The Center for Public Policy & Administration and the Exoro Group are pleased to present the findings from the 2011 Legislative Policy Summit Survey. This survey, conducted by Dan Jones and Associates, measured the public’s attitudes and opinions about many of the issues facing the state this year. Five hundred-nine Utahns were surveyed between January 6-8, 2011, on a range of topics, focusing specifically on issues that will be addressed in the 2011 Legislative Session.

Government Performance

The 2011 Legislative Policy Summit Survey began with an assessment of residents' attitudes regarding national and state government performance. The results indicate a clear distinction between how Utahns view the performance of the nation and the state of Utah. Twenty-nine percent of respondents stated that the nation was definitely or probably headed in the right direction; sixty-five percent stated that the nation was definitely or probably headed in the wrong direction; and six percent of respondents stated they did not know. In comparison Utahns were more positive about the direction of the state, when asked, “Overall, would you say that Utah is headed in the right direction or is it headed in the wrong direction?” Seventy-two percent of respondents stated that Utah was definitely or probably headed in the right direction; twenty-three percent stated that Utah was definitely or probably headed in the wrong direction; and six percent of respondents stated that they did not know.
The survey also provides a sense of the concerns that face Utahns every day, the things that they worry about, and what affects their daily living. The question asked “What are the most pressing concerns that you worry about and that affect your everyday life that could be addressed by state government and the legislature?” In this unaided, open-ended question, the top concern of Utahns was education. The second most pressing concern was health insurance, the cost and availability of health insurance, and health care reform. The economy, unemployment/jobs, and taxes rounded out the list of the top five concerns.

### Table 1. Pressing Concerns to be Addressed by State

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education Comments</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Insurance / Healthcare Reform</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment / Jobs</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxes</td>
<td>10%</td>
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</tbody>
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Other issues of concern to Utahns included Immigration (6%), fiscal responsibility/spending/debt (6%), miscellaneous government comments (5%), Social Security/retirement (2%), natural resources/ environment (2%), gasoline prices (2%), crime/justice system (2%), miscellaneous (3%), and don’t know (5%).

### Education and the Budget

The 2011 Legislative Summit Survey asked citizens about education, both public education and higher education. The results indicate strong support for public and higher education. The survey included a pair of questions about the public’s willingness to increase taxes to support public education in the state. The results show support to raise taxes to increase salaries of public school teachers and to reduce class sizes.

Respondents were asked, “Knowing that there are only so many resources, would you be willing to pay more in taxes for increased salaries for Utah’s public school teachers?” The majority of respondents (67%) stated that they would definitely or probably be willing to pay increased taxes for this purpose; only 31% responded that they would definitely or probably not be willing to pay increased taxes, or were neutral on the subject.
Respondents were then asked, “Knowing that there are only so many resources, would you be willing to pay more in taxes for reducing class sizes in Utah’s public schools?” The results again show that a majority of Utahns (69%) are willing to pay higher taxes to address issues in public education. Only 27% of respondents stated that they definitely or probably would not be willing to pay increased taxes to reduce class size, or were neutral on the subject.

The survey asked respondents about weaknesses in Utah’s public education system: “Where are the ‘weak links’ in Utah’s public education system – that is kindergarten through high school?” This was an unaided question, where the survey allows citizens to offer their perspectives on the weak areas in our K-12 school system. The top three responses were comments regarding the size of classrooms; school administration; and the lack of funding, comprising 30 percent of all responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. The ‘Weak Links’ in Utah’s Public Education System</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Sizes are too Large 14 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration 10 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Funding 6 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Estimates show that by the year 2020, 66% of jobs in Utah will require an education beyond high school. At least 55% of the jobs in the state will require at least an associate’s degree (Gerorgetown University 2010). Currently, only 38% of the population has an associates degree or higher degree. Our survey indicates that Utahns strongly
support initiatives to increase the percentage of the population with higher education degrees to meet the needs of Utah’s economy in the next decade. The results of our survey show that 98% of Utahns believe that college degrees and technical training are important for jobs in the future.

**Immigration Results**

The 2011 Legislative Policy Summit Survey asked citizens several questions regarding immigration policy. The results show that the majority of Utahns support moderate reforms. A set of questions explored Utahn’s familiarity with and support of the Utah Compact, a declaration of five principles to guide Utah’s immigration discussion. The Compact has broad support from community and religious leaders, business, and law enforcement. The survey asked “Have you heard about the Utah Compact which deals with immigration?” Results showed that about 47% of Utahns have heard about it, compared to 48% who have not heard about the Compact.

Those respondents who had heard about the Utah Compact were asked a follow up question: “Based on what you know or have heard about the Utah Compact, do you favor or oppose its approach?” Fifty-one percent responded that they definitely or probably favored the approach of the Utah Compact, 14% probably opposed, and 12% definitely opposed.
We also included two additional questions that provide the perspectives and opinions of Utahns on immigration reforms. The survey asked respondents to comment on undocumented immigrants in Utah with children under 18: “In your opinion, should undocumented parents be deported if they have children under age 18 who are U.S. citizens?” Results show that Utahns are relatively split on this issue, with 54% of respondents stating that parents definitely or probably should not be deported and 38% stating that parents definitely or probably should be deported. Nine percent of respondents stated that they were neutral on the subject or did not know.

Respondents were then asked to give their opinion on a list of comments regarding immigration legislation: “Which of the next statements best reflects your opinion regarding immigration legislation in Utah?” Fifty-three percent of respondents favored moderate reform that includes allowing those already in the state the ability to continue to work and live here; thirty-one percent favored the Arizona approach to immigration; and eleven percent believed it should be left to the federal government.
Conclusion

The 2011 Legislative Policy Summit Survey provides a clear picture of the public’s attitudes and opinions on key policy issues facing the State of Utah. Our citizens gave feedback on their concerns, the priorities, and their perspectives on complex issues. Essentially, the survey gives us a read on the political pulse of our state.

The survey provides information on how Utahns feel toward immigration issues. Despite a mixture of responses regarding the Utah Compact on immigration, 51% of Utahns favor a moderate approach to immigration policy. The survey also provides data on how Utahns view the state government: while the majority of Utahns do not believe the nation is headed in the right direction, they do believe that Utah itself is on the right course.

Lastly, the results demonstrate Utahns’ strong support of public education, with 98% of Utahns believing higher education will be important for future employment. Twenty-one percent of respondents mentioned education as a pressing concern in daily life that should be addressed by the state, and a majority are willing to increase taxes to benefit teacher salaries and reduce classroom sizes.

Methods

The survey was commissioned by the Center for Public Policy & Administration and The Exoro Group. This survey of Utah residents was conducted and compiled by Dan Jones & Associates, Inc., a full-service, independent public opinion and market research firm located in Salt Lake City, Utah.

To meet the research objectives, 509 individuals were interviewed by telephone from January 6-8, 2011, during evening hours on weekdays and during daytime hours on Saturdays. All interviews were conducted in the Dan Jones & Associates Data Collection Center, where interviews are supervised and monitored.

Questionnaire

Dan Jones & Associates developed the questionnaire in conjunction with the Center for Public Policy & Administration at the University of Utah and The Exoro Group. Before any fieldwork began, the survey instrument was pretested on individuals selected at random from the sample universe. The pretest was designed to detect problems with the clarity, completeness, level of shared language, and appropriateness of questions.

Sample

Dan Jones & Associates utilized a random sampling procedure, giving each household in Utah an equal opportunity of being selected for an interview. The margin of error for the statewide survey (509 interviews) is ±4.5% for total data. The margin of error increases for the responses of subgroups within the data and for each of the geographical survey areas. This study has a 95% confidence level, meaning that no more than one time in twenty should chance variations in the sample cause the results to vary by more than the margin of error (±4.5%) from the answers that would be obtained if all people in the survey universe were polled.

Fieldwork
Dan Jones & Associates employs professional, experienced interviewers who have worked on numerous surveys and have proven to be reliable, thorough, and able to develop excellent rapport with respondents. Interviewers were cautioned to limit their interaction with respondents concerning individual responses to the questionnaire. To assure consistency in reciting the questions and in recording the responses, the project director briefed each interviewer.

Both structured and unstructured questions were used to measure intensity of opinions and to assess the perceptions of respondents. Demographic questions were asked to provide opinions of subgroups.

**Data Analysis**

The staff of Dan Jones & Associates prepared statistical results. Each question has a response distribution and a series of demographic cross-tabulations, that organize responses by various groupings and allow for detection of differences that may exist between opinions of subgroups.