

Quarterly Profile

OF NEW MEXICO CITIZENS

A UNM INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY SURVEY RESEARCH CENTER REPORT

SUMMER 1995—VOL 7/NO 3

FOCUS 1: TERRORISM

This summer the regularly scheduled *Quarterly Profile of New Mexico Citizens* came right after the bombing of the Federal Building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The bombing focused the public's attention on the issue of terrorism, and we asked a series of questions about the issue to determine the character and extent of public concern in the aftermath of a widely publicized terrorist attack. We asked New Mexicans what powers government should have in the fight against terrorism, which federal agencies can be trusted to combat terrorism effectively, and how likely is it that additional terrorist attacks will occur in the U.S.

The Likelihood of Continued Terrorism

To begin this series of questions, interviewers asked, "Based on what you know about the recent bombing of the Federal Building in Oklahoma City, how likely do you think it is that there will be other acts like this in the United States within the next year?" Fourteen percent considered it unlikely that such an event would take place, 26% were neutral, and 60% considered it likely that a similar attack would take place within a year.

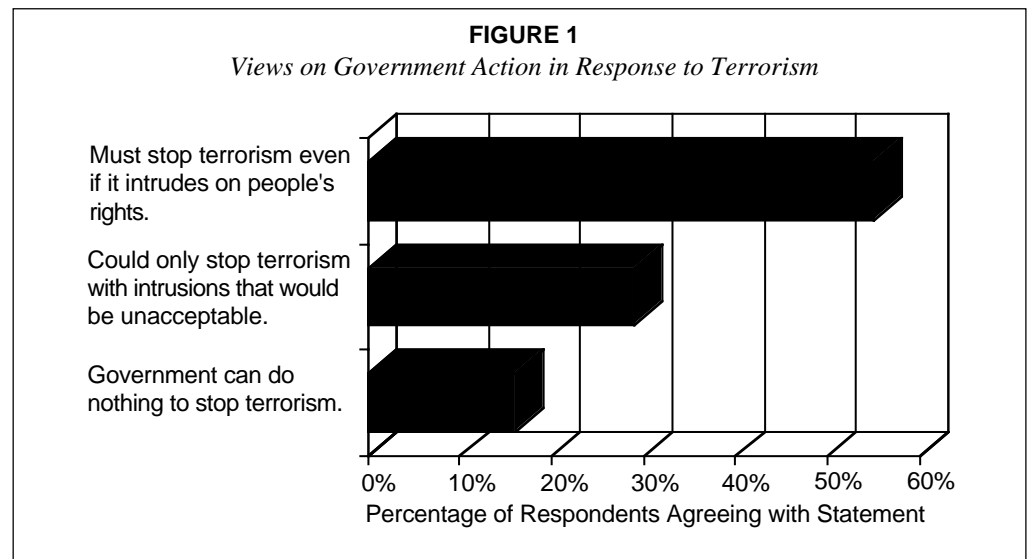
Responses to this first question varied considerably depending on respondents' educational background and their media use habits. Table 1 shows that only 14% of all respondents see another terrorist bombing as being *unlikely* in the next year, whereas over a third (36%) of college graduates who depend on the print media for news think another bombing is unlikely in the near future. Seventy-five percent of New Mexico respondents without a college degree who depend on print media for their news believe another bombing to be likely, but only 41% of college graduates who use print media share this view.

Preventing Terrorism

Despite these variations, only a minority of respondents from diverse social and demographic groups thought a future terrorist attack was

TABLE 1
Perceived Likelihood of Another Terrorist Bombing Within the Next Year by Primary News Source and Educational Background

News Source	Sample Size	Not Likely	Neutral	Likely	Total
Electronic media users without college degrees	304	11%	28%	62%	100%
Electronic media users with college degrees	115	13%	30%	57%	100%
Print media users without college degrees	68	12%	13%	75%	100%
Print media users with college degrees	59	36%	24%	41%	100%
All respondents	569	14%	26%	60%	100%



unlikely. What, then, did respondents think the U.S. government could do to prevent terrorism? When asked about the government's ability to stop terrorist activity, a majority (55%) said that the government must try to stop terrorists even if it intrudes on some people's rights and privacy. Sixteen percent said that the government could do nothing to stop terrorist activities, and 29% felt that only with unacceptable intrusions on peoples' rights and privacy could the government put an end to terrorism (see Figure 1).

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FOCUS 1: TERRORISM

Preventing Terrorism

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The previous question was very broad, and we followed it with a series of related questions concerning the federal government's power to deal with terrorism. We asked New Mexicans whether they supported some new powers the federal government might use to combat terrorism. Table 2 shows the distribution of responses on a scale from one ("strongly oppose") to seven ("strongly support").

A near-majority of New Mexicans (49%) supported giving the government the power to ban information about bomb-making from computer networks; 17% strongly opposed this measure. The other proposed powers received less support: 37% strongly supported granting the federal government the power to expel a citizen of another country who is suspected of planning a terrorist act; 30% would grant the power to search for and seize weapons from suspicious groups; 29% would give the power to infiltrate and spy on suspicious organizations; and 24% would permit the federal government to ban advocates of anti-government violence from speaking on the radio or television.

The Waco Incident

New Mexicans' views regarding the federal government's anti-terrorist powers may have been influenced by events prior to the Oklahoma City bombing. To understand this connection, we asked two questions about the confrontation between the federal government and the Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas, in April of 1993. Ninety-seven percent of New Mexicans surveyed said they recalled the incident, and the following percentages are based on this subsample.

Interviewers asked, "In your view, did the federal agents involved in the Waco incident apply too much force, the right amount of force, or too little force in their attempt to resolve the situation?" A plurality of respondents (43%) said that federal agents used "too much" force in their attempt to resolve the situation at the Branch Davidian compound. When we asked whether New Mexicans believed that the federal agents were engaging in legitimate police enforcement or abusing the power of the federal government, 62% of our statewide sample said that the federal agents were engaging in legitimate police enforcement when they entered the compound, whereas 38% believed that the federal agents were abusing the power of the federal government.

These overall response rates obscured some significant differences in how various ideological groups answered these questions. Of those who identified themselves as strongly conservative, 54% said that too much force was used and 27% said that too little force was used. Of those who identified themselves as strongly liberal, 68% thought too much force was used, and 16% believed too

TABLE 2

Favorability or Opposition to Proposals Granting the Federal Government Powers to Combat Terrorism

Proposed government powers	Strongly Oppose							Strongly Favor		Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
The power to ban bomb-making info. from computer networks	17%	4%	6%	7%	10%	7%	49%	100%		
The power to quickly expel aliens suspected of planning a terrorist act	12%	8%	10%	9%	15%	10%	37%	100%		
The power to search for and seize weapons from suspicious groups	16%	7%	10%	9%	17%	10%	30%	100%		
The power to infiltrate and spy on suspicious organizations	13%	8%	12%	11%	18%	9%	29%	100%		
The power to ban radio or TV speech advocating anti-government violence	28%	8%	10%	8%	14%	7%	24%	100%		

little force was used. However, 80% of strong liberals said that the federal agents were engaging in legitimate police enforcement, whereas strong conservatives were split fifty-fifty on the issue. An explanation for these seemingly contradictory findings may be this: conservatives are generally more supportive of the use of force than are liberals, but conservatives have more negative views toward government agencies and often see *their* use of force as illegitimate.

Is the Federal Government Threatening?

Given these concerns about the federal government's actions in Waco, we wondered whether New Mexicans were more generally concerned about the power of the federal government. We asked respondents if they felt that the federal government has become so large and intrusive that it has become threatening. On a scale from one (not at all threatening) to five (very threatening), 35% percent chose the halfway point. Fifteen percent said the government is not at all threatening, and 17% percent said it is very threatening.

We then asked New Mexicans to identify the group or individual within the government that they felt posed the greatest threat. We placed responses to this question into categories and compiled the following list of perceived threats from the federal government: the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Internal Revenue Service (IRS), Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), Department of Energy (DOE), Department of Defense (DOD), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (BATF), and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

Of those respondents who viewed the government as somewhat or very threatening, 66% said they "didn't know" what particular branch of the government was threatening or gave a response that very few others gave. The most commonly named threats were the BATF, the CIA, and the IRS, each of which approximately 9% of respondents mentioned. In sum, most respondents did not perceive the federal government as an overwhelming threat, and those that did view it as threatening did not appear to have a clear and common threat in mind.

FOCUS 2: GRAZING ON PUBLIC LANDS

Livestock Grazing on Federal Public Lands

The management and regulation of private livestock grazing on federal public lands continues to be an issue of great importance to many New Mexicans. This summer we asked New Mexicans several questions concerning grazing on public land, some of which were originally asked in the Fall 1994 *Quarterly Profile*. Although most of the findings show only marginal change in public attitudes, responses to two of the questions did change significantly. The results may indicate that a shift is taking place in how the public views ranching and the use of public lands.

In the spring of 1995, the U.S. Department of the Interior revised grazing regulations for lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). These rules, scheduled to take effect in August, 1995, come after two years of contentious debate among environmental groups, ranching interests, coalitions within the U.S. Congress, and the Clinton Administration. Some of the more salient points of the new regulations include:

- Replacement of BLM district Advisory Councils, which had been made up of grazing permit holders, with Resource Advisory Councils to be comprised of permit holders plus non-grazing interests such as recreationists and environmental preservationists.
- Creation of a process to establish regional or state standards for rangeland management and administration to establish or preserve "healthy rangelands."
- Title to water rights acquired on public lands for livestock grazing will be in the name of the United States to the extent allowed by state law. Title to all new permanent range improvements will belong to the federal government as well.
- The structure for arriving at fees assessed for grazing livestock on public lands will remain unchanged.

Stable Opinions on Grazing

Although the revised grazing regulations failed to please most of the interest groups involved in the debate, the widely publicized struggle over proposed policy revisions has caused more New Mexicans to become concerned about the issue. From the fall of 1994 to the summer of 1995, the percentage of New Mexicans viewing the issue as "unimportant" fell from 19% to 12%. The portion of citizens viewing the issue of grazing on public lands as "somewhat important" or "extremely important" increased from 51% to 55%.

After asking New Mexicans about the general importance of grazing on public lands, we explored two dimensions of the issue. Table 3 shows the responses to a question regarding the perceived impact of public lands ranching on respondents' local economies. Although the numbers shift from 1994 to 1995 toward lower economic importance, the slight drop is within the range of statistical error, and we cannot say that New Mexicans' views have changed significantly on this question in the past nine months.

When asked to assess how much, if any, damage public grazing causes to the environment, responses also remained stable

TABLE 3

"How important is ranching on public lands to the economy of your community?"

	Not at All or Slightly Important	Moderately Important	Somewhat or Extremely Important
Fall 1994	19%	29%	51%
Summer 1995	23%	29%	48%

Note. Respondents answered on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all important and 10 is extremely important.

TABLE 4

"How would you assess the damage, if any, caused by livestock grazing on public lands?"

	Little or No Damage	Moderate Damage	Substantial or Extreme Damage
Fall 1994	36%	41%	23%
Summer 1995	35%	39%	26%

Note. The full question wording was as follows: "Some people think that grazing livestock on public lands has caused damage to much of the natural habitat including sensitive areas in and around streams. Using a scale where zero is no damage, ten is extreme damage, and you may choose any number from zero to ten, how would you assess the damage, if any, caused by livestock grazing on public lands?"

between the fall of 1994 and the summer of 1995. Response percentages for the two survey periods are presented in Table 4, which shows that New Mexicans lean toward perceiving low to moderate amounts of environmental damage. None of the differences between 1994 and 1995 average responses were statistically significant.

Although New Mexicans have mixed views about the environmental damage caused by grazing on public lands, New Mexicans continue to place environmental preservation above commercial uses and recreation. We asked respondents to choose the most important priority from a list of "multiple uses" for public lands. Approximately half the respondents in both the fall of 1994 (49%) and summer of 1995 (51%) said environmental preservation is the most important priority in managing our public rangeland. Twenty-three percent in both samples thought that commercial uses were the most important priority, and roughly one-in-five chose recreation as the most important use of public lands.

Changing Views of Ranchers

One question where responses *have* changed significantly since 1994 concerned the importance of preserving ranching as a way of life. Interviewers asked respondents, "Some people argue that

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FOCUS 2: GRAZING ON PUBLIC LANDS

Changing Views of Ranchers

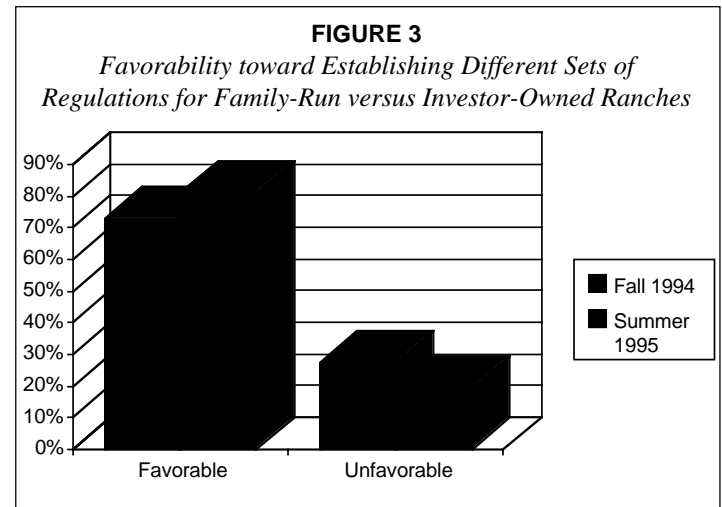
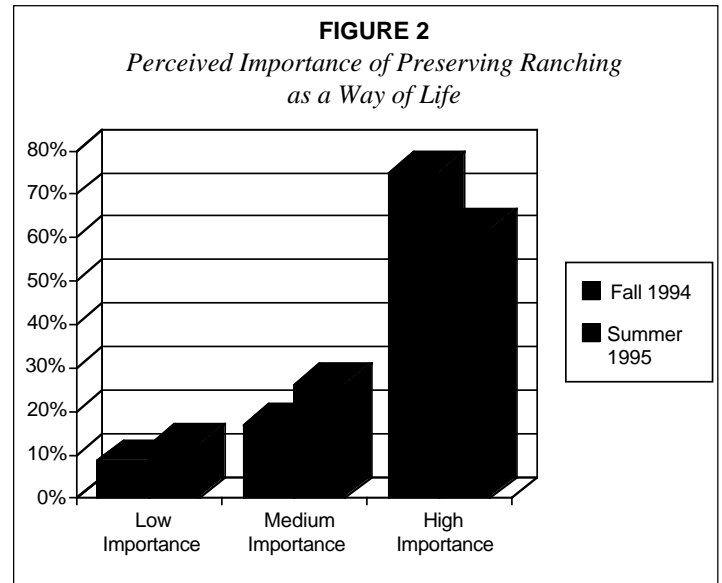
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ranching in New Mexico represents a tradition of culture and custom that goes back over three hundred years. How important do you think it is to help preserve this traditional way-of-life?" Respondents answered using a scale of zero to ten, with zero being not at all important and ten being extremely important. Results are shown in Figure 2.

Although most New Mexicans perceive the preservation of ranching as a way of life to be important, Figure 2 shows that significantly fewer feel this way now than before. For example, in the fall of 1994, 75% of respondents rated the preservation of ranching as very important, but in the summer of 1995, only 62% gave this response. Although a shift has occurred in New Mexicans' attitude toward this issue, a solid majority still places a premium on preserving ranching as a way of life.

New Mexicans also appear to have become more favorable toward making regulatory distinctions between family-run ranches and commercial firms owned by investors. Respondents answered the question, "Currently, there is one set of regulations and fees that apply to all ranchers who graze livestock on public lands. One proposal to help the traditional family ranch continue to exist would be to treat the two types of ranching operations differently. How do you feel about this proposal? Are you very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable?"

Figure 3 shows that the proposal drew a higher percentage of favorable responses in the summer of 1995 than in the fall of 1994. Seventy-three percent of respondents were favorable to the proposal in 1994 while 81% favored it in 1995. Twenty-seven percent did not favor the proposal in 1994 while only 19% opposed it in 1995. What may have caused attitudinal changes in the past nine months? One possible cause is the heated public debate surrounding the revised regulation and management of grazing on public lands. Our results show that a greater portion of New Mexico citizens view the issue as important in its own right, and it is quite possible that during the past nine months a portion of the public has changed its views toward ranching to see it less as an "important way of life" that merits public support. This would explain why a smaller portion (though still a majority) of the public believes it is important to preserve ranching as a way of life, and it explains why an even larger majority favors setting different fees and regulations for investor-owned versus family-run ranching operations. Continued tracking



of New Mexicans' attitudes and preferences toward grazing on public lands will show if there is, in fact, a transformation taking place in how New Mexico citizens view ranching and public land management.

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Subscription requests and other inquiries:

Carol Brown (505/277-1099)
The University of New Mexico
Institute for Public Policy
Department of Political Science
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87131-1121

Director: Hank C. Jenkins-Smith
Associate Director: Carol L. Silva
Administrator: Carol Brown
Quarterly Profile
Project Managers: Pat Baca, John Gastil, Carol Silva
Survey Manager: Scott Goold
Contributing Staff: Pat Baca, Amy Fromer, Hale Thurston
Production/Layout: Carol Brown

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.

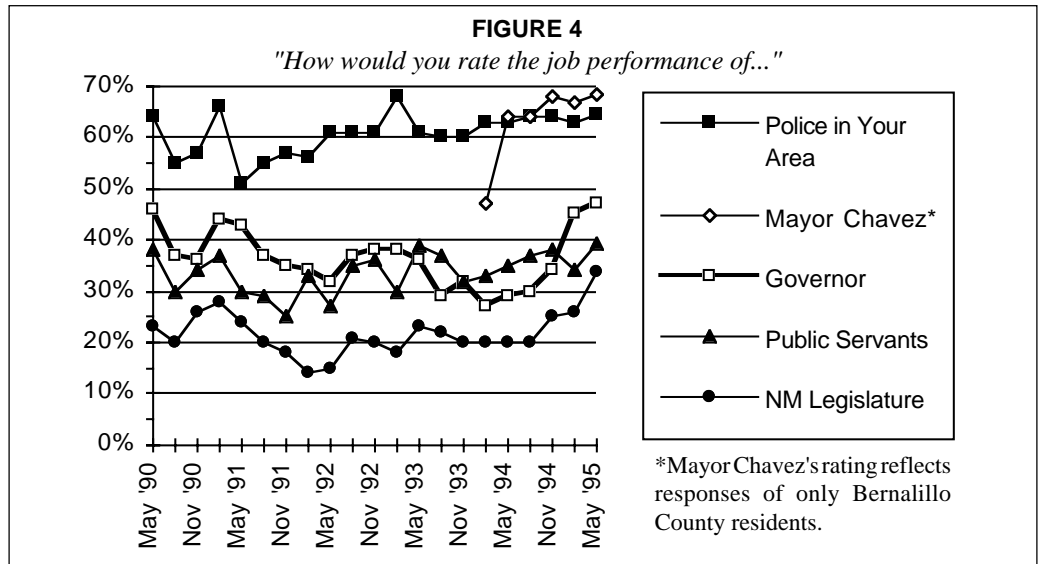
SURVEY DATA

The UNM Institute for Public Policy conducted its survey of New Mexico citizens through telephone interviews with 569 adult New Mexicans in May and June of 1995. The telephone numbers were selected randomly by computer. The results of the poll have a four 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 four percentage 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

Citizen Approval Ratings

This *Quarterly Profile's* approval ratings of New Mexico politicians and institutions show a continued eighteen month trend toward more positive scores for the Governor, public employees, and the legislature. Figure 4 shows that Governor Johnson received an approval rating of 47%, and public employees and the state legislature had approval ratings of 39% and 34%, respectively. Sixty-five percent of New Mexicans surveyed approved of the performance of their local police, and Bernalillo County residents continued to give Mayor Martin Chavez of Albuquerque a very strong approval rating (68%).



A Telegram to the Governor

This is our second *Quarterly Profile* since Gary Johnson took office as Governor of New Mexico, and we decided to take an in-depth look at the nature of his ratings. Immediately after asking each respondent to rate Johnson's job performance as excellent, good, fair, or poor, the following question was asked: "If you could send Governor Johnson a telegram explaining why you rated his job performance as [you did], briefly, what would you say?"

Of our sample of 569 respondents statewide, 544 chose to offer a telegram to Governor Johnson. The content of the telegrams varied widely but fell into four basic categories: 44% of the ratings Johnson received were inspired by judgments regarding his character or image; 24% mentioned specific policy or social issues; 10% were tied to messages regarding advice or congratulations; and 21% percent fell into a broad category of "not sure" and "don't know" responses.

Table 5 shows the type of approval ratings Governor Johnson received broken down by the reasons for the rating. A majority (58%) of the respondents who focused on character or image rated the Governor's performance as excellent or good, whereas nearly two-thirds (65%) of those respondents focusing on issues rated him as fair or poor (65%).

TABLE 5
Governor Johnson Performance Ratings by Reason for Rating

Job Rating	Overall	Content of the Telegram Sent to the Governor			
		Character/ Image	Issue(s)	Advice/ Congratulations	Not Sure/ Don't Know
Excellent	8%	11%	8%	7%	3%
Good	39%	47%	27%	39%	37%
Fair	35%	20%	43%	41%	56%
Poor	17%	22%	22%	13%	4%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

TABLE 6
Governor Johnson's Approval Ratings by Ideology of Respondents

Political Ideology	Sample	Performance Rating				Total
		Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	
Strongly Liberal	24	4%	26%	13%	57%	100%
Liberal	57	9%	23%	38%	30%	100%
Slightly Liberal	60	7%	29%	40%	24%	100%
Middle of the Road	156	3%	42%	32%	23%	100%
Slightly Conservative	111	10%	41%	43%	6%	100%
Conservative	116	12%	50%	32%	6%	100%
Strongly Conservative	28	11%	43%	39%	7%	100%
Overall	552	8%	39%	36%	17%	100%

Understanding the Governor's Approval Rating

We also examined Governor Johnson's approval rating to gauge the extent to which it corresponded to New Mexican's general political views. Not surprisingly, Table 6 shows that the ratings Johnson received varied according to where respondents placed

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TRENDS

Understanding the Governor's Approval Rating

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themselves on a seven point continuum ranging from “very liberal” to “very conservative.” Only 30% of self-identified “very liberal” respondents gave Governor Johnson a favorable rating, whereas 62% of “conservative” and 54% of “very conservative” respondents rated his performance favorably.

In addition to ideology, two other factors strongly influenced Gary Johnson’s ratings: voter registration status and educational background. Being registered to vote indicates an investment in the political system, whereas educational level tracks closely with socioeconomic status. Among respondents who identified themselves as registered voters, those with higher levels of formal education were more likely to rate Governor Johnson’s performance as “poor.” Fewer than 10% of respondents without high school diplomas rated Johnson’s performance as poor, whereas more than 30% of New Mexicans with post-graduate educations gave Johnson this lowest rating.

In his campaign for governor, Gary Johnson pursued an unconventional strategy, and this may partly explain the Governor’s

current approval ratings, as well as the variations shown above. By proclaiming himself to be a newcomer and outsider to organized politics, he managed to defeat both Republican primary opponents and a sitting governor. Governor Johnson has unapologetically continued to practice this unconventional style in dealing with the legislature and in administering state agencies.

Although Johnson’s new style and policies have left many traditional New Mexico politicians and observers in a state of disorientation or even anger, he appears to have struck a popular chord among citizens. Johnson’s ability to maintain his approval rating even after the legislative session shows that his performance as governor has not greatly affected New Mexicans’ initial impressions, as recorded in our last *Quarterly Profile*. Nonetheless, it is clear that some segments of the New Mexico public disapprove of Johnson’s performance. The Governor is not as popular among New Mexicans with relatively liberal political orientations and active voters with greater levels of formal education.

Correction. *Quarterly Profiles* Summer 1994-Spring 1995 incorrectly reported Mayor Chavez’s original Spring, 1994, approval rating as 56%. The correct rating was 47%, as reported originally in *Quarterly Profile* Spring 1994. In addition, the percentages of respondents in Bernalillo County who gave DK/NA responses when asked to rate Mayor Chavez’s job performance were 14% (for those living in NM less than 5 years), 4% (for those living in NM 5-29 years), and 3% (for those living in NM 30 or more years).

The University of New Mexico
 Institute for Public Policy
 Department of Political Science
 Albuquerque, New Mexico 87131-1121

(505) 277-1099