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FOR RELEASE: FEBRUARY 24, 2015

**COLORADO, IOWA, VIRGINIA GOVERNORS GET GOOD GRADES
QUINNIPIAC UNIVERSITY SWING STATE POLL FINDS;
COLORADO VOTERS STILL HIGH ON LEGALIZED MARIJUANA**

Voters in three critical swing states, Colorado, Iowa and Virginia, give their governors good job approval ratings and are strongly optimistic about the next three or four years in their states under their current governors, according to a Quinnipiac University Swing State Poll released today.

Job approval ratings for U.S. Senators in the three states range from a better than 3-1 score for Iowa's Chuck Grassley to a lackluster grade for Colorado's Cory Gardner and Michael Bennet, the independent Quinnipiac (KWIN-uh-pe-ack) University Poll finds. The Swing State Poll focuses on key states in the presidential election.

Colorado voters still strongly support legalization of recreational marijuana in the state, although only one in five voters admits to using marijuana since it became legal January 1, 2014.

"An improving economy nationally seems to be helping the political climate even in the dead of a very cold winter. Incumbent governors are getting good grades from these electorates. Voters in Colorado, Iowa and Virginia are optimistic about the future," said Peter A. Brown, assistant director of the Quinnipiac University Poll.

Colorado

Colorado voters approve 53 – 37 percent of the job Gov. John Hickenlooper is doing, compared to a 48 – 46 percent approval rating in a July 16, 2014, Quinnipiac University poll. Gov. Hickenlooper tops 50 percent among men, women and independent voters.

Voters say 58 – 31 percent that they are optimistic about the next four years with Hickenlooper as governor.

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U.S. Sen. Cory Gardner, elected in November, gets a 36 – 26 percent job approval rating, with U.S. Sen. Michael Bennet at 39 – 28 percent.

Colorado voters are divided on whether Sen. Bennet deserves reelection in 2016, with 32 percent saying he deserves reelection and 34 percent saying no. Democrats favor reelection by a bare majority of 53 – 19 percent. Opposing reelection are Republicans 46 – 26 percent and independent voters 35 – 25 percent.

With noticeable gender and age gaps, voters support legalized recreational marijuana 58 – 38 percent. Men support legalization 63 – 33 percent, with women in favor 53 – 44 percent. Voters 18 to 34 years old support it 82 – 16 percent. Support drops to 58 – 38 percent among voters 35 to 54 years old. Among voters over 55 years old, 46 percent support legalization, with 50 percent opposed.

While 53 percent of Colorado voters say they have tried marijuana, only 19 percent say they've tried it since it became legal last year.

“Colorado voters are as happy with ‘Hick,’ Gov. John Hickenlooper, as they were before an ugly reelection campaign,” said Tim Malloy, assistant director of the Quinnipiac Poll.

“As for pot, they remain neither cold nor hot. Voters still think it was a good move to legalize recreational marijuana, but few admit to joining the ranks of new ‘imbibers.’”

Iowa

Long-time Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad gets a 59 – 31 percent job approval rating from voters, who say 67 – 24 percent they are optimistic about the next four years with Gov. Branstad at the helm.

Voters approve by a solid 67 – 21 percent of the job U.S. Sen. Chuck Grassley is doing and say 55 – 30 percent that he deserves reelection in 2016.

Support for reelection is over 50 percent among men and women, 72 – 15 percent among Republicans and 58 – 28 percent among independent voters. Democrats say 48 – 39 percent that Sen. Grassley does not deserve reelection.

Newly-elected U.S. Sen. Joni Ernst gets a 42 – 26 percent job approval rating. The reverse gender gap that dogged her 2014 Senate campaign fades as men approve 45 – 25 percent while women approve 40 – 27 percent.

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“U.S. Sen. Joni Ernst, who took Iowa and conservatives nationally by storm in the 2014 balloting, is getting good approval numbers for a first-timer,” Brown said. “Iowa seems to be an incumbent’s happy place these days as Gov. Terry Branstad and Sen. Charles Grassley, who is a big favorite for re-election, find themselves in strong shape with the voting public.”

Virginia

Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe finishes his first year in office with a 49 – 25 percent job approval rating as 26 percent of voters remain undecided.

By a strong 62 – 26 percent margin, however, voters are optimistic about the next three years with McAuliffe as governor.

Voters approve 62 – 23 percent of the job U.S. Sen. Mark Warner is doing and give U.S. Sen. Tim Kaine a 53 – 28 percent job approval rating.

“Virginia is much like Iowa in voter affection for top officials. The difference in Iowa is that the governor and senators are all Republicans, while in Virginia they are all Democrats. That's quite a turnaround from the days not that long ago when The Old Dominion was solidly red,” Brown said.

From February 5 – 15 Quinnipiac University surveyed:

- 1,049 Colorado voters with a margin of error of +/- 3 percentage points;
 - 1,089 Iowa voters with a margin of error of +/- 3 percentage points;
 - 1,074 Virginia voters with a margin of error of +/- 3 percentage points.
- Live interviewers call land lines and cell phones.

The Quinnipiac University Poll, directed by Douglas Schwartz, Ph.D., conducts public opinion surveys in Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Florida, Ohio, Virginia, Iowa, Colorado and the nation as a public service and for research.

For more information, visit <http://www.quinnipiac.edu/polling>, call (203) 582-5201, or follow us on [Twitter](#) @QuinnipiacPoll.

12abc. Do you approve or disapprove of the way - (CO) John Hickenlooper / (IA) Terry Branstad / (VA) Terry McAuliffe - is handling his job as Governor?

	CO Hickenlooper	IA Branstad	VA McAuliffe
Approve	53%	59%	49%
Disapprove	37	31	25
DK/NA	10	10	26

13abc. Are you generally optimistic or pessimistic about the next - (CO) four years with John Hickenlooper / (IA) four years with Terry Branstad / (VA) three years with Terry McAuliffe - as governor?

	CO Hickenlooper	IA Branstad	VA McAuliffe
Optimistic	58%	67%	62%
Pessimistic	31	24	26
DK/NA	10	8	12

14abc-15abc. Do you approve or disapprove of the way - (CO) Cory Gardner, Michael Bennet / (IA) Joni Ernst, Chuck Grassley / (VA) Tim Kaine, Mark Warner - is handling (his/her) job as United States Senator?

	CO.....		IA.....		VA.....	
	Gardner	Bennet	Ernst	Grassley	Kaine	Warner
Approve	36%	39%	42%	67%	53%	62%
Disapprove	26	28	26	21	28	23
DK/NA	39	33	32	13	19	15

16ab. (CO/IA only) Looking ahead to the 2016 election for United States Senator, do you feel that - (CO) Michael Bennet / (IA) Chuck Grassley - deserves to be reelected, or do you feel that he does not deserve to be reelected?

	CO Bennet	IA Grassley	VA
Yes/Deserves	32%	55%	-
No/Does not	34	30	-
DK/NA	34	15	-

38a. (CO only) As you may know, voters in Colorado passed a law legalizing marijuana for recreational use in 2012. Do you support or oppose this law?

	CO	IA	VA
Support	58%	-	-
Oppose	38	-	-
DK/NA	4	-	-

39a. (CO only) Keeping in mind that all of your answers in this survey are confidential, have you, yourself ever happened to try marijuana?

	CO	IA	VA
Yes	53%	-	-
No	45	-	-
DK/NA	2	-	-

40a. (CO only) Have you used marijuana after recreational sales began in Colorado January 1st, 2014?

	CO	IA	VA
Yes	19%	-	-
No	80	-	-
DK/NA	1	-	-