

News Release

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Richmond City Poll

CNU Center for Public Policy

**Richmond Voters Hungry for Change: Have Mixed Views on City Leaders
and Institutions, Unhappy About Handling of Most Issue**

(NEWPORT NEWS, VA) – Half of Richmond voters think the city is headed in the right direction, but when it comes to evaluating the overall political leadership of Richmond city government, voters by a wide margin want change. Just over 70% of voters say they want change and a new direction, while 20% say things are going well and should continue as is. This desire for change is reflected in mostly negative views of the working relationships between city institutions and the way issues have been dealt with. Nearly 3 in 4 voters say they are dissatisfied with the working relationship between the city council and the mayor, the working relationship between the school board and the city, and the handling of the Braves baseball stadium issue. Around 6 in 10 voters are dissatisfied with the management of city finances and with efforts to improve the quality of schools. A small majority are dissatisfied with taxes. Voters have no clear views on planning for a public mass transit system or on the working relationship between the city and surrounding counties in the region. These findings are from a Richmond City Poll conducted by the Center for Public Policy at Christopher Newport University. The poll was conducted February 14-17, 2008 with 350 registered voters in Richmond. The margin of error is +/- 5.3% at the 95% confidence level. The poll was conducted in order to assess Richmond voter's views as we near the end of the first term under the new strong mayor form of government.

On the bright side, voters are very satisfied with the way crime has been handled, and with the improved economy, and despite their desire for change and their negative view of how the city's political leadership has handled issues, Richmond voters have very favorable views of Police Chief Rodney Monroe (86% favorable) and the City Council (63% favorable). The approval rating of other city leaders, including Mayor Wilder and the school board, hover a few points above or below the 50% mark.

“Voters are saying they are frustrated with the bickering and back-and-forth that has characterized the relationships between the city council, mayor, and school board, and as a result would like to see a change in direction,” Said Quentin Kidd, Director of the Center for Public Policy at CNU. “But they are also very satisfied with what they perceive is an improving quality of life in Richmond, with lower crime and a better economy.”

Overall, would you say the City of Richmond is heading more in the right direction or the wrong direction? (cells=%, numbers may not equal 100% due to rounding.)

Right direction	50
Mixed	12
Wrong direction	24
DK/Refused	13

And how would you evaluate the overall political leadership of Richmond city government – would you say things are going well and should CONTINUE as is or is it time for a CHANGE that moves Richmond in a new direction? (cells=%, numbers may not equal 100% due to rounding.)

Continue as is	20
Change/move in new direction	72
DK/Refused	8

Next, tell me if you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied with how the city’s political leadership has handled each of the following issues... (cells=%, numbers may not equal 100% due to rounding.)

	Very Favorable	Somewhat Favorable	Somewhat unfavorable	Very unfavorable	Don’t Know
Improving the quality of schools	7	25	31	29	8
Managing city finances	7	27	30	29	8
The working relationship between the city and surrounding counties in the region	12	32	23	21	13
Working to improve the economy	9	43	22	16	10
Keeping taxes reasonable	8	33	25	29	4
Handling of the Braves baseball stadium situation	4	11	24	49	12
The working relationship between the city and the School Board	3	17	32	40	8
The working relationship between the Mayor and City Council	4	15	29	49	3
Fighting crime	29	51	10	8	1
The planning for a public mass transit system	16	25	21	19	19

I'd like to ask your opinion of several people and organizations. For each one, please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable opinion of that person or organization. (Cells=%, and numbers may not equal 100% due to rounding)

	Very Favorable	Somewhat Favorable	Somewhat unfavorable	Very unfavorable	Don’t Know
Mayor Doug Wilder	23	30	23	20	3
School Superintendent Deborah Jewell-Sherman	17	36	21	7	19
Police Chief Rodney Monroe	59	27	3	1	10
Richmond Chief Administrative Officer Sheila Hill Christian	19	25	6	2	48
The School Board	10	37	25	14	14
The City Council	14	49	21	12	4

Releases to Come

February 27: Detailed views on Mayor L. Douglas Wilder's leadership

Survey Methodology

The Richmond City Poll is provided as a public service to the citizens of Virginia. It is an omnibus public opinion survey of registered Richmond voters conducted by telephone from February 14-17, 2008. Results for the full sample have a margin of error of plus or minus 5.3% at the 95% confidence level. This means for the full sample we can be 95% confident that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects is plus or minus 5.3%. In addition to sampling error, the other potential sources of error include non-response, question wording, and interviewer error. Where percentages for subgroups are reported, the margin of error would be higher. Numbers may not equal 100% due to rounding. The poll was designed by the Center for Public Policy at CNU and conducted for CNU by FrederickPolls, LLC of Arlington, Virginia. For information or requests, contact Dr. Quentin Kidd, at (757) 594-7971 or qkidd@cnu.edu.

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