

## PUBLIC OPINION POLL:

Mayor Nutter Gets High Marks From Philadelphians  
Residents Split Over City Budget Options and Sales Tax Increase

February 9, 2010



THE  
**PEW**  
CHARITABLE TRUSTS

Philadelphia  
Research  
Initiative

### KEY FINDINGS

A new public opinion poll commissioned by The Pew Charitable Trusts' Philadelphia Research Initiative (PRI) shows that Mayor Michael Nutter continues to get generally high marks from Philadelphians after a tough economic year dominated by a prolonged city budget crisis.

Halfway through Nutter's four-year term, 53 percent of the respondents in the survey of 1,602 city residents say they like the job he is doing as mayor and 32 percent dislike it—an improvement from an April 2009 PRI survey when his job-approval scores were 47 percent positive and 39 percent negative. In addition, 60 percent now have a favorable impression of him, 30 percent unfavorable. That favorable rating is down from 71 percent a year ago, but about the same as in April.

As was the case in the last two polls (January 2009 and April 2009), the mayor fares much better among white Philadelphians than among black residents. Depending on the question, blacks give Nutter ratings that are 20-to-25 percentage points lower than the ratings whites give him. For instance, 43 percent of blacks approve of the job Nutter is doing as mayor—the same percentage as disapprove—while 65 percent of whites approve.

Nutter's lowest overall numbers come when Philadelphians are asked about his ability to handle the city budget. On that score, respondents citywide are evenly divided, with 47 percent voicing confidence in him and 46 percent lacking confidence. A year ago, his numbers on this measure were 57 percent confident and 37 percent not confident.

Similar splits are apparent on the issues that were at the heart of last year's budget crisis and may surface again this year in what officials are saying will be another tough budget season. On the key fiscal decision of 2009—to hike the sales tax by one percentage point—47 percent of Philadelphians say they approve, and 49 percent disapprove. Residents also are closely divided on what they want to see generally from city government, whether it be more services and higher taxes or fewer services and lower taxes. The same sort of division was apparent a year ago as well.

By and large, budget cuts have not had a dramatic impact on residents' lives thus far. About three out of five Philadelphians see no change in the quality of city services, and the share of respondents who report some improvement in those services is about the same as those who think they've seen some deterioration.

The poll also asked Philadelphians for their opinions on the jobs being done by Police Commissioner Charles Ramsey, Schools Superintendent Arlene Ackerman and City Council as a whole. Ramsey's performance gets the highest marks, winning the approval of 69 percent of residents and the disapproval of only 11 percent. Twenty-nine percent give Ackerman positive marks on the job she is doing, and 20 percent give her negative marks. Over half the respondents were unable to judge her. Council also is in positive territory, 42 percent approving to 34 percent disapproving, an improvement from a 39-39 split in the survey last April.

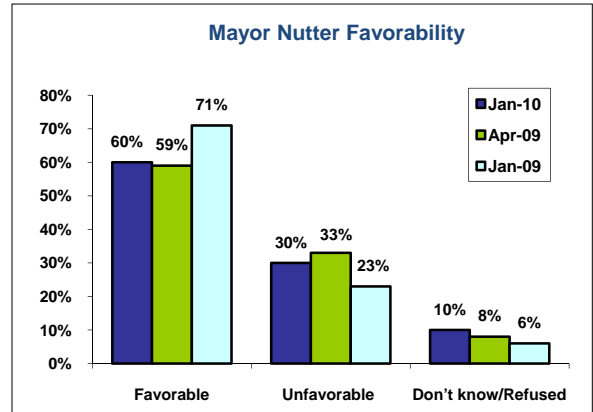
On another issue, residents appear to have accepted both that casino gambling is coming to the city and that Pennsylvania casinos soon will include table games as well as slot machines. On casino gambling in

the city, 51 percent approve and 34 percent disapprove; on table games, 54 percent are in favor, 32 percent against.

## ASSESSMENTS OF MAYOR NUTTER AND OTHER PUBLIC OFFICIALS

In the survey, Philadelphians were given three opportunities to express their opinions on Michael Nutter and the job he is doing as mayor.

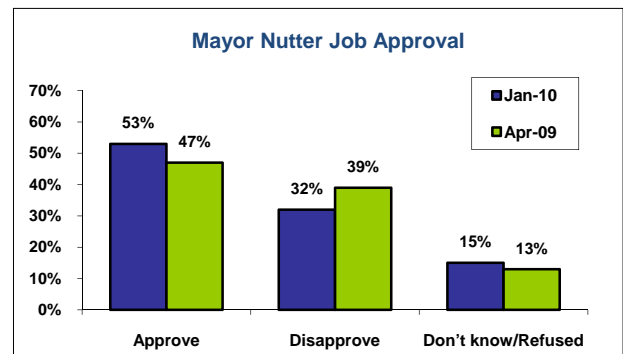
On the most general question, whether respondents have a favorable or unfavorable impression of him, Nutter's positive marks outnumber negative responses by a 2-1 ratio, 60 percent favorable to 30 percent unfavorable. Those numbers are less positive than a year ago, when favorable impressions of the mayor outscored the unfavorable 71 to 23 percent. The results are about the same as in April 2009, at the height of last year's budget debate, when his score was 59 percent favorable, 33 percent unfavorable.



On job approval, Nutter gets thumbs up from 53 percent of those questioned, thumbs down from 32 percent. This is an improvement from last April when his job-approval numbers were 47 percent positive, 39 percent negative. The question was not asked in the same way a year ago, making comparisons to that survey impossible.

The demographic breakdown of support for Nutter on these poll questions follows a consistent pattern, with the mayor doing better among whites than blacks, better among high-income residents than people with less income, and better among college graduates than those who are less well-educated. Similar patterns were evident in the two polls conducted for PRI last year.

In the current survey, for instance, the 1,602 respondents as a whole approve of Nutter's job performance by a 21-point margin. Whites overwhelmingly approve of the job the mayor is doing, 65 percent to 21 percent. Hispanics are very positive about him as well, with 55 percent approving, 24 percent disapproving. But blacks are evenly divided with 43 percent on either side. Even so, Nutter's job-performance score among blacks is better than it was in April, when only 36 percent approved and 54 percent disapproved.



Nutter's job approval rating is 62 percent among individuals in families making \$100,000 or more, 47 percent among those making between \$30,000 and \$50,000. It is 62 percent among college graduates, about 50 percent among those without college degrees. Fifty-nine percent in Northeast Philadelphia approve of the job Nutter is doing while 42 percent in North Philadelphia approve.

When asked about their overall impression of Nutter, 74 percent of whites say they have a favorable impression compared to 49 percent of blacks; 59 percent of whites say they are confident in his ability to make the right choices about the city budget compared to 37 percent of blacks. For details, see Appendix Table 1.

On handling the city budget, a subject that has dominated the conversation about city government for well over a year, Nutter gets his lowest ratings, perhaps reflecting the continuing divisions within the public over what should be done. Forty-seven percent of residents are "very confident" or "pretty confident" in Nutter's "ability to do the right thing" on budget problems, while 46 percent are "not too

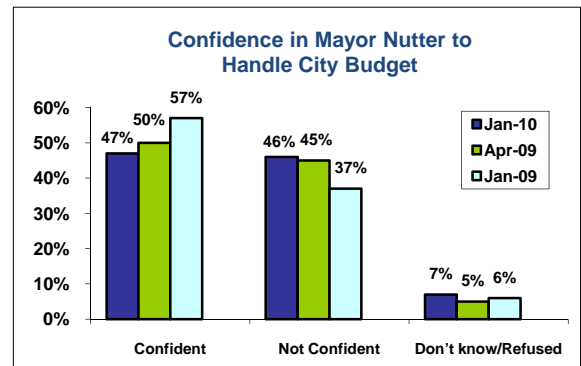
confident" or "not at all confident." These marks are lower than a year ago, when 57 percent had confidence in him on this score and 37 percent did not. They also are marginally lower than the results from last April, when the positive marks outnumbered the negative, 50 percent to 45 percent.

Philadelphians also were asked for their opinions on the jobs being done by three of the most visible and important players in local public life: City Council as a unit, Police Commissioner Charles Ramsey and Schools Superintendent Arlene Ackerman.

Forty-two percent of respondents say they approve of the job Council is doing compared to 34 percent who disapprove. That is an improvement since April, when 39 percent approved and 39 percent disapproved.

Ramsey's ratings are in a class by themselves, with 69 percent approval and only 11 percent disapproval. (Twenty percent offered no opinion.) This was the first time PRI had asked about the police commissioner, who has been on the job since Nutter took office as mayor two years ago. Ramsey's high marks come after a year in which major crimes in Philadelphia declined by 10 percent and in which, compared to 2008, there were fewer high-profile episodes of violence—such as city police officers being killed in the line of duty.

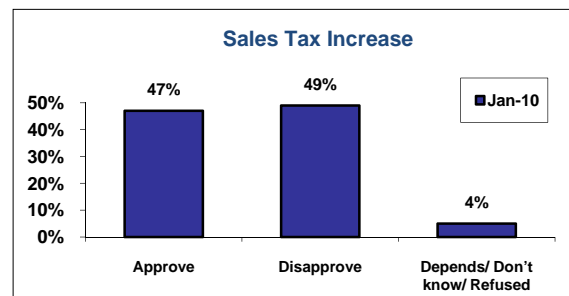
As for Ackerman, the poll results suggest that she has not made a particularly strong impression on Philadelphians as a whole during her year and a half as schools superintendent. Her job performance wins approval from 29 percent of those questioned and disapproval from 20 percent; fully 51 percent say they do not have an opinion. When only parents with school-aged children at home are counted, the results are similar, with 34 percent approving, 25 percent disapproving and the rest unable or unwilling to express an opinion.



## THE BUDGET, TAXES AND CITY SERVICES

The two surveys conducted for PRI last year showed deep division among Philadelphians over the hard choices faced by city government as it tried to put together a viable budget in tough economic times. The issues haven't changed much and public attitudes haven't either, as reflected by the results from the current survey.

In 2009, the key budget decision made by Mayor Nutter and City Council (in concert with the state legislature and the governor) was to raise the sales tax in Philadelphia by one percentage point, from 7 percent to 8 percent. As to whether that was a good idea, residents are split almost right down the middle: forty-seven percent approve of the decision and 49 percent disapprove. The poll question noted that city officials said the tax increase "was necessary to prevent big cuts in city services and layoffs of city workers."

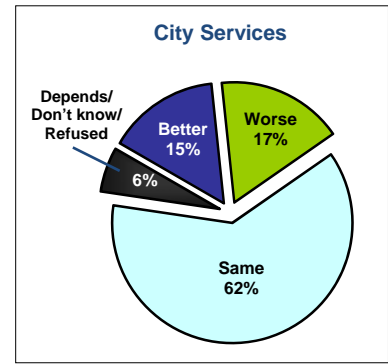


The strongest support for the sales tax increase comes from whites (54 percent), college graduates (59 percent) and members of households with incomes over \$100,000 (63 percent). The strongest opposition comes from Hispanics (57 percent), individuals with no more than a high school education (57 percent) and members of households with incomes less than \$30,000 (56 percent). For details, see Appendix Table 2.

The idea of the sales tax increase, which is slated to last for five years, was to prevent a substantial deterioration in city services. Thus far, at least, Philadelphians say they haven't felt much in the way of deterioration. The poll asked respondents what they thought had happened to city services in the past

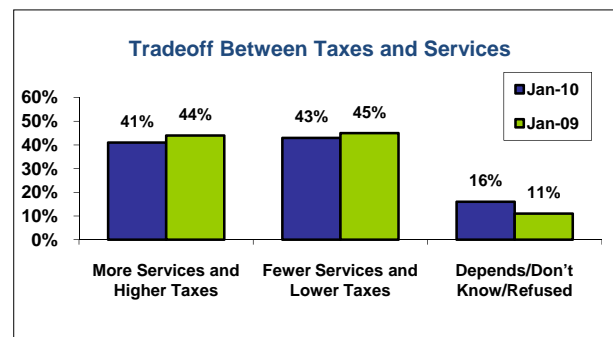
year. Fifteen percent say that services have gotten better, 17 percent say they've gotten worse, and 62 percent say they've seen no change.

As to specific public services, a similar pattern holds, with residents giving those services either the same ratings as last year or slightly lower ones. For instance, this year as last year, 48 percent of those polled give good or excellent ratings to the city's parks, playgrounds and recreational facilities. Police protection is basically unchanged, getting high marks from 52 percent of residents in 2010 and 55 percent a year ago. The biggest drop came in the ratings for the public libraries, many of which have had their hours cut back; they score 57 percent "good" or "excellent" this year, compared to 65 percent in 2009.



On the more general question about what people want from government, the division in public opinion, which was apparent in 2009, persists today. Given a choice between more services and higher taxes on the one hand, or fewer services and lower taxes on the other, 41 percent choose more services/higher taxes, 43 percent fewer services/lower taxes. A year ago, the corresponding numbers were 44 percent and 45 percent.

Some of the most solid backing for the more services/higher taxes option comes from college graduates (52 percent), people under the age of 35 (48 percent) and African Americans (45 percent). Backing for the fewer services/lower taxes option is strongest among Hispanics and individuals with no more than a high school education (both 49 percent). For details, see Appendix Table 3.

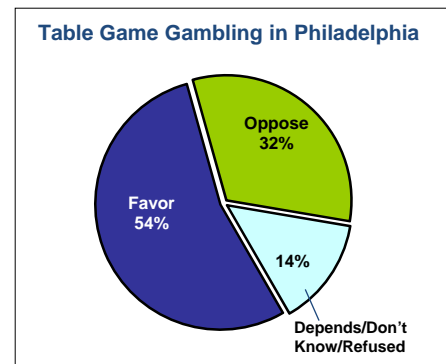


## CASINO GAMBLING

The first slots parlor in Philadelphia—slated for the Delaware River waterfront in Fishtown—has yet to open its doors, and the fate of a second prospective Philadelphia casino remains unclear. But the results of the poll suggest that the public is getting accustomed to the idea that casino gambling finally is coming to the city after years of debate.

Last January, those in favor of slot-machine casinos in the city outnumbered those opposed by only 6 percentage points, 49-to-43. Last April, the margin was 12 percentage points, 53-to-41. This time, the margin was 17 points, 51-to-34. Each time residents were polled, there was a decline in the percentage opposing the casinos.

In the current survey, respondents also were asked about putting table games in casinos, a measure enacted by the Pennsylvania state legislature in early January. The results on this topic were similar to the results about casino gambling in general, with 54 percent in favor, 32 percent against. On both casino questions, there was relatively little variation in the answers among demographic groups. For details, see Appendix Table 4.



## ABOUT THE SURVEY

The Philadelphia Research Initiative survey was conducted by telephone between January 8 and January 19 among a citywide random sample of 1,602 city residents, ages 18 and older. Interviews were conducted with 1,302 landline users and 300 cell phone users to reach a broad representative sample of Philadelphians.

The final sample was weighted to reflect the demographic breakdown of the city. The margin of error for the entire sample is approximately +/- 2.5 percentage points. The margin of error is higher for subgroups. Surveys are subject to other error sources as well, including sampling coverage error, recording error and respondent error.

Abt SRBI Public Affairs designed the survey and conducted all interviewing, working with Cliff Zukin, veteran pollster and director of the public policy program at Rutgers University.

This report was written by Larry Eichel, project director of the Philadelphia Research Initiative, in consultation with Zukin.

## **ABOUT THE PHILADELPHIA RESEARCH INITIATIVE**

The Pew Charitable Trusts' Philadelphia Research Initiative provides timely, impartial research and analysis on key issues facing Philadelphia for the benefit of the city's citizens and leaders. Pew is a nonprofit organization that applies a rigorous, analytical approach to improve public policy, inform the public and stimulate civic life. [www.pewtrusts.org/phila-research](http://www.pewtrusts.org/phila-research)

## APPENDIX

Table 1

### VIEWS OF MAYOR NUTTER

	Job Approval (percent)	Job Disapproval (percent)	Very/Pretty Confident on Handling the Budget (percent)	Favorable (percent)	Unfavorable (percent)
<b>Total</b>	53	32	47	60	30
<b>Race</b>					
White	65	21	59	74	18
Black	43	43	37	49	42
Hispanic	55	24	41	60	23
<b>Education</b>					
H.S. or less	52	34	44	57	32
Some College	49	34	47	61	31
College Grad	62	23	55	69	24
<b>Age</b>					
18-34	49	36	41	55	35
35-49	47	38	42	57	32
50-64	58	28	55	64	29
65+	65	19	57	72	18
<b>Household Income</b>					
<\$30,000	52	32	42	55	34
\$30-\$50,000	47	41	46	59	37
\$50-\$100,000	58	29	56	66	27
\$100,000+	62	25	62	78	20
<b>Neighborhood</b>					
South Philly	55	31	42	62	31
West Philly	52	33	48	61	32
North Philly	42	36	37	47	36
N.W. Philly	49	37	48	53	37
N.E. Philly	59	25	54	71	20

## APPENDIX

Table 2

		SALES TAX INCREASE		
		Approve (percent)	Disapprove (percent)	Depends /Don't know (percent)
	<i>Total</i>	47	49	5
<b>Race</b>				
	White	54	42	4
	Black	43	54	3
	Hispanic	35	57	8
<b>Education</b>				
	H.S. or less	40	57	4
	Some College	54	42	4
	College Grad	59	36	5
<b>Age</b>				
	18-34	45	52	3
	35-49	44	51	5
	50-64	52	44	4
	65+	49	45	6
<b>Household Income</b>				
	<\$30,000	41	56	3
	\$30-\$50,000	50	45	4
	\$50-\$100,000	54	42	4
	\$100,000+	63	33	4
<b>Neighborhood</b>				
	South Philly	48	48	4
	West Philly	49	46	5
	North Philly	37	59	4
	N.W. Philly	51	46	3
	N.E. Philly	48	46	5

## APPENDIX

Table 3

### TAXES VS. SERVICES

	More Services and Higher Taxes (percent)	Fewer Services and Lower Taxes (percent)	Depends / Don't Know (percent)
<b>Total</b>	41	43	16
<b>Race</b>			
White	39	43	18
Black	45	39	15
Hispanic	32	49	18
<b>Education</b>			
H.S. or less	34	49	18
Some College	49	36	15
College Grad	52	35	13
<b>Age</b>			
18-34	48	40	11
35-49	40	45	15
50-64	41	44	15
65+	32	41	27
<b>Household Income</b>			
<\$30,000	40	44	16
\$30-\$50,000	44	40	15
\$50-\$100,000	49	41	10
\$100,000+	44	43	13



## APPENDIX

**Table 4**

### CASINO GAMBLING IN PHILADELPHIA

	Favor Casinos (percent)	Oppose Casinos (percent)	Favor Table Games (percent)	Oppose Table Games (percent)
<i>Total</i>	51	34	54	32
<b>Race</b>				
White	52	34	54	33
Black	52	32	55	30
Hispanic	44	39	42	38
<b>Education</b>				
H.S. or less	54	32	53	32
Some College	54	33	58	31
College Grad	43	39	50	35
<b>Age</b>				
18-34	49	35	57	33
35-49	54	32	53	32
50-64	55	33	56	32
65+	47	36	46	32
<b>Household Income</b>				
<\$30,000	50	36	49	38
\$30-\$50,000	52	30	57	29
\$50-\$100,000	61	26	66	25
\$100,000+	48	41	53	34
<b>Neighborhood</b>				
South Philly	52	34	55	32
West Philly	46	38	49	35
North Philly	51	33	50	34
N.W. Philly	52	34	55	34
N.E. Philly	56	28	60	27

**PHILADELPHIA RESEARCH INITIATIVE / ABT SRBI  
 TOPLINE FOR SELECTED QUESTIONS  
 JANUARY 8 – JANUARY 19, 2010 — ANNUAL BENCHMARK POLL**

BASE= 1,602 Philadelphia Residents, Except Where Noted

Q. I'M GOING TO READ YOU A LIST OF FEATURES AND SERVICES. PLEASE RATE EACH AS IT APPLIES TO THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA.

LIBRARY SERVICES IN YOUR AREA

TOTAL ASKED (795)

	ALL RESPONDENTS =====	JANUARY 2009 =====
EXCELLENT	15%	20%
GOOD	43%	45%
ONLY FAIR	19%	17%
POOR	18%	11%
DON'T KNOW / REFUSED	5%	7%

PROGRAMS FOR TEENS

TOTAL ASKED (795)

	ALL RESPONDENTS =====
EXCELLENT	5%
GOOD	23%
ONLY FAIR	26%
POOR	28%
DON'T KNOW / REFUSED	19%

STREET REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE

TOTAL ASKED (795)

	ALL RESPONDENTS =====	JANUARY 2009 =====
EXCELLENT	4%	6%
GOOD	24%	27%
ONLY FAIR	33%	35%
POOR	39%	32%
DON'T KNOW / REFUSED	1%	*

SENIOR CITIZEN PROGRAMS AND FACILITIES

TOTAL ASKED (795)

	ALL RESPONDENTS =====	JANUARY 2009 =====
EXCELLENT	10%	14%
GOOD	35%	36%
ONLY FAIR	21%	21%
POOR	11%	7%
DON'T KNOW / REFUSED	22%	22%

POLICE PROTECTION

TOTAL ASKED (795)

	ALL RESPONDENTS =====	JANUARY 2009 =====
EXCELLENT	10%	15%
GOOD	42%	40%
ONLY FAIR	32%	30%
POOR	13%	12%
DON'T KNOW / REFUSED	2%	3%

THE GENERAL APPEARANCE OF YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD  
TOTAL ASKED (807)

	ALL RESPONDENTS =====	JANUARY 2009 =====
EXCELLENT	14%	15%
GOOD	45%	43%
ONLY FAIR	26%	29%
POOR	15%	13%
DON'T KNOW / REFUSED	1%	*

PARKS, PLAYGROUNDS AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES  
TOTAL ASKED (807)

	ALL RESPONDENTS =====	JANUARY 2009 =====
EXCELLENT	12%	13%
GOOD	36%	35%
ONLY FAIR	31%	30%
POOR	17%	18%
DON'T KNOW / REFUSED	3%	4%

TRASH COLLECTION  
TOTAL ASKED (807)

	ALL RESPONDENTS =====	JANUARY 2009 =====
EXCELLENT	17%	20%
GOOD	51%	51%
ONLY FAIR	21%	20%
POOR	10%	9%
DON'T KNOW / REFUSED	2%	1%

THE AVAILABILITY OF HEALTH CARE SERVICES  
TOTAL ASKED (807)

	ALL RESPONDENTS =====	JANUARY 2009 =====
EXCELLENT	18%	18%
GOOD	40%	42%
ONLY FAIR	23%	21%
POOR	14%	14%
DON'T KNOW / REFUSED	5%	4%

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION  
TOTAL ASKED (807)

	ALL RESPONDENTS =====	JANUARY 2009 =====
EXCELLENT	20%	20%
GOOD	45%	47%
ONLY FAIR	19%	24%
POOR	10%	6%
DON'T KNOW / REFUSED	6%	3%

FIRE PROTECTION  
TOTAL ASKED (807)

	ALL RESPONDENTS =====
EXCELLENT	26%
GOOD	52%
ONLY FAIR	15%
POOR	3%
DON'T KNOW / REFUSED	5%

Q. OVERALL, DO YOU APPROVE OR DISAPPROVE OF THE JOB MICHAEL NUTTER IS DOING AS MAYOR?

	ALL RESPONDENTS =====	APRIL 2009 =====
APPROVE	53%	47%
DISAPPROVE	32%	39%
DON'T KNOW / REFUSED	15%	13%

Q. DO YOU APPROVE OR DISAPPROVE OF THE JOB THE CITY COUNCIL IS DOING?

	ALL RESPONDENTS =====	APRIL 2009 =====
APPROVE	42%	39%
DISAPPROVE	34%	39%
DON'T KNOW / REFUSED	24%	22%

Q. DO YOU APPROVE OR DISAPPROVE OF THE JOB THAT SCHOOLS SUPERINTENDENT ARLENE ACKERMAN IS DOING—IF YOU DON'T HAVE ANY OPINION JUST SAY SO?

	ALL RESPONDENTS =====
APPROVE	29%
DISAPPROVE	20%
DON'T KNOW / REFUSED	51%

Q. AND DO YOU APPROVE OR DISAPPROVE OF THE JOB THAT POLICE COMMISSIONER CHARLES RAMSEY IS DOING—IF YOU DON'T HAVE ANY OPINION JUST SAY SO?

	ALL RESPONDENTS =====
APPROVE	69%
DISAPPROVE	11%
DON'T KNOW / REFUSED	20%

Q. IS YOUR OVERALL IMPRESSION OF MAYOR NUTTER FAVORABLE OR UNFAVORABLE?

	ALL RESPONDENTS =====	APRIL 2009 =====	JANUARY 2009 =====
VERY FAVORABLE	20%	22%	29%
SOMEWHAT FAVORABLE	40%	37%	42%
SOMEWHAT UNFAVORABLE	15%	14%	13%
VERY UNFAVORABLE	15%	19%	10%
DON'T KNOW / REFUSED	10%	8%	6%

Q. CITY OFFICIALS RAISED THE SALES TAX BY ONE PERCENTAGE POINT FROM 7 TO 8 CENTS LAST YEAR, SAYING IT WAS NECESSARY TO PREVENT BIG CUTS IN CITY SERVICES AND LAYOFFS OF CITY WORKERS. DO YOU APPROVE OR DISAPPROVE OF THIS TAX INCREASE?

	ALL RESPONDENTS =====
STRONGLY APPROVE	19%
SOMEWHAT APPROVE	28%
SOMEWHAT DISAPPROVE	17%
STRONGLY DISAPPROVE	32%
DEPENDS	2%
DON'T KNOW/REFUSED	3%

Q. HOW CONFIDENT ARE YOU IN MAYOR NUTTER'S ABILITY TO DO THE RIGHT THINGS IN HANDLING THE CITY'S BUDGET PROBLEMS?

	ALL RESPONDENTS =====	APRIL 2009 =====	JANUARY 2009 =====
VERY CONFIDENT	9%	11%	17%
PRETTY CONFIDENT	38%	39%	40%
NOT TOO CONFIDENT	30%	28%	26%
NOT AT ALL CONFIDENT	16%	17%	11%
DON'T KNOW/REFUSED	7%	5%	6%

Q. IN GENERAL, IF YOU HAD TO CHOOSE BETWEEN MORE GOVERNMENT SERVICES AND HIGHER TAXES, OR FEWER SERVICES AND LOWER TAXES, WHICH WOULD YOU CHOOSE?

	ALL RESPONDENTS =====	APRIL 2009 =====
MORE SERVICES AND HIGHER TAXES	41%	44%
FEWER SERVICES AND LOWER TAXES	43%	45%
DEPENDS	10%	6%
DON'T KNOW / REFUSED	6%	5%

Q. THINKING ABOUT ALL CITY SERVICES, DO YOU THINK THEY HAVE GOTTEN BETTER IN THE LAST YEAR, GOTTEN WORSE, OR HAVE THEY STAYED PRETTY MUCH THE SAME?

	ALL RESPONDENTS =====
BETTER	15%
WORSE	17%
SAME	62%
DEPENDS	2%
DON'T KNOW/REFUSED	4%

Q. AS YOU MAY KNOW, THE FIRST SLOT MACHINE CASINO WILL SOON OPEN IN FISHTOWN. ON THE WHOLE DO YOU FAVOR OR OPPOSE SUCH GAMBLING IN PHILADELPHIA?

	ALL RESPONDENTS =====	APRIL 2009 =====	JANUARY 2009 =====
FAVOR	51%	53%	49%
OPPOSE	34%	41%	43%
DEPENDS	6%	-	5%
DON'T KNOW/REFUSED	9%	6%	3%

Q. THE STATE LEGISLATURE HAS APPROVED ALLOWING TABLE GAMES SUCH A BLACKJACK AND POKER IN THE CASINOS IN ADDITION TO SLOT MACHINES. DO YOU FAVOR OR OPPOSE ALLOWING THESE TABLE GAMES?

	ALL RESPONDENTS =====
FAVOR	54%
OPPOSE	32%
DEPENDS	4%
DON'T KNOW/REFUSED	10%