March 10, 2005

Policy Issues and Trust of Government
An Analysis of Center for Public Policy & Administration Survey Questions administered as part of a Dan Jones and Associates Survey

Following the end of the 2005 Legislative Session, Dan Jones and Associates asked two questions of 400 Utah residents. First, with the Utah Legislative Session just completing its work, what issues do you see that need to be worked on further? Second, on a scale of 1-7 with ONE meaning NO TRUST AT ALL and SEVEN meaning COMPLETE TRUST, how much trust do you have in the following government officials?

For question one, respondents were given a pre-selected list of issue topics from which to select. This list included issues around which legislation was NOT passed during the session. Respondents were also given the opportunity to include other issues not listed.

From the list of issues, 60% of respondents said that “funding for public education,” should be “definitely worked on,” giving this issue the highest ranking among those on the list. Following public education funding, the next issue chosen by respondents was “access to health insurance,” with 55% of respondents stating that this issue is something the Legislature should “definitely work on.”

The Legislature spent a lot of time, effort and money on road and highway construction during the 2005 session. This may have resolved Utahns’ concerns about congestion and other road-related issues, because road projects received some of the lowest rankings. For public transit including commuter rail, Legacy Highway, and state roads other than major highways, only 38%, 36% and 23% of respondents, respectively, thought these issues were things that should be “definitely worked on.”
Turning to trust in various government officials, respondents were asked to rate their trust in President Bush, the U.S. Congress as a whole, Governor Huntsman, the Utah State Legislature as a whole, their county commission, their mayor and their local city council. Of these choices, Utahns had the highest trust in Governor Huntsman, who received a mean score of 5.08 on a seven-point scale, with 7.0, the highest score possible. Following the national trend of distrusting legislative bodies, the US Congress received the lowest mean score in the poll, 4.07, with only 4% of respondents saying they had “complete trust” in that body. The Utah State Legislature also seemed to share in respondents’ distrust of legislative bodies, with a mean score of 4.16 and only 3% of respondents placing “complete trust” in the Legislature. It is important to note the survey only asked about legislative bodies as a whole and did not provide respondents an opportunity to rate their own Congressional or Legislative representative.

The demographic characteristics of the survey’s respondents are as follows: 51% were female, 68% were age 40 or older, only 37% had children currently in the public school system, only 20% had a educator or public school employee in their household, 57% identified themselves as “very active” LDS, 56% had an annual income of at least $45,000. Regarding political affiliation, 49% identified themselves as Republicans and in years past, 33% had voted a strong Republican ticket. Ideologically, 63% considered themselves either “very conservative” or “somewhat conservative.” Finally, 38% of respondents live in Salt Lake County, another 37% live in Davis, Utah and Weber counties, and 25% live elsewhere in the state. The poll has a margin of error of + - 4%.

See the Survey Summary

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