

Louisiana Moving in the Right Direction, LSU Survey Finds

2008 Louisiana Survey addresses economy, education, taxes, immigration and more

Complete survey available online at www.survey.lsu.edu

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BATON ROUGE – Louisiana citizens are optimistic about the state’s future, according to results of the 2008 Louisiana Survey, released today by Kirby Goidel, director of LSU’s Public Policy Research Laboratory.

According to the LSU survey, 51 percent of respondents said the state is headed in the right direction, up from 33 percent in the 2007 survey. Goidel said the 51 percent is the strongest response to this question since the 2005 survey, which was conducted prior to Hurricane Katrina.

The survey, sponsored by the LSU Manship School of Mass Communication’s Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs, was conducted by the school’s Public Policy Research Lab. The 2008 survey also addresses education, taxes and immigration, among other topics.

Another shift in this year’s survey related to the post-Katrina environment is that fewer respondents listed “rebuilding” as the state’s issue of primary concern. In 2008, “education” topped the list as the state’s most important issue, followed by “economy/jobs” and “health care.”

The optimism of 2008 was again evident when 61 percent of respondents said they were either very confident or somewhat confident that state government would effectively address the state’s most important problem – up from 39 percent in the 2007 survey. In addition, substantial majorities believe that at least some change is possible across a wide range of issues, including

roads and infrastructure, 54 percent; increased workforce training, 50 percent; reduction of waste in state government, 49 percent; and attracting businesses to the state, 49 percent.

Citizens also responded to an open-ended question and said the single most important thing that Gov. Bobby Jindal's administration can accomplish is reducing corruption, 21 percent; bringing jobs to the state/improving the economy, 18 percent; and improving access to and quality of health care, 14 percent.

Education

Education, from K-12 to colleges and universities, ranked high among respondents on a number of different questions. Louisiana's colleges and universities received either a grade "A" or "B" from 78 percent of respondents, up from 65 percent in last year's survey.

In a related question, the largest percentage, 35.4 percent, selected public education as what they thought should be the state's top spending priority. Other questions showed that 70 percent of respondents "strongly favor" expanding state funding of pre-K programs, and 67 percent said there should be a greater priority placed on providing sufficient funding for the needs of young children than on cutting state taxes and spending.

Surplus Funds

More than 37 percent of respondents ranked "improving public schools" as their preference for how the state should spend surplus revenues, compared to 24.3 percent who listed "improving roads" as their preference. Another 14 percent preferred "strengthening higher education" as their preference for spending surplus revenues.

Taxes

Forty-five percent of respondents – up from 33 percent in 2007 – said state income taxes are too high and need to be reduced. There was also an increase in the percentage of respondents who believe that state sales and property taxes are too high. Fifty-two percent of respondents believe that sales taxes are too high, up from 50 percent in 2007. Nearly 44 percent think property taxes are too high, up from 40 percent in 2007.

Immigration

Another line of questions dealt with immigration, showing that Louisianians believe immigration is an important, but not critical issue. Slightly more than a quarter of respondents – 27 percent – see immigration as “one of the most important issues facing the state,” but a far larger percentage – 40 percent – see immigration as “important but not one of the most important issues.” Nearly a third of respondents, 32 percent, say immigration is “not all that important” or “not important at all.”

In addition, 55 percent of respondents say immigrants are mostly taking jobs that Louisianians do not want, and respondents are almost evenly split on whether immigration has helped, 44 percent, or hurt, 42 percent, their local communities. Respondents from New Orleans were more likely to say that immigration has impacted their community, but were also more likely to say that it has helped more than hurt.

Other Topics

Other issues addressed in the survey include whether Louisiana and America are ready for a black or woman president; whether Louisianians support tax credits for parents of children in private/religious schools; whether state or

national business conditions have gotten worse during the past year; and whether America is in a recession.

To view the complete survey, visit www.survey.lsu.edu. For more information on the questions and responses, contact Kirby Goidel of the Public Policy Research Lab at 225-578-7588 or kgoidel@lsu.edu.

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