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University of North Florida Poll Reveals that a Vast Majority of Duval County Residents Oppose JEA increasing its Annual Contribution to Pay the Pension Obligation

Among other issues, a new University of North Florida poll interviewed adult Duval County residents to find out what they thought about Jacksonville's current unfunded liability of nearly 1.7 billion dollars for its pension system that serves police officers and firefighters. A pension reform plan that would require JEA to increase its annual contribution to the city to help pay the pension obligation faces strong opposition (73 percent) in the community. The public also opposes (56 percent) a small increase in property taxes dedicated to reducing the pension obligation. Three proposals to reduce the pension obligation that do have community support include requiring current (62 percent) and future employees (70 percent) to pay more into the pension system. There is also tepid support for requiring future public safety employees to work longer until they become eligible to receive pension benefits (51 percent).

In addition, Jacksonville residents are split on what should be Jacksonville's top priority this upcoming year. Similarly to last year, the leading issues on residents' minds were improving education, improving the economy and creating jobs, and reducing crime. A plurality of residents feel improving education should be the city's top priority (27 percent), up slightly from 2013 (24 percent). Fewer people felt the economy (26 percent) should be the city's top priority in 2014 than in 2013 (37 percent). While more people think reducing crime should be the city's prime focus in 2014 (20 percent) than they did in 2013 (13 percent).

The proposal to extend the current six-cent gas tax has a majority of support (52 percent). Support for the city to pass a Human Rights Ordinance has increased (65 percent) relative to last year's level of support (58 percent).

The survey was conducted through the use of a 27-station telephone-polling laboratory at UNF. A polling sample was selected through the use of Random-Digit-Dialing methodology. A cell phone sample was used to increase representation. Age, gender, race and education were weighted to the most recent U.S. Census data.

The survey was conducted between Monday, Feb. 10, and Tuesday, Feb. 17, and includes 502 residents (+/- 4.37 percent) in Duval County. Approximately 120 UNF political science students participated in the data collection.

Below are the full results. For further information or questions about methodology, contact Dr. Michael Binder, UNF assistant professor of political science, at (904) 620-1205 or m.binder@unf.edu.

UNF, a [nationally ranked](#) university located on an environmentally beautiful campus, offers students who are dedicated to enriching the lives of others the opportunity to build their own futures through a well-rounded education.

*Data is weighted by age, gender, race and education.

Toplines

In your opinion, what should be Jacksonville's top priority this year?

	February 2014 (N=502)	February 2013 (N=917)
Improving Arts and Entertainment	1%	2%
Improving the Downtown Area	5%	6%
Improving the Economy and Creating Jobs	26%	37%
Improving Public Education	27%	24%
Improving Transportation and Infrastructure	4%	4%
Reducing Crime	20%	13%
Solving the Public Pension Problem	3%	3%
Balancing the Budget	8%	5%
Something Else? _____	4%	6%
Don't Know/No Answer	2%	1%

The city of Jacksonville currently has an unfunded liability of nearly 1.7 billion dollars for its pension system that serves police officers and firefighters. These pension benefits were promised to current public safety employees and retirees when they were hired. Currently about 15% of the city's annual operating budget is used to pay the pension obligation with the city's obligation increasing over the next 20 years. The increased contributions for the pension reduce the amount in the city budget for other city services. A number of proposals have been offered to reduce the city's pension obligation. Do you oppose or support the following proposals?

Require JEA, formally known as Jacksonville Electric Authority, to increase its annual contribution to the city to help pay the pension obligation. This increased contribution might lead to higher electric rates. [if support/oppose, ask:] would you say strongly or somewhat?

	February 2014 (N=502)
Strongly Support	10%
Somewhat Support	15%
Somewhat Oppose	18%
Strongly Oppose	55%
Don't Know/No Answer	3%

A small increase in city property taxes dedicated to reducing the pension obligation. [if support/oppose, ask:] would you say strongly or somewhat?

	February 2014 (N=502)
Strongly Support	13%
Somewhat Support	26%
Somewhat Oppose	20%
Strongly Oppose	36%
Don't Know/No Answer	5%

Ask CURRENT public safety employees to pay more into the pension system. [if support/oppose, ask:] would you say strongly or somewhat?

	February 2014 (N=502)
Strongly Support	32%
Somewhat Support	30%
Somewhat Oppose	15%
Strongly Oppose	16%
Don't Know/No Answer	7%

Ask FUTURE public safety employees to pay more into the pension system. [if support/oppose, ask:] would you say strongly or somewhat?

	February 2014 (N=502)
Strongly Support	43%
Somewhat Support	27%
Somewhat Oppose	13%
Strongly Oppose	11%
Don't Know/No Answer	6%

Require CURRENT public safety employees to work more years to be eligible for their pension. [if support/oppose, ask:] would you say strongly or somewhat?

	February 2014 (N=502)
Strongly Support	20%
Somewhat Support	19%
Somewhat Oppose	21%
Strongly Oppose	30%
Don't Know/No Answer	9%

Require FUTURE public safety employees to work more years to be eligible for their pension. [if support/oppose, ask:] would you say strongly or somewhat?

	February 2014 (N=502)
Strongly Support	30%
Somewhat Support	21%
Somewhat Oppose	17%
Strongly Oppose	25%
Don't Know/No Answer	8%

Do you support or oppose the City of Jacksonville extending the six-cent gas tax if five-cents goes to the Jacksonville Transportation Authority and one-cent goes to the city for road improvements? [if support/oppose, ask:] would you say strongly or somewhat?

	February 2014 (N=502)
Strongly Support	22%
Somewhat Support	30%
Somewhat Oppose	14%
Strongly Oppose	29%
Don't Know/No Answer	4%

Do you support or oppose the City of Jacksonville adding sexual orientation to the existing list of groups protected from workplace discrimination? [if support/oppose, ask:] would you say strongly or somewhat?

	February 2014 (N=502)	February 2013 (N=917)
Strongly Support	39%	36%
Somewhat Support	26%	22%
Somewhat Oppose	9%	13%
Strongly Oppose	16%	20%
Don't Know/No Answer	11%	9%

Demographic Toplines

Are you a registered Democrat, Republican, No Party Affiliation or are you not registered to vote?

	N=502
Democrat	39%
Republican	33%
No Party Affiliation and Others	18%
Not Registered to Vote	9%

What is your age?

	N=502
18-24	14%
25-44	37%
45-64	35%
65-80	11%
Above 80	3%

What best describes your racial or ethnic background?

	N=502
White or Caucasian	56%
Black or African American	29%
Hispanic or Latino	8%
Asian	2%
Other	4%

What is the highest grade in school or year of college you have completed?

	N=502
Less than high school degree	4%
High School Graduate	20%
Some College	38%
College Graduate	25%
Post Graduate	13%

What is your annual household income?

	N=502
Less than \$25,000	18%
\$25,000 to \$50,000	27%
\$50,000 to \$75,000	14%
\$75,000 to \$100,000	11%
Above \$100,000	15%
Don't Know/No Answer	15%

Gender

	N=502
Male	47%
Female	53%