

NEW JERSEY FAMILY POLICY COUNCIL

POLICIES & POLLS

2001 New Jersey General Election



Common-Sense
Family Policies
and the Public
Support for Them



Policies & Polls

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What is Policies and Polls?

More and more, political candidates like to talk about “family values.” That’s good news for New Jersey families because families are not a special interest — they are a common interest.

However, just because a candidate claims to be “pro-family” doesn’t mean their ideas will actually help New Jersey families. Hoping to establish a standard for measuring government’s impact on families, the New Jersey Family Policy Council has crafted *Policies & Polls*. This booklet will benefit both families and candidates. It will help families by shifting government’s focus to supporting families. As a candidate, it will help you in three ways — by directing you toward the issues families will vote on, providing the surveys to prove it, and outlining the talking points to make these issues clear.

As a candidate, it’s just what you’re looking for.

Contents

Parental Notification for Teenage Abortions	3
Juvenile Crime	4
Choice in Education	5
Empowering Local Schools	6
Marriage Protection	7
The Marriage Penalty	8
Single-Parent Homes	9
Sex Education and Teenage Pregnancy	10
Internet Pornography	11
Needle Exchange	12
Divorce Reform	13
Endnotes	15

Parental Notification for Teenage Abortions

2001 New Jersey General Election

The Issue:

New Jersey does not have a parental-notification law, so minors seeking to have an abortion may obtain one without notifying any adult.

The Results:

- Teenage girls often go through this serious medical procedure without any parental guidance.
- Doctors who perform abortions do not always have full medical records for these girls, which can expose them to serious health risks.
- Teenage girls suffer negative emotions and are also at risk for possible serious medical complications, including uterine perforation, cervical lacerations, hemorrhage, reactions to anesthesia, and infection.

The Solutions:

Urge passage of a parental-notification law, a measure that has already been effective in many states. Studies have shown that parental-notification laws have reduced the number of abortions in the states that have such statutes.¹ The New Jersey Legislature enacted a parental-notification law on August 24, 1999, but it was declared unconstitutional by the state Supreme Court on August 15, 2000. In response, the Legislature has proposed a constitutional amendment that would allow the law to stand. However, for the second year in a row the amendment failed to pass (this time by only two Senate votes) with the super majority required to place it before New Jersey voters in this election. This amendment should be passed and placed before the voters immediately.

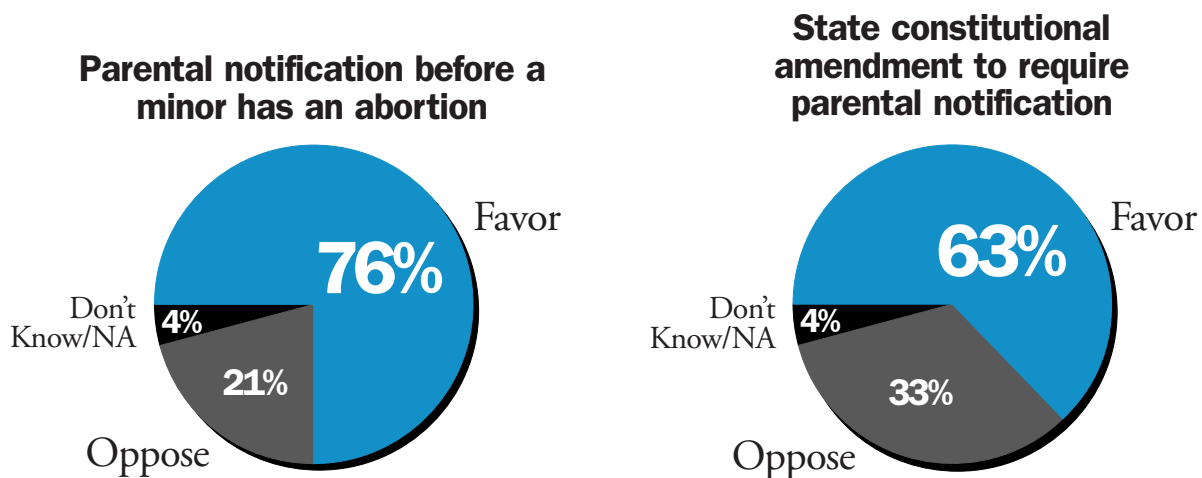
Public Support - National:

Nearly 78 percent of Americans support parental notification.

Source: Zogby International, August 1999 poll.

Public Support - New Jersey:

- Seventy-six percent of New Jersey voters favor parental notification before minors have abortions.
- Sixty-three percent of New Jersey voters support a constitutional amendment to require parental notification for abortions.



Source: Quinnipiac University poll, March 12, 2001.

Juvenile Crime

2001 New Jersey General Election

The Issue:

Although juvenile crime arrests and violent crime arrests in New Jersey have steadily declined since 1995,² these numbers do not totally reflect the seriousness of the problem.

- The juvenile violent crime index in New Jersey is 22 percent above the national average.³
- Between 1989 and 1998, arrests for serious violent crime offenses increased 15 percent for females in New Jersey, reflecting a national trend for the same period.⁴
- Even though the percentage of violent incidents in our schools is not currently on the rise (as they have been nationally), the incidents have become more severe and remorseless.
- There was a 30 percent increase in juvenile arrests for aggravated assault, a 67 percent increase in drug abuse violations, and 19 percent increase in arson during the period 1990-1998 versus the previous decade, 1980-1988.⁵

The Results:

The problem of juvenile crime is still prevalent in New Jersey. Further, the average age of youths involved in crimes has decreased in recent years.

The Short-term Solutions:⁶

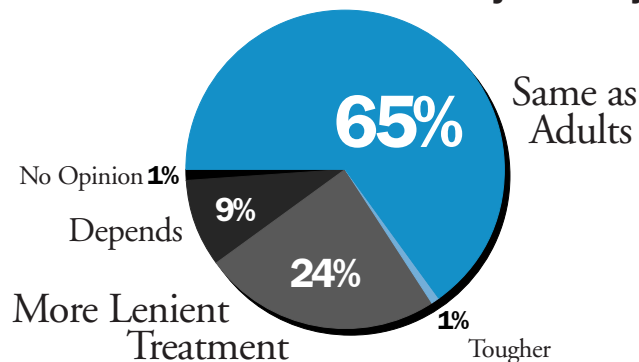
- Establish tough juvenile sanctions that emphasize discipline and responsibility to deter non-violent first-time offenders from committing more crimes.
- Increase the ability of the juvenile system to treat chronic, violent juvenile offenders as adults.
- Provide for use of juvenile offense records in adult sentencing.

The Long-term Solutions:

- Recognize the undeniable link between family structure and crime. Nationally, father absence is the strongest link to or determinant of juvenile crime even when measuring for poverty, race and education variables — and New Jersey is no different.⁷ Therefore, legislation should be passed to institute a “Marriage Builders” program in New Jersey to teach skills to strengthen marriages and families. Furthermore, a growing body of empirical evidence shows that the best situation in which to raise children is a family with a married mother and father. Mandate that the family life curricula used by New Jersey schools teaches this fact.
- Call for greater involvement of religious institutions in the public schools, such as faith-based groups and after-school activities that are rooted in moral principles.

Public Support:

How should juveniles who commit violent crimes be treated in the criminal justice system?



Source: Gallup poll, August 29 – September 5, 2000.

Choice in Education

2001 New Jersey General Election

The Issue:

Students may not have access to good public education because school district boundaries dictate which students can attend which schools.

The Results:

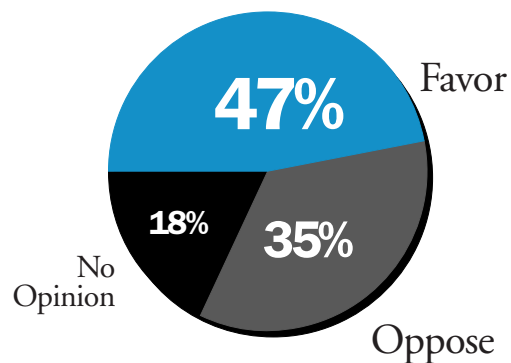
Students may be trapped in schools that do not offer quality education or serve their individual needs.

The Solution:

Provide quality education for students by giving parents better options for educating their children, including educational tax credits, tuition-tax deductions and school vouchers.

Public Support – National:

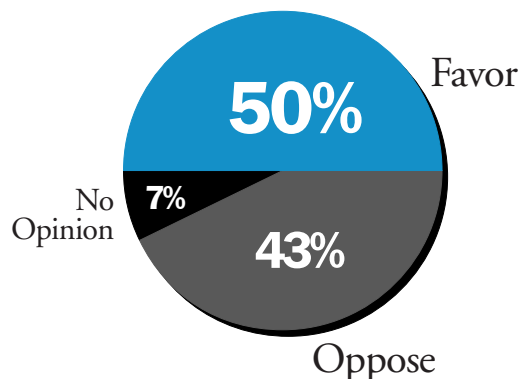
Americans were asked: Based on what you have read or heard, do you favor or oppose President Bush's school voucher program?



Source: Gallup education poll conducted April 20-22, 2001. These numbers increased 2%, 1%, and 1% respectively over the previous Gallup poll administered January 5-7, 2001.

Public Support – New Jersey:

New Jersey voters were asked: Do you favor or oppose providing parents with tax money in the form of school vouchers to help pay for private or religious schools?



Source: Quinnipiac University poll, July 3, 2001, "McGreevey Leads Schundler in NJ Governor Race, Quinnipiac University Poll Finds; Education Emerges as Most Important Issue."

Empowering Local Schools

2001 New Jersey General Election

The Issue:

Government bureaucracies, not local schools, dictate how education funds are to be used.

The Result:

Local schools are unable to use these funds for their specific needs.

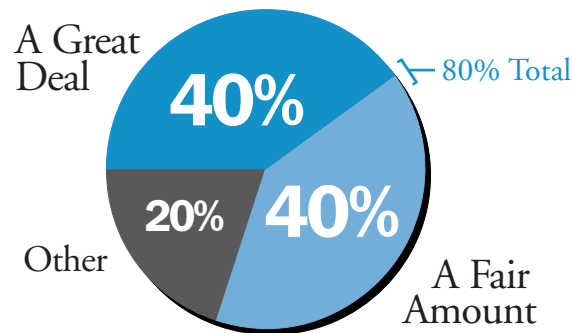
The Solution:

Allow local school districts more freedom to determine how funds are distributed depending on their specific needs.

Public Support:

- When given a list of various ways to improve the quality of education in this country, 80 percent of Americans felt that providing more federal money for local school districts to use as they see fit would improve the educational system “a great deal/fair amount.”

How would providing more federal money for local school districts to use as they see fit improve the educational system?



- In the same poll, providing more federal money for local school districts to use “as they see fit” came in second behind increasing teachers’ salaries as a way to improve the educational system.

Source: Gallup poll, January 24, 2001.

Marriage Protection

2001 New Jersey General Election

The Issue:

Policy makers are challenged to legitimize same-sex relationships by legalizing homosexual marriages and/or civil unions.

The Result:

Important values and morals rooted in the traditional institution of marriage between one man and one woman are being threatened by the legalization of homosexual marriages.

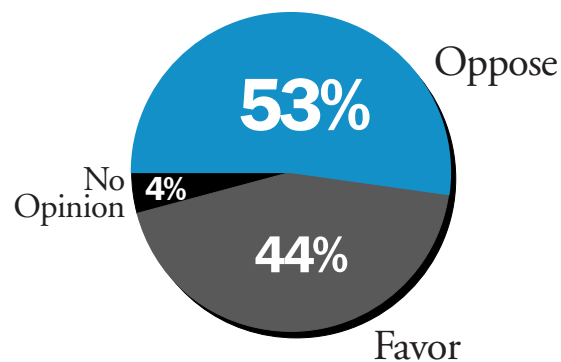
The Solution:

Recognize the need to uphold and strengthen traditional marriages. Pass legislation that would declare same-sex marriages void.

Public Support:

Although there appears to be an increase in tolerance for homosexuality, more Americans oppose the legalization of homosexual marriages.

Would you favor or oppose a law that would allow homosexual couples to legally form civil unions, giving them some of the same legal rights as married couples?



Source: Gallup poll, May 10-14, 2001.

The Marriage Penalty

2001 New Jersey General Election

The Issue:

The income of a family's second wage earner is taxed at a higher rate than if the salary were taxed as an individual, and the standard deduction is lower for a married couple filing jointly than for two individual returns.

The Result:

- The tax penalty discourages marriage and decreases the amount of money couples have to spend on family needs.
- The establishment of marriages and families is essential to maintaining social stability. When tax laws discourage marriage, society is threatened.

The Solution:

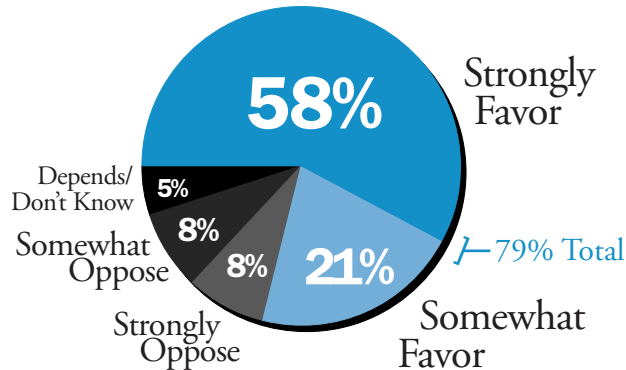
Eliminate the economic penalty for married couples and encourage dating couples to enter into committed marriages.

Note: We are encouraged by the actions of the President and Congress to phase out the marriage tax penalty over the next few years; however, families who are pulling together at this time in our nation and state need this tax relief now more than ever.

Public Support:

- Eighty-five percent of Americans say that the marriage tax penalty is unfair (61 percent say it is “very unfair”), while just 13 percent believe it is fair (*The Wirthlin Report*, September 1999).
- Nearly 80 percent say they would like to see the marriage tax penalty eliminated, compared to only 16 percent who oppose the elimination of this tax (an increase from the 77 percent who favored elimination in 1997). Fifty-eight percent say they “strongly favor” elimination.

Would you favor or oppose eliminating the marriage penalty tax?



Source: The Wirthlin Report, September 1999.

- Seventy-six percent of Americans support decreasing taxes for married couples with children as opposed to 23 percent who disapprove (*The Wirthlin Report*, August 2000, Vol. 10, No. 4).

Single-Parent Homes

2001 New Jersey General Election

The Issue:

Over 21 percent of New Jersey children are being raised in single-parent homes. The increase in teen pregnancy, out-of-wedlock births and divorce has resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of children being raised in single-parent homes.

The Result:

- Children raised in single-parent homes tend to be more prone to commit crimes, to experience abuse, teen pregnancy, poverty and emotional and behavioral problems.⁸
- In New Jersey, as well as in the nation, there is a correlation between father absence and high school dropouts, teen pregnancy, violent crime and child abuse.⁹

The Solution:

Enact policies that recognize and affirm the social research findings that clearly show the importance of children being raised by their married mother and father. In general, public policy should favor marriage and discourage divorce.

Public Support – National:

- When asked to rate the importance of specific possible causes of increased school violence in the nation's public schools, 76 percent of Americans surveyed indicated that the breakdown of the American family is a "very important" factor.

Source: Gallup poll, May 1999.

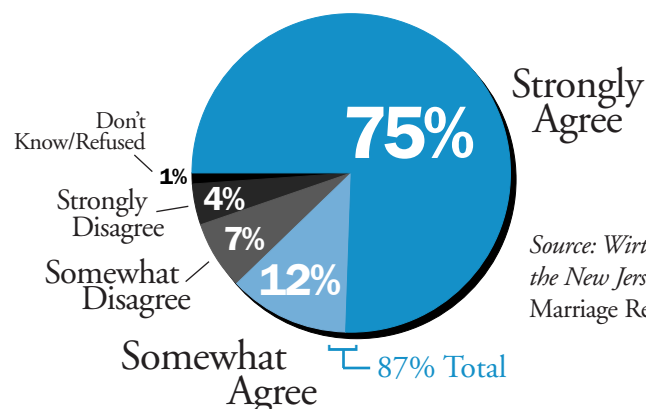
- Ninety-two percent of Americans agree with the statement, "Families stand at the center of our society. We can only go forward in this country if families are strengthened."

Source: Wirthlin Worldwide, Inc. 2000 poll, available at www.allianceformarriage.org.

Public Support – New Jersey:

New Jersey adults strongly believe (75 percent) that all things being equal, it is better for children to be raised by their married mother and father. A total of 87 percent agreed to some extent.

All things being equal, it is better for children to be raised by their married mother and father.



Source: Wirthlin Worldwide, Inc. 1997 survey for the New Jersey Family Policy Council's New Jersey Marriage Report: From This Day Forward.

Sex Education and Teen Pregnancy

2001 New Jersey General Election

The Issue:

- In New Jersey, 9 out of 10 teen mothers who gave birth in 1997 were unmarried. Between 1960 and 1997, the percentage of unwed teen mothers grew from 17.2 percent to 90.1.¹⁰
- Nationally there was a 325 percent increase in out-of-wedlock teen births from 1960-1998.¹¹

The Results:

- High rates of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) among teenagers. One in four sexually experienced teens acquires an STD each year.
- An increase in teenage abortion. New Jersey has the third highest teen abortion rate in the country and is the only state that did not experience a decline in abortions during 1992-1996.
- More than 80 percent of single mothers under the age of 18 end up in poverty and reliant on government assistance.¹²

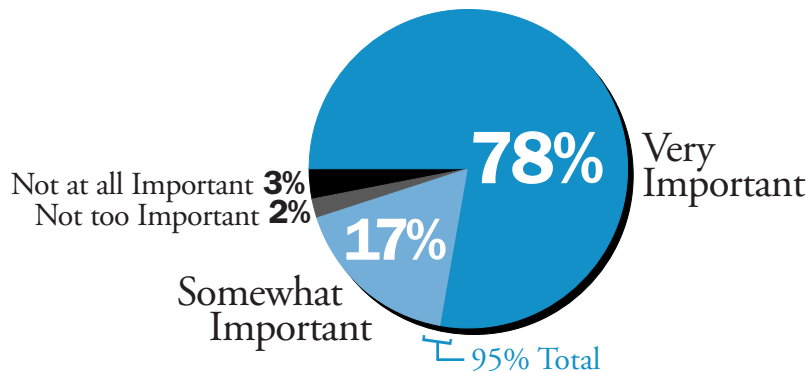
The Solution:

- Sex education in schools should focus on abstinence rather than comprehensive sex education. A CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) report made public in July 2001 documents 138 different studies on condom effectiveness that failed to provide convincing evidence that condoms protect against many STDs.
- Provide more funding for abstinence-based curricula for use in schools, as well as other abstinence-centered programs that have shown great success.

Public Support – National:

- A total of 95 percent of adults surveyed indicated that it is important for teens to be given a strong message from society that they should abstain from sex, at least until they are out of high school. Five percent indicated that it was not important.

How important do you think it is for teens to be given a strong message from society that they should abstain from sex?



Source: National survey conducted by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, April 2001, “With One Voice: America’s Teens Sound Off About Teen Pregnancy.”

Public Support – New Jersey:

- Fifty-three percent of New Jerseyans believed that couples should wait to have sex until they are married as opposed to young couples having sex prior to marriage; 38 percent disagreed and 4 percent said neither.

Source: New Jersey Marriage Report: From This Day Forward, *New Jersey Family Policy Council*, 1997.

Internet Pornography

2001 New Jersey General Election

The Issue:

Because it is free of significant regulation, the Internet gives any user access to violent and sexually explicit materials.

The Results:

- Children have access to pornography and other indecent materials from computers in their homes, schools and libraries.
- Sexual predators use the Internet to target and recruit children for exploitation.

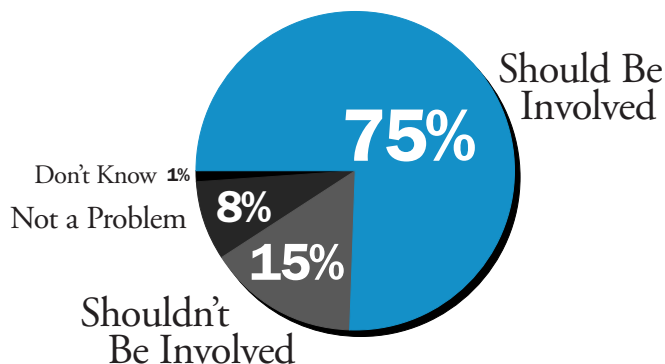
The Solutions:

- Enact legislation such as the Student Internet Access Act (A2196), which would require public schools and libraries to install special software systems in their computers to protect young students from exposure to indecent materials.
- Encourage greater corporate responsibility in the marketplace. Parents need high-tech tools such as filters and other blocking technologies to protect and screen Internet materials.

Public Support:

- Three-quarters (75 percent) of Americans say the government should do something about the availability of pornography to children.

Should the government do something about the availability of pornography to children or should the government not be involved?



Source: National Public Radio/Kaiser Family Foundation/Kennedy School of Government poll on computers and the Internet, November 15 – December 19, 1999.

- Furthermore, 63 percent of Americans strongly disagree with allowing people to place sexually explicit material on the Internet.

Source: Freedom Forum First Amendment Center, poll conducted by University of Connecticut, February 26 – March 24, 1999, "State of the First Amendment 1999." Responses: 63% strongly disagree, 12% mildly disagree, 14% mildly agree, 10% strongly agree, 1% don't know/refused to answer.

Needle Exchange

2001 New Jersey General Election

The Issue:

Needle exchange programs (NEPs) provide injection drug users with sterile needles and syringes in exchange for used ones, as they continue to use illicit and harmful drugs.

The Results:

- The decriminalization of drug paraphernalia that NEP clients use condones and enables the behavior of drug addicts, who bring their dangerous networking activities to the neighborhoods where needle exchange programs are located.¹³
- By allowing needle exchange programs to exist, the government is relaying a mixed message to society and young people that does nothing to help the fight against drugs.

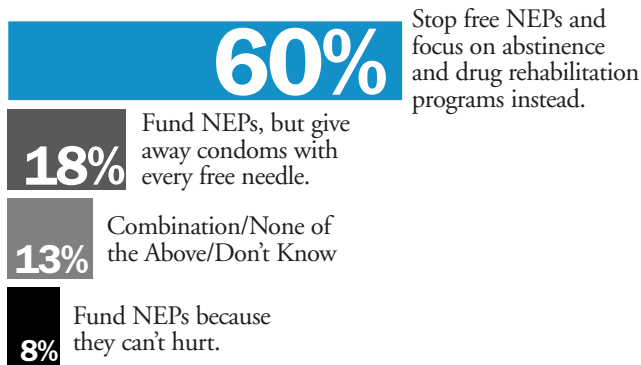
The Solution:

- Provide drug treatment services that have proven effective in decreasing injection drug use and related activities, rather than implementing needle exchange programs that facilitate and tacitly condone the use of illegal drugs. *Note:* Results of the National Institute on Drug Abuse Treatment Outcome Study showed participants in outpatient methadone treatment reduced heroin use by 70 percent and illegal activity by 57 percent. They also increased their full-time work by 24 percent.¹⁴
- Disallow the use of federal funds for needle exchange services. *Note:* Some studies of NEPs seem to show a decline in HIV transmission rates, but the studies are problematic for a number of reasons.¹⁵ Research analyst Bryan Kim of the nonpartisan Statistical Assessment Service in Washington, D.C., states that “because legal, ethical and logistical restrictions preclude the types of studies that yield *definitive* conclusions, scientists often have to settle for proxy measurements.”¹⁶

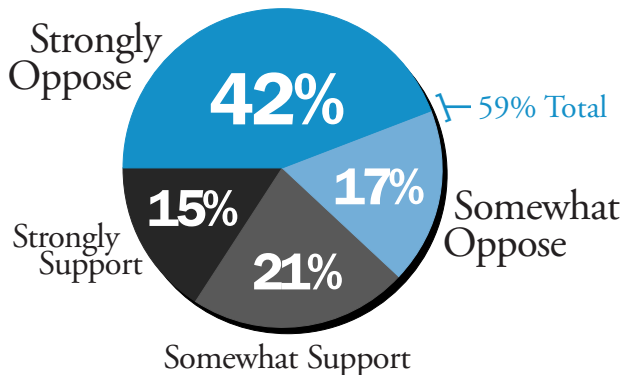
Public Support:

- If given the opportunity, 60 percent of registered voters would tell Congress to stop free needle programs and focus on abstinence and drug rehabilitation programs instead.
- A combined total of 59 percent of registered voters oppose the creation of needle exchange programs in their neighborhoods.

Which of the following responses would you give to your members of Congress if you were given the chance?



Would you support or oppose the creation of a needle exchange program in your neighborhood?



Source: “America Assesses Needle Exchange Programs,” a national survey of 1,000 registered voters conducted June 29 – July 7, 1997 and “American Voters Speak Out: Drug Policy in the Next Millennium,” a national survey of 1,000 registered voters, May 26 – 29, 1998. These surveys were conducted for the Family Research Council by The Polling Company, Washington, D.C.

Divorce Reform

2001 New Jersey General Election

The Issue:

Currently in the state of New Jersey, either spouse can file for divorce for any reason without the consent of the other spouse if the couple has been separated (not living together) for 18 months.

The Results:

- The no-fault divorce law, which allows for relatively easy divorce proceedings, discourages married couples from seeking any type of pre-divorce counseling or other possible remedies prior to divorce.
- Abandoned spouses and children have no recompense under the law.
- The increase in divorce rates further contributes to the breakdown of the family, which is an essential aspect of social stability.

The Solutions:

- Pass legislation that would make it more difficult for couples seeking “easy” divorce.
- Require mutual consent to divorce proceedings.
- Encourage married couples to stay together by requiring some type of conflict-resolution program such as pre-divorce counseling and longer waiting periods before divorce.

Public Support – National:

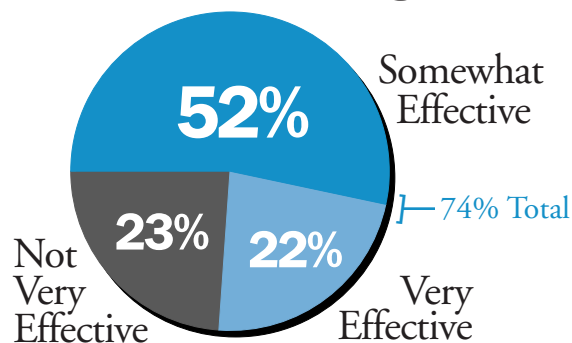
- Seventy-eight percent of Americans surveyed would approve a policy that would require married couples with children to obtain counseling before being granted a divorce.

Source: The Wirthlin Report, *August 2000, Vol. 10, No. 4.*

Public Support – New Jersey:

- A combined total of 74 percent of New Jersey adults believe that mandatory pre-divorce counseling would be effective in strengthening the institution of marriage. Sixty-one percent believe that longer waiting periods before divorce would be effective.

How effective would mandatory pre-divorce counseling be in strengthening the institution of marriage?



Source: Wirthlin Worldwide survey conducted for NJFPC, cited in the New Jersey Marriage Report: From This Day Forward, New Jersey Family Policy Council, 1997.

Endnotes

2001 New Jersey General Election

- ¹ “Teens and Abortion, Should Doctors Be Forced to Notify Parents?” *The Record* (Hackensack, NJ), May 28, 1999, cited in *New Jersey Index of Leading Cultural Indicators*, New Jersey Family Policy Council, 2000, p. 6.
- ² *New Jersey Index of Leading Cultural Indicators*, New Jersey Family Policy Council, 2000, pp. 19-20.
- ³ *Ibid.*
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 20.
- ⁵ *Fatherless New Jersey and Beyond*, New Jersey Family Policy Council, 2001, p. 18.
- ⁶ *Polls & Policies and Alabama Guide to the Issues/Georgia Guide to the Issues*, Alabama Policy Institute, 1998.
- ⁷ *Fatherless New Jersey*, pp. 10, 21-22.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-17.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 22.
- ¹⁰ New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services, cited in *New Jersey Index*, p. 3.
- ¹¹ *National Vital Statistics Reports*, Vol. 48, No. 16, October 18, 2000, pp. 18, 24. Cited in *Fatherless New Jersey*, p. 10.
- ¹² *Kids Having Kids, A Robin Hood Foundation Special Report on the Costs of Adolescent Childbearing*, Robin Hood Foundation, June 1996, p. 1.
- ¹³ Nancy Sosman, “Needle Exchanges Destroy Neighborhoods,” Coalition for a Better Community, 99 East Fourth Street, New York, N.Y., April 1996.
- ¹⁴ Letter from Barry R. McCaffrey, Director, Office of National Drug Control Policy, to Alan Leshner, Director, National Institute on Drug Abuse, December 4, 1997.
- ¹⁵ For an in-depth review of the problems with NEP studies, call the NJFPC at 1-800-FAMILY-1 to request a copy of the March 1999 issue of *Family Findings*, “Needle Exchange Programs —Panacea or Peril?”
- ¹⁶ Bryan Kim, “Needle Exchange Programs: A Prickly Debate,” Statistical Assessment Service, Washington, D.C.

Reports published by the New Jersey Family Policy Council cited herein
*(New Jersey Index of Leading Cultural Indicators, Fatherless New Jersey and Beyond, New Jersey Marriage Report:
 From This Day Forward)* may be obtained by calling the NJFPC (973-263-5258).



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