NEWS RELEASE [RMP 2004-II-04]   Contact: Earl de Berge
                                                             Research Director

DISCONTENT WITH TAX POLICIES, BORDER ISSUES, SOCIAL PROGRAMS AND BEING DEAF TO THE PUBLIC TIED TO LOW RATINGS FOR LEGISLATURE

Phoenix, Arizona, May 18, 2004. Only 25 percent of Arizonans are willing to say that the legislature is doing a "good job" and a nearly equal proportion (21%) flatly accuse them of doing a "poor job."   Only 17 percent indicate that they have no idea what the legislature is doing and 37 percent give only lukewarm (or "fair") ratings.

Legislators often brush off low positive job ratings saying that most people know nothing about what legislators actually do or that it has just become the popular thing to cast aspersion on the legislature. And while it is generally true that Arizonans have long been reticent to applaud the performance of any legislature, it is not true that low ratings are merely institutional in nature or that disapproval is somehow independent of the perceived quality of work the public thinks legislators bring to their jobs. Indeed, over the past several decades, the proportion rating the legislature favorable has ranged from a low of 14 percent (1992) to a high as 37 (1999).

When the public was asked in this most recent poll to evaluate the performance of the Legislature on specific categories of public policy, it is very clear that the public is paying a great deal more attention than legislators may believe and that they have a very wide range of views as to what kind of job legislators are doing.

Of thirteen specific policy areas, a plurality of Arizonans believe the legislature is doing a "poor" job in nine of them.

Some of the most negative assessments relate to public perceptions regarding what the legislature has done regarding illegal aliens. Close to half rate the legislature's performance to help curb the flow of illegal aliens into Arizona from Mexico as "poor" and barely one in then think they are doing a good job. A smaller percent, but nonetheless a plurality, believe the legislature has also done a poor job of protecting illegal aliens from dying of exposure in Arizona's deserts. Public willingness to be critical of the legislature certainly seems to suggest that issues pertaining to illegal aliens is not perceived as merely a federal issue.

Other unflattering assessments trace to public views that the legislature has done a poor job in reducing taxes on consumers (43%), meeting the needs of the poor (43%) or the elderly (35%), funding public education(42%) or funding public transit (38%). As well, we register wide belief (43%) that the legislature simply takes no interest in the views of the average taxpayer. Only 16 percent believe the legislature is interested in the views of average taxpayers.

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And notwithstanding major efforts last year to reform Child Protective Services in Arizona, by a 35 percent to 22 percent ration, the public still gives the legislature poor marks on protecting Arizona children from child abuse.

In only four of the 13 public policy categories we asked the public to evaluate did a plurality give the legislature favorable ratings and in only one of these four, funding freeway construction, was the favorable reading noticeably higher than the "poor" ratings. The remaining three, protecting the state's environment, consumer fraud programs and wildfire protection programs received modestly more positive than negative assessments from the public.

The findings outlined in this report are based on a survey of 713 adults, including 555 registered voters, across Arizona conducted between April 29th and May 4th, 2004, by the Behavior Research Center of Arizona as part of the Center's independent and non-partisan Rocky Mountain Poll series. The public is welcome to visit www.brcpolls.com to read this and other recent polls.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: This Rocky Mountain Poll Arizona (2004-II-04) is based on 713 telephone interviews with adults, including 555 registered voters, conducted from April 29th through May 4th, 2004 throughout Arizona. In the overall sample, one may say with 95 percent certainty that the results have a statistical precision of plus or minus 3.7 percent of what they would have been had the entire adult population been surveyed. The voter sample has an estimated margin of error of plus or minus 4.2. The Rocky Mountain Poll is conducted by the Behavior Research Center of Arizona and is an independent and non-partisan research program.

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

ENCLOSED: Statistical data for reference.

STATISTICAL DATA   Behavior Research Center
                                                  Rocky Mountain Poll - Arizona
For this and other polls, see www.brcpolls.com/results.   RMP 2004-II-04

"Would you say the Arizona State Legislature is doing an excellent, good, fair, poor or very poor job in each of the following areas:"

	EXCELLENT/ GOOD	FAIR	POOR/ VERY POOR	UNSURE	(NET TO POSITIVE)
Its overall performance	25%	37%	21%	7%	(+4%)
Funding the construction of freeways in your community	48	21	24	7	(+24)
Protecting Arizona's environment	37	35	23	5	(+14)
Working to protect Arizona forests from wildfires	33	32	24	11	(+9)
Protecting consumers from business fraud in Arizona	25	38	23	14	(+2)
Developing programs to protect illegal aliens from dying of exposure in Arizona deserts	23	26	31	20	(-8)
Funding public transit service in your community	24	27	34	15	(-10)
Funding programs to protect children from abuse	22	30	35	13	(-13)
Working to meet the needs of the elderly	18	36	33	13	(-15)
Listening to the opinions of average tax payers	16	30	41	13	(-25)
Funding public education in Arizona	18	28	44	10	(-26)
Reducing your taxes	14	36	41	9	(-27)
Working to meet the needs of the poor	15	30	46	9	(-31)
Developing programs to stop the flow of illegal immigrants into Arizona	12	21	58	9	(-46)

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STATISTICAL DATA   Behavior Research Center
                                                            Rocky Mountain Poll - Arizona
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Performance of State Legislature:
■ Excellent/Good   ■ Poor/Very Poor

Category	Excellent/Good	Poor/Very Poor
Curbing Illegal Alien Traffic	12%	-58%
Poverty Programs	15%	-46%
Reducing Consumer Taxes	14%	-41%
Listening to Taxpayers	16%	-41%
Funding Education	19%	-44%
Elderly Programs	18%	-33%
Child Protection	22%	-35%
Funding Mass Transit	24%	-34%
Desert Deaths Prevention	23%	-31%
Consumer Fraud	25%	-23%
Wildfires	33%	-24%
Environment	37%	-23%
Freeways	48%	-24%

Performance of State Legislature:
■ Net Score = Positive - Negative

Category	Net Score
Curing Illegal Alien Traffic	-46%
Poverty Programs	-31%
Reducing Consumer Taxes	-27%
Listening to Taxpayers	-25%
Funding Education	-25%
Elderly Programs	-15%
Child Protection	-13%
Funding Mass Transit	-10%
Desert Deaths Prevention	-8%
Consumer Fraud	2%
Wildfires	9%
Environment	14%
Freeways	24%