

## Jobs, economy top concerns of voters

Jim Stinson • Staff writer • October 18, 2010

A year after the U.S. economy supposedly stabilized and the Great Recession came to an end, jobs and the economy are the No. 1 issue in the minds of Monroe County voters.

The Mason-Dixon Polling & Research firm of Washington, D.C., surveyed 500 likely voters in Monroe County between Oct. 1 and Oct. 5 for Voice of the Voter, a collaborative effort that includes the *Democrat and Chronicle*. That effort seeks to inform citizens and give them a voice in the election process.

*The poll results showed a dismal view of the national and, especially, state economies and political directions.*

Fifty-nine percent of likely Monroe County voters told the poll that jobs and the economy were the top national issue. That is up 21 percentage points from 2009.

"We see all around us the lack of jobs," said Robert Dorman, 40, a Greece resident and a nursing instructor at the University of Rochester School of Nursing.

"People are being more cautious with the money they have."

Dorman said even his field — nursing — has been affected. Usually a sector safe from recession, nursing has been hit of late, Dorman said, and students are telling him it is taking longer to find jobs.

The Great Recession ended in the summer of 2009, and the summer of 2010 was supposed to be the "Summer of Recovery," according to President Barack Obama and Vice President Joe Biden. The treatment, \$800 billion-plus in stimulus spending, was supposed to be the post-surgery pain medication.

Instead, the pain of unemployment — at or above the level of 9.5 percent nationally — has lingered for 14 straight months. That's the longest stretch of high unemployment since the Great Depression in

the 1930s.

The current joblessness rate is 8.3 percent in New York and 9.6 percent nationally, and unemployment has been a particularly thorny issue for state and federal officials to try to improve.

Hodan Isse, assistant professor of finance and managerial economics at the School of Management of the State University of New York at Buffalo, said the problem is the glut of available workers is mismatched with what the U.S. market needs.

"Unemployment is going to be like that for a while because it's structural, not cyclical," said Isse.

Isse said the silver lining is that some good comes out of recession. In this case, it could be retrained workers who are ready for the new jobs of a changed 21st century workplace.

In retirement, Joanne Steiger, 67, is in a slightly safer spot than many voters, Steiger said.

The Hilton resident's husband is also retired. But they have children and grandchildren, and Steiger, a registered Democrat, is both wary and weary of growing government power and debt. She said she has concerns the debt will be passed on to her kids, and that time after time, the government fails to do anything about debt.

"The government is not for the people," said Steiger, a retired receptionist. "The government is for the government."

Steiger said she is worried about all the U.S. debt



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that the Chinese government is buying.

"I am scared to death of China," said Steiger.

"We owe them all our money."

But given the depth of the Great Recession, which ended in mid-2009, and the jobless recovery which followed, some voters think some spending may help stimulate the economy.

At least one of these voters, however, did not want further spending.

"Things are better than they were a year or two ago," said Jeremy Hawk, 40, of Rochester.

"The bleeding stopped ... They shouldn't (spend) any more because of the debt."

Hawk said the nation is on the right track.

Yet Hawk, a marketing analyst, went through two different layoffs in the previous two years, he said. He is employed again.

Helping to keep his household stable during the layoffs was his wife, a school teacher, he said. But he has seen some budget cuts affect her school, and that concerns him.

The uncertainty about the economy is severe, and it's not surprising that voters feel down, said Daniel Tessonni, professor of accounting at Rochester Institute of Technology and a board member of International Textile Group.

Tessonni said businesses are unsure what health care for workers will cost in 2011 and 2012. They are unsure what their taxes will be. They are unsure whether banks can proceed with foreclosures and get the worst behind them.

That means many businesses simply won't hire or take chances on capital investment.

"In this arena of uncertainty, firms are going to stand pat," said Tessonni.

Arthur Appleby, a carpenter in Brockport, said the "supposed recovery that started months ago hasn't reached us."

Appleby said property taxes in the village are "untenable." Still, Appleby, a registered Democrat, is not likely to vote to toss out all incumbents on

Election Day, Nov. 2.

He said he was going to diversify his ballot by picking candidates with experience, and some with less experience, in at least two parties, Appleby said.

"You need some new blood," said Appleby, 59.

Dorman, for one, linked the economy and taxes as the top state issue.

"Property taxes here are probably four times what they were in Pennsylvania," said Dorman, who moved back to the Rochester area several years ago.

"We're paying for the dysfunction of Albany."

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**Voice of the Voter**

Voice of the Voter is a collaborative effort among the *Democrat and Chronicle*, WXXI (Channel 21 and AM 1370), WHAM-TV (Channel 13) and WDKX-FM (103.9). It seeks to inform citizens and give them a voice in the election process. The effort is funded by a Rochester Area Community Foundation grant.

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**About the poll**

The poll of 500 likely Monroe County voters was conducted Oct. 1-5 for Voice of the Voter by Mason-Dixon Polling & Research Inc. of Washington, D.C. The margin for error is plus or minus 4.5 percent.

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