Reactions from University students and N.J. residents varied.

"My opinion of Obama hasn't really changed," said Vanja Vlajnic, a School of Arts and Sciences junior. "I don't think that he has changed anything drastically. I think he's been doing an OK job."

Vlajnic said he expected the two politicians to act rather than talk. He believes there is no basis for change in opinion of either one of them until they accomplish something.

"Everybody talks, but I haven't really seen any changes in the job market or the economy," he said. "I just think a lot of people with a lot of political power are talking a lot, but there is no real change."

He said job creation has so far only been a buzzword rather than a fact.

"Until anything actually changes," Vlajnic said. "I don't think we should think any differently of anyone until they accomplish what they said they would."

Richard Hua, a School of Arts and Sciences sophomore, said he approved of the president's jobs plan.

"I haven't agreed with most of Obama's plans so far, but this new one is different," he said. "My opinion of him has definitely gone up."

He remained skeptical with regard to Christie's decision not to run for president.

"Personally, I think he is a bully, and his decision not to run may seem like the decent thing for him to do, but I think he feels too

important for it,” Hua said.

He said he would not be surprised if Christie ran in 2016 due to his popularity.

Others supported Obama since the beginning, and believe he should have more than one term to prove himself, as the Eagleton poll found was the case for half the state’s population.

“My opinion has sort of stayed high. Even though he has disappointed me, I don’t think he has had enough time to impress everybody yet,” said Kathy O’Brien, a N.J. resident.

Christie’s decision not to run was well founded, she said. He had not done his job in New Jersey and he would not do a sufficient job on the federal level.

“I think he’s been horrible since Day 1,” she said. “I don’t he should run for president and I don’t think he should be governor either.”

Jean Darius, of East Orange, said he agrees with the general outrage at Christie’s cuts in education and pensions.

“I have noticed the people around me being angry with his cuts to education and pensions, and I don’t think he is doing a good job,” he said.

He said Christie’s decision to stay home was best to him.

“I think he thought about it and in the end decided he might not go far in the election,” Darius said. “He chose the safe path.”

The Eagleton Institute of Politics polled 903 adults, including 821 registered voters between Oct. 6 and Oct. 9. The numbers point toward Obama’s increased support partly due to Christie’s dropping out of the presidential race and his aggressive stance on job creation.

“We also see some evidence that both Democrats and many independents are happier with Obama now as he more frequently defends his positions and blames Republicans for the gridlock in Washington,” Redlawsk said in the poll.