FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MARCH 28, 2013

CONTACTS: Charles Ballard, State of the State Survey, Institute for Public Policy and Social Research, 517-353-2961, ballard@msu.edu; Cynthia Kyle, Institute for Public Policy and Social Research, 517-353-1731, kylec@msu.edu

SOSS: MICHIGAN SHARPLY DIVIDED OVER RIGHT-TO-WORK

As Michigan becomes the nation’s 24th right-to-work state, its residents remain sharply divided over whether the new law will hurt or help the economy, Michigan State University’s latest State of the State Survey shows.

Of the 1,013 Michigan adults surveyed this winter, 42.7 percent said they believe the new law will help the economy. Another 41 percent said it will hurt.

“That’s a statistical dead heat,” said Charles Ballard, MSU professor of economics and State of the State Survey Director.

The quarterly telephone survey carried a margin of error of about 3 percent. It was conducted between Jan. 14 and March 4.

Right-to-work measures were passed and signed into law in early December and took effect today, 90 days after the legislative session ended.

MSU’s Office for Survey Research, a part of the Institute for Public Policy and Social Research, conducted the survey. SOSS has asked Michigan residents their opinions on social and economic topics since 1994.

Notably, those who said the new laws would “hurt a lot” – 22.5 percent -- outnumbered those who said it would “help a lot” – 17.2 percent, Ballard said. In the middle were 16.3 percent who said the right to work measures would have no effect.

“When we consider different groups within the Michigan population, views about right to work broke along predictable lines,” Ballard said. Of respondents who identified themselves as Republicans, 74.2 percent said the new laws would help the state’s economy.

Only 24.8 percent of Democrats said right-to-work measures would help Michigan. Among independents, 42.3 percent said right to work will help the economy.

more
Union members were considerably more pessimistic than non-union members. Among union members, 74 percent said right to work would hurt the economy. Of those not affiliated with a union, 46 percent said right to work would help the economy.

Nearly 50 percent of the men responding indicated that right-to-work laws would help Michigan. Fewer than 40 percent of the women had the same view. Whites favored right-to-work concepts more than blacks, 45.4 percent to 24.9 percent, respectively.

Some 58 percent of those who identify themselves as conservatives replied that right to work would help. Among liberals, 60 percent indicated it would hurt.

The state was divided geographically too. Among respondents in the region including Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair, Washtenaw and Wayne counties, 38.2 percent said the law would help the economy. In Grand Rapids, 52.6 percent said the law would help.

Of those who believe right to work will help the state “a lot,” 70 percent have a favorable view of Gov. Rick Snyder, who favored the change in law, versus 7 percent of those who think it will hurt “a lot.”

Michigan residents’ views of Snyder’s performance changed little during the winter quarter, Ballard said.

“Governor Snyder's favorable ratings (either “excellent” or “good”) fell very slightly, from 35.5 percent to 34 percent,” Ballard said. “That’s not big enough of a change to be statistically significant. For the moment at least, Snyder is stuck in the mid 30s.”

President Obama gained slightly during the winter, Ballard said. Michigan residents rating President Obama’s performance as excellent or good increased from 42.8 percent in the previous survey to the current 48.4 percent.

“Thus after being stuck in the low 40s, Obama gained a noticeable boost. His favorables are now the highest he has enjoyed since summer 2009,” Ballard said.

MSU’s Institute for Public Policy and Social Research focuses on leadership training, public policy and survey research. It is housed within MSU’s College of Social Science.

###