

# Quarterly Profile

## OF NEW MEXICO CITIZENS

A UNM INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY SURVEY RESEARCH CENTER REPORT

WINTER 1992/1993—VOL 5/NO 1

This edition of the *Quarterly Profile of New Mexico Citizens* focuses on issues of key importance to the state during the next few months. Two in particular are the shape and growth of the state's budget when the legislature meets starting in mid-January, and the likelihood that the legislature will move to enact a health care plan that will cover all New Mexicans. This newsletter will address each of those issues and others as well.

welfare took the hits in terms of our sample's willingness to spend. Survey respondents on average called for a 25% cut in public health and welfare expenditures! Spending for law enforcement was very close to the amount authorized by the legislature. In relative terms, big increases for both environmental improvement, and business development were desired by our respondents.

(continued on page 2)

### FOCUS 1: THE STATE BUDGET

## Citizen Attitudes on State Spending

We told our random telephone sample of 547 respondents how the legislature had allocated the state's resources in the last budget, and then asked them to think about how they might do the same job, if they were given the responsibility to allocate a hypothetical \$1,000 of state money themselves among the same categories. Respondents were told that the most recent budget had allocated approximately two-thirds of the available funding to public elementary, secondary, and higher education. Approximately one-sixth of the budget went to public health and welfare programs, one-tenth went to law enforcement and court operations, with the remaining one-thirtieth being split between environmental regulation/improvement, and business development/regulation. For the sake of convenience the catch-all category of government administration which takes about one-twentieth of the overall budget was excluded from the discussion. We read the following to our respondents:

State government officials will soon begin preparation of the budget for the next fiscal year. We would like to know your preferences for taxing and spending. Imagine that your contribution to state revenues is \$1,000 per year. You can decide how it will be spent. . . . If you could choose, how would you divide the \$1,000 among these 6 categories: public primary and secondary education, higher education, public health and welfare, law enforcement, environmental improvement and regulation, and business development and regulation?

The average responses across the six categories are presented in Table 1 and Figure 1. Only 7.9% of our respondents (N=43) wished to leave the legislature's handiwork untouched. Primary and secondary education received the largest allocation of funds from the respondents. The amount, \$478, is slightly less than the current legislative level of support. Higher education and public health and

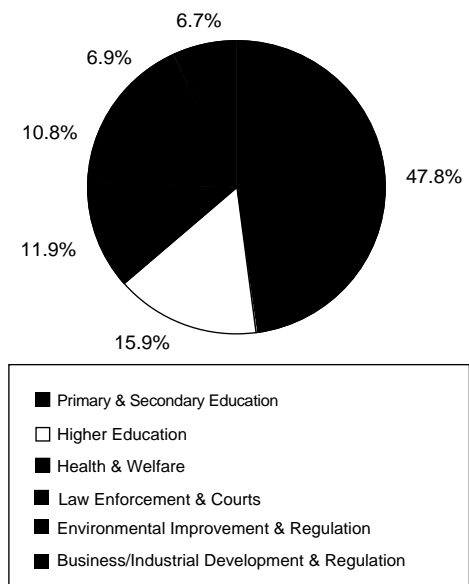
TABLE 1

Average Allocation of \$1,000

Primary & Secondary Education	\$478
Higher Education	\$159
Health & Welfare	\$119
Law Enforcement & Courts	\$108
Environmental Improvement & Regulation	\$69
Business/Industrial Development & Regulation	\$67
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,000</b>

FIGURE 1

Allocations Among State Budget Categories



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## FOCUS 1: THE STATE BUDGET

### Citizen Attitudes on State Spending

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We then examined the responses to this hypothetical budget exercise in greater detail, analyzing the answers given by cross-tabulating them with a variety of demographic characteristics to determine if there were significant differences among or within different classifications of respondents.

Table 2 provides the summary data, but some conjecture and detail also seems appropriate. For example, the collapsed categories in the table for ethnicity indicate relatively slight differences among categories with only spending on higher education and law enforcement and the courts showing any real range or divergence between groups. When one

looks at the smaller groups, one finds that there are some interesting divergences. For example our 36 respondents who self-selected the categorization “Mexican-American” preferred to spend almost 7% more on primary and secondary education than did the sample as a whole. The 21 respondents who categorized themselves as “American Indian” preferred to spend 10% less than the sample average on primary and secondary education while expressing a desire to spend 29% more on higher education than the sample average.

Between Democrats (N=274) and Republicans (N=171) there were, as might be expected, marked divergences in preferences toward public spending priorities. Democrats preferred to spend significantly more on primary and secondary education. Republicans, on the other hand, preferred to spend 20% more than the sample mean on law enforcement and the courts. Republicans also wished to spend more on business development.

### Level of Services and Taxes

After having asked our respondents how they would allocate the state’s resources, we asked, “In your opinion, should state services and your taxes be increased, decreased, or kept the same as last year?” (See Table 3.) The overwhelming sentiment favored maintenance of the *status quo*. A larger share of the full sample (22.0%) favored decreasing taxes and services than did those willing to incur a heavier burden, and receive more services (17.2%).

Breaking down the responses across various demographic variables yields some interesting findings. While there is no group within which a majority supports increased taxes and services, the 77 respondents who reported post-Bachelor’s educational levels provided a 41.6% level of support for increased taxes and services. In general, however, New Mexicans appear to have little or no appetite for additional taxes and services — a paradox to ponder as the Legislature convenes to weigh the normal state budget requirements and a possible statewide health care plan this Winter.

TABLE 2

*Expenditure Allocation Among Budget Categories By Demographic Classification*

	Prim. & Sec. Education	Higher Education	Health & Welfare	Law En- forcement	Environ. Imp. & Reg.	Bus./Ind. Dev. & Reg.
<b>ETHNICITY</b>						
Anglo (N=352)	48.0%	15.2%	11.9%	11.3%	6.7%	6.9%
Hispanic (N=127)	47.3%	16.9%	12.0%	10.1%	7.4%	6.3%
Other (N=61)	46.9%	17.9%	11.6%	9.5%	7.7%	6.4%
<b>PARTY</b>						
Democrat (N=274)	50.1%	16.2%	11.4%	9.7%	6.8%	5.7%
Republican (N=171)	46.5%	15.8%	11.4%	12.3%	6.2%	7.8%
No Party (N=84)	45.3%	14.2%	14.0%	10.3%	8.6%	7.6%
<b>GENDER</b>						
Male (N=238)	46.6%	15.8%	11.0%	11.0%	6.6%	7.6%
Female (N=309)	48.7%	15.9%	10.7%	10.7%	7.2%	5.9%
<b>REGION</b>						
Urban* (N=269)	47.3%	14.9%	12.2%	11.3%	7.6%	6.6%
Rural* (N=278)	48.3%	16.8%	11.6%	10.4%	6.2%	6.7%

\*Urban region consists of Bernalillo, Dona Ana, Santa Fe and Los Alamos counties. Rural region consists of the state’s 29 remaining counties.

TABLE 3

*Should State Services and Your Taxes . . . ?*

	Increase	Keep Same	Decrease	DK/NA
<b>TOTAL SAMPLE</b>				
N=547	17.2%	56.3%	22.0%	4.4%
<b>ETHNICITY</b>				
Anglo (N=352)	20.5%	56.5%	18.8%	4.3%
Hispanic (N=127)	11.0%	60.6%	24.4%	3.9%
Other (N=61)	13.1%	47.5%	34.4%	4.9%
<b>INCOME</b>				
<\$30,000 (N=259)	24.7%	48.3%	22.4%	4.6%
>\$30,000 (N=263)	10.3%	65.0%	20.9%	3.8%
<b>PARTY</b>				
Democrat (N=274)	18.6%	56.9%	20.1%	4.4%
Republican (N=171)	13.5%	59.6%	24.6%	2.3%
No Party (N=84)	22.6%	52.4%	16.7%	8.3%
<b>GENDER</b>				
Male (N=238)	18.9%	55.5%	20.2%	5.5%
Female (N=309)	15.9%	57.0%	23.6%	3.6%
<b>REGION</b>				
Urban* (N=269)	19.0%	56.5%	19.7%	4.8%
Rural* (N=278)	15.5%	56.1%	24.5%	4.0%

\*Urban region consists of Bernalillo, Dona Ana, Santa Fe and Los Alamos counties. Rural region consists of the state’s 29 remaining counties.

## FOCUS 2: HEALTH CARE REFORM

### Access to Health Care

In this *Quarterly Profile*, we explore New Mexicans' feelings about health care reform. There seems to be broad-based philosophical support for government intervention to achieve universal access to health care. This base of support for proposed changes cuts across party lines, income, status in the current health care system, and other variables which might be expected to affect the levels of support for change.

We asked people to tell us whether and how strongly they agreed with the statement, "The government should require that basic health care be available to all citizens." **Seventy-nine percent of registered voters agreed with the statement.** Eighty-two percent of the entire sample agreed with the statement. The response frequencies do not vary significantly by ethnicity, political party or ideology, age, or number of doctor visits last year. Responses do vary by income; 88.8% of those making less than \$30,000 per year agreed with the statement, while 76.4% of those making more than \$30,000 per year agreed.

Support for government guaranteed universal access is very strong regardless of the degree of satisfaction with current health care, but it is greater among those respondents who are currently dissatisfied in some way. Of those currently satisfied, 76.9% agreed with our statement. Of those who are currently dissatisfied, 89.4% agreed, while 96.6% of those reporting mixed feelings about their current care agreed that the government should require universal access. Since insurance coverage (or lack thereof) seems to correlate significantly with current satisfaction, not surprisingly, insurance coverage also relates to support for governmentally required universal access. Of those who currently have insurance, 80.4% agreed with our statement. Among people who have no insurance, support for the statement jumped to 90.7%. Table 4 shows the percentages of the sample and subgroups agreeing with the statement, "The government should require that basic health care be available to all citizens."

### Support for Proposed Single-Payer System

We then asked for response to the following statement: "The government should fund the provision of basic health care to all citizens." For the sample as a whole, 72.4% agreed that the government should fund the provision of basic health care to all citizens. Republicans showed the lowest level of support at 59.5%. Next, we described a health care provision plan currently being considered in New Mexico. The description addressed "a health plan financed through personal income or payroll taxes, in which all New Mexicans would get full health care coverage. Doctors and hospitals would continue to be independent, and patients would have full choice of providers."

Overall, 71.8% of respondents thought they would be satisfied with the described plan. Of those who are satisfied with their current care, 74.9% said they thought they would be satisfied with the proposed plan. Of those who are currently dissatisfied, 63% thought they would be satisfied with the plan. Of those who currently have mixed feelings, 71% thought they would be satisfied with the new plan. The factors of current health status, current cost,

*(continued on page 4)*

**TABLE 4**

*"The government should require that basic health care be available to all citizens."*

	Percentage Agreeing
<b>TOTAL GROUP (N=547)</b>	82.0%
<b>INCOME</b>	
<\$30,000 (N=263)	88.8%
>\$30,000 (N=259)	76.4%
<b>REGISTERED VOTERS (N=436)</b>	79.0%
<b>DEGREE OF SATISFACTION</b>	
Currently satisfied (N=328)	76.9%
Currently dissatisfied (N=142)	89.4%
Currently mixed feelings (N=59)	96.6%
<b>INSURANCE COVERAGE</b>	
Currently insured (N=438)	80.4%
Currently uninsured (N=109)	90.7%

**TABLE 5**

*"Would you support the adoption of this plan by the state of New Mexico?"*

	Yes	No	Don't Know
<b>EDUCATION</b>			
Less than High School (N=47)	76.6%	12.8%	10.6%
High School (N=128)	69.5%	18.0%	12.5%
Post High School (N=198)	66.7%	21.2%	12.1%
College Degree (N=96)	51.0%	37.5%	11.5%
Post Graduate (N=77)	54.5%	31.2%	14.3%
<b>ETHNICITY</b>			
White(non-Hispanic) (N=352)	54.5%	30.1%	15.3%
Spanish- American (N=91)	85.7%	9.9%	4.4%
Mexican-American (N=36)	88.9%	11.1%	0.0%
Native-American (N=21)	76.2%	19.0%	4.8%
Other (N=40)	65.0%	17.5%	17.5%
<b>AGE</b>			
18-24 Years (N=54)	42.6%	33.3%	24.1%
25-39 Years (N=80)	60.0%	27.5%	12.5%
40-54 Years (N=154)	65.6%	23.4%	11.0%
55-69 Years (N=198)	65.2%	23.7%	11.1%
70+ Years (N=61)	77.0%	14.8%	8.2%

**FOCUS 2: HEALTH CARE REFORM**

**Support for Proposed Single-Payer System**

(continued from page 3)

and current insurance status did not appear to significantly affect responses.

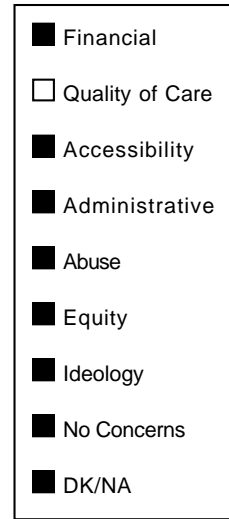
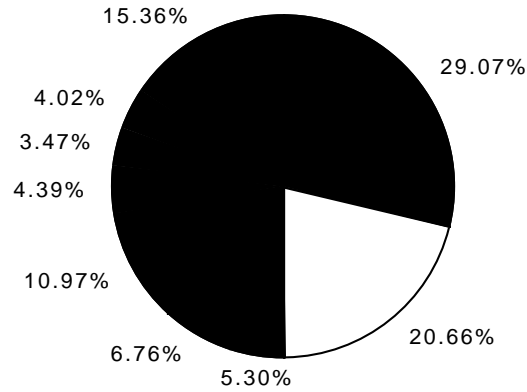
Fifty-three percent of respondents thought the new system would cost more than the current system. Of those people, however, 66% still expected to be satisfied with the new system.

When asked if they would support adoption of the proposed plan, 64% of respondents said yes. Of people who currently have insurance, 60% would support plan adoption, and 76% of people currently without insurance supported adoption. Age, educational level, and ethnicity also seem to influence support (see Table 5).

Party affiliation is another factor which may affect support for adoption of the proposed plan. Among Democrats, support ran at 74.4%, while among Republicans the level of support was 44.4%. Among independents, support for the proposed plan was at 65.4%.

People who expressed support for government funding of health care were asked if they would support a tax increase, and how large an increase, to pay for the new plan. Eighty-seven percent of respondents supporting government funding said they would support a small to moderate tax increase. Among

**FIGURE 2**  
*Concerns About Proposed Health Care Reform Plan*



those who support the idea of a universal plan, support for a tax increase does not vary significantly by any of the descriptive categories we used.

We asked people what would be their biggest concern about the described new plan. Almost one third (29%) listed financial concerns as primary. The next biggest concern was quality of care, followed by concerns about abuse of the system by both doctors and patients. See Figure 2 for a breakdown of concerns mentioned by respondents.

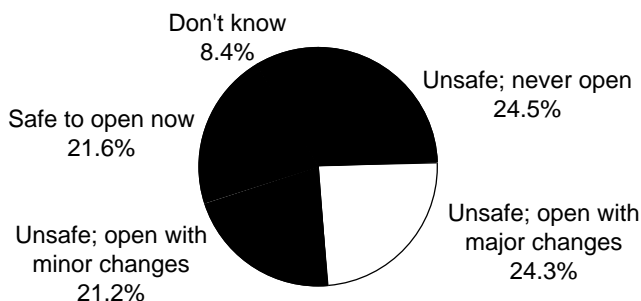
**TRENDS**

**Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP)**

Figure 3 depicts the November responses to our question regarding the opening of the Waste Isolation Pilot facility near Carlsbad. Slight changes have occurred since August when we last asked the question of a random telephone sample of New Mexicans. Four percent fewer of our New Mexico respondents felt that WIPP should not open, or should only open with major changes. The trend towards viewing WIPP as safe to open continues its gradual upward trend with 21.5% of respondents assessing the facility as safe to open now.

**FIGURE 3**

*Which of the following best represents your view? WIPP is ...*



Rather than examining the distribution by region as we normally do for the *Quarterly Profile*, this time we looked at age cohorts and discovered a significant degree of association between age and attitude towards WIPP. The data demonstrate a greater degree of skepticism regarding the safety of WIPP among the younger age groups than among those over 40. Solid majorities of those respondents age 55 and over view WIPP as safe to open with little or no alterations.

**TABLE 6**

*Attitudes Toward WIPP by Age Cohort*

	18-24 Years (N=61)	25-39 Years (N=198)	40-54 Years (N=154)	55-69 Years (N=80)	70+ Years (N=54)
Unsafe; never open	24.6%	26.3%	27.3%	21.3%	14.8%
Unsafe; open with major changes	32.8%	30.3%	25.3%	10.0%	11.1%
Unsafe; open with minor changes	23.0%	21.2%	18.3%	20.0%	27.8%
Safe to open now	14.8%	17.2%	20.1%	37.5%	25.9%
Don't know	4.9%	5.1%	8.4%	11.3%	20.4%

## TRENDS

## Citizen Approval Ratings

This quarterly survey solicited New Mexicans' favorability rating of then-President-elect Clinton for the first time; and since it was the first time, we thought it would be appropriate to examine the well-springs of his support and compare it with Governor King's and the legislature's. First, as might be expected from the election results, President Clinton enjoyed a higher approval rating than either Governor King or the legislature. Of our sample, 47% had positive expectations of the former Arkansas governor. Neither Governor King nor the legislature enjoyed any post-election "bounce." In fact, it is notable that having gone to the polls to elect a new legislature only two weeks before, our respondents maintained only a 20% approval rating — virtually unchanged from the previous survey in August.

Bill Clinton's support is heavily partisan and ideological in nature. Among Democrats (N=274) the President enjoyed a 64% approval rating. Only 22% of Republicans (N=171) shared that opinion, however, they did appear to give him the benefit of the doubt, with 41.5% rating their expectations of him as "fair." By contrast, Governor King's level of support among Democrats and Republicans is virtually the same. While his approval rating is not as high as Clinton's, it appears that our three-term Governor is viewed with a certain equanimity by New Mexico's citizens.

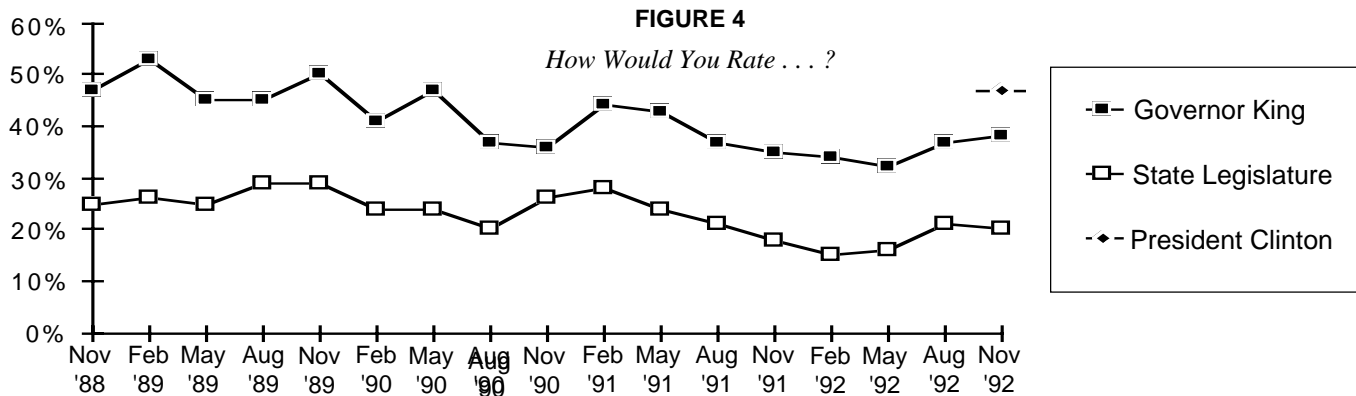
We asked respondents about their ideological preferences. We find that political ideology is associated with party identification in New Mexico. Those who identified themselves as strongly liberal or liberal were 67% Democrat (N=263), while those who identified themselves as conservative or strongly conservative were 62% Republican (N=168). To further amplify then the differences in support

between Governor King and President Clinton, we note that the President had a 68% approval rating among those classifying themselves as liberal, and only a 28% approval rating among conservatives. The Governor, on the other hand, gets a 38.9% approval rating among conservatives and a 35.4% approval rating among liberals.

The President does definitely appear to be the favorite of his generation. Baby-boomers aged 40-54 in our survey (N=154) gave him a 53% approval rating. This was exceeded only by the 70 and older cohort (N=61) which gave him a 61% approval rating. Once again for Governor King there was no statistically significant difference in levels of support across age cohorts. The legislature enjoys its best level of support from the elderly. Nearly 38% (N=61) of those 70 and older approve of the legislature's performance.

President Clinton evokes no significant support or animosity from one particular racial or ethnic grouping. Governor King, however, enjoys markedly higher support among those respondents self-identifying themselves as "Spanish-American" (N=91), 46.2%, than among any other racial or ethnic grouping. The legislature has a distinct ethnic support bias among our sample respondents. Those who self-identified as "White-non-Hispanic" (N=352) gave the solons an approval rating of just 17.6% while those selecting another ethnic classification gave approval ratings 10 to 15 percentage points higher.

In summary, as President Clinton begins his first term in office, his support among New Mexicans is distinctly partisan and ideological. At the state level, the Governor and the legislature appear to have support levels which arise out of economic, age, and ethnic differences.



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Subscriptions: \$30.00/year

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### UNM INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY

The Institute for Public Policy serves New Mexicans as a non-partisan forum for research, analysis, data collection and training. The Institute's Survey Research Center conducts surveys and research on the policy preferences and political attitudes of New Mexico citizens. The *Quarterly Profile* is distributed to federal, state, and local New Mexico policy makers, corporate and civic leaders, private organizations, the media and interested citizens.

#### SURVEY DATA

The UNM Institute for Public Policy conducted its survey of New Mexico citizens through telephone interviews with 547 adult New Mexicans in November, 1992. The telephone numbers were selected randomly by computer. The results of the poll have a five percentage point margin of error at a 95 percent level of confidence, which means that 19 out of 20 times the findings should be within 5 points of the results that would be obtained if all New Mexico households were surveyed. The margin of error is larger for subgroups of the sample because of the smaller number of observations. As with any survey a potential source of error is the possibility that variation in the wording of questions or the order in which questions are asked could produce different results.

## TRENDS

## Political Accessibility and Citizen Influence

There is always considerable interest in the extent to which citizens feel the government is accessible and responsive to their demands. As this survey of New Mexico citizens was conducted shortly after the 1992 General Election we wondered if there would be an increased level of positive feeling about citizens' abilities to affect government policy. The last time we presented this data was in the second quarter of 1991.

The Institute measured the degree to which respondents feel they can affect the political process in two ways. First, how responsive is the government to citizens' demands? The responses shown in Table 7 indicate that a substantial majority of New Mexicans feel as if they can affect government policy. The percentage is lower than it was 18 months earlier, however, in spite of the election just concluded. The percentage that felt voting was their only source of influence was also slightly greater.

A second way of assessing how politically influential citizens feel is to assess how well they understand politics, and how well they think they would perform in a political office. As Table 8 illustrates, 60% of New Mexicans agree that politics is unintelligible at times. This is slightly higher than the percentage reported in our Spring/Summer 1991 edition. The startling finding of this survey is the 54% of citizens who responded affirmatively to the statement, "I feel I could do as good a job in public office as most other people." The earlier report had just 47% of that survey agreeing

TABLE 7

### *Accessibility of Government*

	Agree	Disagree
"People like me don't have any say about what the government does."	42%	57%
"Voting is the only way people like me can have any say about how the government runs things."	57%	42%

TABLE 8

### *Political Understanding/Participation*

	Agree	Disagree
"Sometimes politics and government seems so complicated that a person like me can't understand what's going on."	60%	39%
"I feel I could do as good a job in public office as most other people."	54%	44%

with the statement. Given that the preceding survey items all show slight increases in disaffection with the political process, a tentatively supported conclusion may be that New Mexico citizens are not feeling greater confidence in their own competence so much as they are feeling less confidence in their elected officials' abilities.

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