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# ***Rocky Mountain Poll***

NEWS RELEASE [RMP 2010-I-04]

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## **VOTERS ON EDGE - TWO PARTIES FACE MORE EROSION** **MORE WILL RE-REGISTER AS INDEPENDENTS**

**SYNOPSIS:** Incumbents, regardless of political party will face voter ire in Arizona in 2010. Voters show continuous interest in re-registering as Independents. Dissatisfaction with Governor and Legislature deep.

February 4, 2010. Close to a third of Arizona's registered Democrats and Republicans are so fed up with the state of politics and economics they are considering re-registering as Independents, including 12 percent who say they are "very likely" to make such a move before the end of the year. If only 25 percent of those "very likely" to switch loyalties actually do so (representing about three percent of current voters), Independents will rival in number the remaining ranks of Democrats and be within three points of equaling the number of registered Republicans. Further, if one adds voters with the Green Party and Libertarians to the to people who are not registered with either of the two major political parties, it is clear there is no "dominant" political party in Arizona.

There is also growing evidence of deepening voter dissatisfaction with Arizona's current battery of elected officials, a finding that may portend opportunity for new office seekers and possibly even Independent candidates. Top office holders in Arizona from Governor Jan Brewer and Attorney General Terry Goddard to the state legislature, the once wildly popular Sheriff of Maricopa County and even U.S. Senators, are losing popularity. Republican voters are the most noticeably disaffected with their own leadership, but Democratic voters are showing signs of looking around as well. For example, and using the Republican controlled legislature as an example, just 15 percent of GOP voters approve of the job being done by the legislature and four of ten flatly rate their performance as "poor" ... some of the lowest ratings ever given the legislature by Republican voters.

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The same loss of stature is true as regards President Barack Obama, whose popularity continues to erode across Arizona including within the ranks of his own party. Overall, Obama's positive job ratings have subsided to 40 percent today from 51 percent last April and his "poor" job ratings rose to 35 percent from only 20 percent in the same period. Among Democrats his favorable job ratings now register at 61 percent compared to 75 percent in September.

Perhaps more important is the finding that significantly large percentages of people currently registered as Democrat or Republican express strong interest in switching their allegiance ... not to the other party, but to the ranks of Independents. Close to 30 percent of all registered voters are already registered Independents and if the switching continues as it has in recent years, it is highly probable that Independent (or non-partisan) will become the dominant political affiliation in Arizona within a few years. Such an outcome could open wide the doors for breaking the back of the two party "system" in Arizona and even the emergence of new political parties.

This general malaise toward officialdom raises questions as to whether Arizona voters are getting themselves ready for a house cleaning this year and if so, whether any candidates will emerge with the broom voters are looking for. This may well be a good year for long shot candidates to take on incumbents who voters increasingly seem to view as out of touch with main street concerns. Incumbents, even those trying to run for a higher office than they currently hold, may face a cynical electorate looking for new leadership and meaningful change.

Looking at voter opinion toward Governor Jan Brewer and the legislature, the poll finds that Governor Brewer has simply been unable to gain traction with voters - her favorable job rating is now only 21 percent, fundamentally unchanged since she assumed office and got into a running battle with the GOP leadership in the state legislature over taxation and budget issues. Her negative job ratings currently total 29 percent. Governor Brewer's job approval rating has not reached the historic low of Republican Evan Mecham in 1988 when only 13 percent rated his performance favorably and an astonishing 65 percent classified him as a "poor" governor. Nearly a decade later Republican Governor Fife Symington's job ratings hit their lowest point just before he left office (21 percent favorable and 46 percent unfavorable). So while Governor Brewer is in the dog house with most voters, Mecham, and Symington bested her negative scores by a considerable amount.

For its part, the state legislature is well regarded by only 15 percent of the public while nearly four in ten think they are doing a "poor" job. Negative regard for the legislature is literally three times what it was in 2006 and 2007 and favorable ratings have dropped from 30 to 15 percent. The public's view of the state legislature has never been overly generous and it is not so today but now Republicans have joined Democrats and Independents in a sour view of the GOP controlled legislature. Overall

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only 15 percent of Republican voters, eight percent of Independents and 12 percent of Democrats give good marks to the state legislature. Outright negative assessments in all voter groups hover in the 40 percentile range. Only among people not registered to vote does favorable opinion toward the legislature rise ... and then only to 26 percent..

Democrat Attorney General Terry Goddard’s popularity has also eroded – with only 30 percent favorable job ratings to 14 percent unfavorable. This compares to **42** percent favorable and **13** percent unfavorable in his home county of Maricopa during April of 2009. And again, it is Republicans who are defecting ...GOP voter approval of Goddard totaled 45 percent in May of 2009 but has subsided to only 24 percent today. Positive scores among Independents have also edged south. Terry Goddard has long shown a tendency to start his campaigns off slowly rather than build early voter awareness and loyalty. This may be a year when waiting to get started with paid image development campaign could leave him vulnerable to and potentially weakened by attacks from adversaries.

Public assessments of U.S. Senator John McCain have also slipped in latest survey and although he remains popular, especially with Republicans, it is clear that the voters have questions.

Joe Arpaio, Sheriff of Maricopa County, has also experienced sharp declines in his job ratings, particularly in the eyes of Independent voters. Today only 39 percent think he is going a “good” job while 35 percent classify his performance as “poor.” Toward the end of 2007 his positive ratings approached 60 percent while less than a quarter rated his performance as “poor”.

It is impossible to examine these numbers and not wonder if Arizona voters have simply become fed up with the state of the economy, the apparent inability of officials and business leaders to get a jobs plan working forcefully and growing impatience with what voters see as acrimony and excessive partisanship in high places that blocks the ability of government and business to work toward common goals. “Same old, same old” may be about to face a round of voter rebellion

. Whatever their reasons and motives, one thing is certain: voters appear as ready for leadership change in 2010 as they were in 2008 ... and perhaps at all levels and in both political parties.

**EDITOR’S NOTE: This Rocky Mountain Poll - Arizona (2010-I-04), is based on 800 interviews with adult heads of household statewide conducted between January 7 and 22, 2010. A total of 629 voters statewide were included in this study. Where necessary, figures for age, sex, race and political party were weighted to bring them into line with their actual proportion in the population. In a sample of this size, one can say with a 95 percent certainty that the results have a statistical precision of plus or minus 3.5 percent of what they would have been had the entire population been surveyed. The Rocky Mountain Poll is conducted by the Behavior Research Center of Arizona and is an independent and non-partisan research program sponsored by the Center.**

This statement conforms to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

ENCLOSED: Statistical tables.

STATISTICAL DATA

Behavior Research Center  
Rocky Mountain Poll - Arizona  
RMP (2010-I-04)

For this and other polls, see [www.brcpolls.com/results](http://www.brcpolls.com/results).

	ALL OF ARIZONA				NET
	EXCELLENT/ GOOD	FAIR	POOR/ VERY POOR	NOT SURE	POSITIVE TO NEGATIVE
<b>PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA</b>					
January 2010	40%	18%	35%	7%	+ 5
September 2009	45	20	30	5	+15
April 2009	51	24	20	5	+31
<b>GOVERNOR JAN BREWER</b>					
January 2010	21	30	29	20	- 8
September 2009	22	29	28	21	- 6
<b>ATTORNEY GENERAL TERRY GODDARD</b>					
January 2010	30	24	15	31	+15
September 2009	28	31	13	18	+15
April 2009 (Maricopa)	42	27	6	25	+36
<b>ARIZONA STATE LEGISLATURE</b>					
January 2010	15	28	37	20	-22
April 2009	15	37	35	13	-20
March 2007	28	39	12	21	+16
January 2006	30	37	14	19	+16
<b>SENATOR JON KYL</b>					
January 2010	35	23	20	22	+15
September 2009	33	24	18	25	+15
April 2009	37	26	13	24	+24
<b>SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN</b>					
January 2010	40	30	21	9	+19
September 2009	45	29	20	6	+25
November 2007	45	26	17	12	+28
<b>SHERIFF JOE ARPAIO</b>					
January 2010	39	21	35	7	+4
July 2008	54	14	28	4	+26
November 2007	59	16	22	3	+37

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*“How likely is it you will, during this year, register as either Democrat, Republican or Independent - - very likely, somewhat likely or not very likely?”*

| <u>Likelihood to Switch</u>         | <u>All Voters</u> | <u>Democrat</u> | <u>Republican</u> | <u>Independent</u> |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Very likely                         | 12%               | 14%             | 13%               | 9%                 |
| Somewhat likely                     | 15                | 17              | 18                | 5                  |
| Total with any likelihood to switch | 27%               | 31%             | 31%               | 14%                |

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	<u>VERY LIKELY TO SWITCH</u>	<u>% IF 1/4 DO IN FACT SWITCH</u>
All voters	12%	3.0%
Democrat to Independent	15	3.7
Republican to Independent	13	3.2
Independent to Democrat or Republican	9	2.2

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