



THE COMMONWEALTH POLL

VCU Center for Public Policy

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Virginians Divided Over Need For More State Revenue: Plurality Says More Needed

Richmond, VA— Better than six in ten Virginians (62 percent) have heard about the budget proposals being considered in the General Assembly while 37 percent have not, according to a new poll conducted by Virginia Commonwealth University. Among those who have heard about the budget proposals (530 respondents), Virginians are divided over whether or not the state needs more revenue to meet its needs; a plurality says it does (48 percent) and 44 percent says the state has enough revenue now. This judgment is at the heart of the debate over budget proposals in the General Assembly this year. The Commonwealth Poll was conducted March 31 to April 7 with 812 adults in Virginia. The margin of error is +/- 4 percentage points.

Do you think the state of Virginia needs more income or revenue in order to meet its needs or do you think it has enough to meet its needs now?			
AMONG THOSE WHO'VE HEARD ABOUT BUDGET PROPOSALS			
Needs more	Has enough now	Don't know	No Answer
48%	44%	7%	1%

Cary Funk, Ph.D., director of the Commonwealth Poll, noted, “The budget impasse has reached the point where a clear majority of citizens have heard about the budget proposals. The public is divided but more people lean toward the belief that the state needs more revenue than the other direction. This is a key premise behind the

proposals to raise taxes. Not surprisingly, opinion is divided along partisan lines on this issue.”

Rating Virginia’s Financial Management

Virginia state government often prides itself on sound financial management. But in the midst of the ongoing budget crisis, public opinion leans negative on this issue. When asked to rate the financial management of state government from excellent to poor, just 10 percent considered it excellent or very good, 31 percent said it was good, 32 percent said fair and 19 percent thought it was poor. All told, that places the majority of Virginians with a view of state financial management as fair or poor (51 percent) while 41 percent consider it good or better.

Overall, do you think the financial management of state government in Virginia is excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor?

Excellent or Very good 10%	Good 31%	Fair 32%	Poor 19%	Don't know or No answer 7%
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Governor Job Performance

A majority holds positive views of Governor Mark Warner’s job performance after more than two years in office and perennial budget battles with the General Assembly. Among those who rated the governor’s performance (714 respondents), 55 percent think he is doing an excellent or good job while 45 percent think it is fair or poor.

Governor Warner Job Performance

	RATED	NOT RATED	EXCELLENT OR GOOD	FAIR OR POOR
April 2004	88%	12%	55%	45%
July 2002	80%	20%	60%	40%

“How would you rate the job Mark Warner is doing as governor? Do you think that he is doing an excellent, good, fair, or poor job as governor?”

Funk said, “We would expect some decline over time in the governor’s approval ratings. These findings are surprisingly similar to ratings from two years ago.” Governor Gilmore’s job performance ratings went from 64 percent saying his performance was excellent or good in May 1998 to 45 percent in December 2001 just before leaving office. Governor George Allen's job performance ratings went from 68 percent saying excellent or good in April 1994 to 61 percent in April 1997.

Fellow Democrats are decidedly more positive about Governor Warner's performance than Republicans. Nearly three-quarters of Democrats (73 percent) give Warner excellent or good markings. Republicans are split with a majority of 53 percent saying Warner is doing a fair or poor job and 47 percent saying excellent or good. Independents are nearly evenly split with 51 percent in the positive direction and 49 percent in the negative direction when rating Warner's performance. Compared to July 2002, Republicans and Independents are more negative in their evaluations of Warner while Democrats have remained strongly supportive.

Governor Mark Warner Job Performance

	JULY 2002		APRIL 2004	
	EXCELLENT OR GOOD	FAIR OR POOR	EXCELLENT OR GOOD	FAIR OR POOR
Democrats	69%	31%	73%	27%
Republicans	50%	50%	47%	53%
Independents	59%	41%	51%	49%

Questions asked on the Commonwealth Poll
 March 31-April 7, 2004
 Number of respondents: 812

How would you rate the job Mark Warner is doing as Governor? Do you think that he is doing an excellent, good, fair or poor job as Governor?				
AMONG THOSE WHO RATED				
Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Number of cases
11%	44%	37%	7%	714

Overall, do you think the financial management of state government in Virginia is excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor?							
Excellent	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor	Don't know	No answer	Number of cases
2%	8%	31%	32%	19%	6%	1%	812

Have you heard, read, or seen anything about the budget proposals considered by the General Assembly this year, or is this something you haven't heard about?				
Heard about budget proposals	Not heard	Don't Know	No Answer	Number of cases
62%	37%	0%	0%	812

Do you think the state of Virginia needs more income or revenue in order to meet its needs or do you think it has enough to meet its needs now?				
AMONG THOSE WHO'VE HEARD ABOUT BUDGET PROPOSALS				
Needs more	Has enough now	Don't know	No answer	Number of cases
48%	44%	7%	1%	530

METHOD OF THE COMMONWEALTH POLL

The Commonwealth Poll is an omnibus public opinion survey of Virginia residents. Each survey covers a variety of topics. The survey is conducted by telephone with a randomly-selected sample of adult Virginians.

Interviewing was conducted by telephone from the facilities of the Survey and Evaluation Research Laboratory at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond. The interviewing is conducted by a staff of professionally trained, paid interviewers using computer-assisted telephone interviewing software.

The sample of telephone numbers was prepared by Genesys Sampling Systems of Ft. Washington, Pennsylvania, and was designed so that all residential telephones, including new and unlisted numbers, had a known chance of inclusion. The cooperation rate for the survey was 36% percent. Using the Council of American Survey Research Organization (CASRO) response rate calculations, interviews were obtained with respondents in 30% percent of the known or assumed residential households in the sample.

The data were weighted to adjust for unequal probabilities of selection due to multiple telephone lines and multiple adults living in the household. In addition, the data were weighted on sex, race, age, and region of residence to reflect the demographic composition of the Virginia adult population. Percentages reported in the text and tables are weighted, while the number of cases shown in the tables for various subgroups is the actual number of respondents.

Questions answered by the full sample of adults are subject to a sampling error of plus or minus approximately 4 percentage points at the 95 percent level of confidence. This means that in 95 out of 100 samples like the one used here, the results obtained should be no more than 4 percentage points above or below the figure that would be obtained by interviewing all adult Virginians with telephones. Where the answers of subgroups are reported, the sampling error would be higher. Because of nonresponse (refusals to participate, etc.), standard calculations of sampling error are apt to understate the actual extent to which survey results are at variance with the true population values. Surveys are also subject to errors from sources other than sampling. While every effort is made to identify such errors, they are often difficult or impossible to measure. Readers making use of the results are urged to be mindful of the limitations inherent in survey research.

Further information is available on request from the director of the Commonwealth Poll, Dr. Cary Funk, at (804)827-1430 or cfunk@vcu.edu. More information on the Commonwealth Poll can be found at <http://www.vcu.edu/commonwealthpoll/>.

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