

Plurality of voters give Evers good marks at start of term in MU poll, but large swath express no opinion

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Tony Evers began his first month in office with a plurality of voters giving him good marks, but a large swath expressing no opinion of the new gov, according to the latest Marquette University Law School Poll.

Thirty-nine percent of registered voters surveyed last week approved of the job Evers is doing, while 22 percent didn't and 38 percent didn't know.

Meanwhile, 57 percent said the state is on the right track, while 33 percent said it's not. That split was 55-40 in October, the final poll before Evers beat two-term Gov. Scott Walker.

Poll director Charles Franklin noted Walker had unusually high name ID as a gov following the fight over Act 10 early in his first term.

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"It's not at all unusual that a new governor would be that high," Franklin said of the voters who expressed no opinion of Evers. He said the question going forward was how soon they developed an impression of the new gov.

The survey also found voters backing Evers' position on several issues he's raised early in his administration.

Evers has vowed to include a provision in his state budget to accept federal money to expand Medicaid even as Republican lawmakers have promised to nix it. The poll found 62 percent favor accepting the money, while 25 percent are opposed.

During his State of the State address Tuesday, Evers said he had directed AG Josh Kaul to withdraw from the multi-state lawsuit seeking to overturn the Affordable Care Act. Republicans changed state law last month to strip the gov of the power to direct the AG to withdraw from a suit, and Evers' office later walked back that comment.

The poll found 48 percent believe Wisconsin should withdraw from the lawsuit, while 42 percent said it should continue.

On other issues:

*73 percent support a "major" funding increase for special education, while 20 percent were opposed. Evers plans to include a \$600 million hike for special ed in his upcoming budget.

*52 percent want gas taxes and fees to remain where they are, while 42 percent backed an increase to pay for roads. Evers, who has said he's open to a gas tax hike, said in his State of the State he'll appoint a task force to look at solutions for funding transportation.

*42 percent agreed prisoners should be released and given a less costly form of punishment if they have served least half of their sentence and were no longer a threat to society, while 43 percent were opposed. Those who were asked if a similar question, but with prisoners first serving two-thirds of their sentences, 51 percent supported early release, while 34 percent were opposed. Evers has said he wants to reduce the state's prison population.

The poll of 800 registered voters was in the field Jan. 16-20 and had a margin of error of plus or minus 3.9 percentage points. Sixty-one percent of the interviews were conducted via landline, and the sample was 45 percent Republicans, 43 percent Dem and 11 percent independents. Franklin said that was more Republican than the poll's trend since it began in 2012, but in line with the partisan bent of more recent surveys.

See the [poll release](#).