

## Streamlining Alabama State Government: What Alabama Thinks

- **Only 1 of 6 Alabamians agree that the State Government is doing a good or excellent job in handling its money, but the public is equally divided between those who agree and disagree that the State budget cuts enacted this fiscal year have led to a more efficient and streamlined government.**
- **By a margin of 2 to 1, Alabamians are opposed to reducing benefits such as health insurance for state employees; and more than two-thirds of the public opposes reductions in State expenditures on children after-school and recreation services (69%), senior citizen center services (73%), and senior health care (68%).**
- **88% of Alabamians oppose layoffs of school teachers, and 76% oppose a hiring freeze of new State Highway Patrol Officers.**

(Auburn, November 4) The *Ask-Alabama* statewide fall 2004 public opinion survey underscores the difficulties that the State Legislature and Governor's Office face in reducing the growth of State expenditures during the special session<sup>1</sup>. The poll, conducted by the Center for Governmental Services at Auburn University, indicates that most Alabamians believe that their State officials must do more to control expenditures, but are adamant that services for children and seniors be protected; that state trooper and public teacher employment levels be retained or expanded; and that State employee benefits not be cut any further.

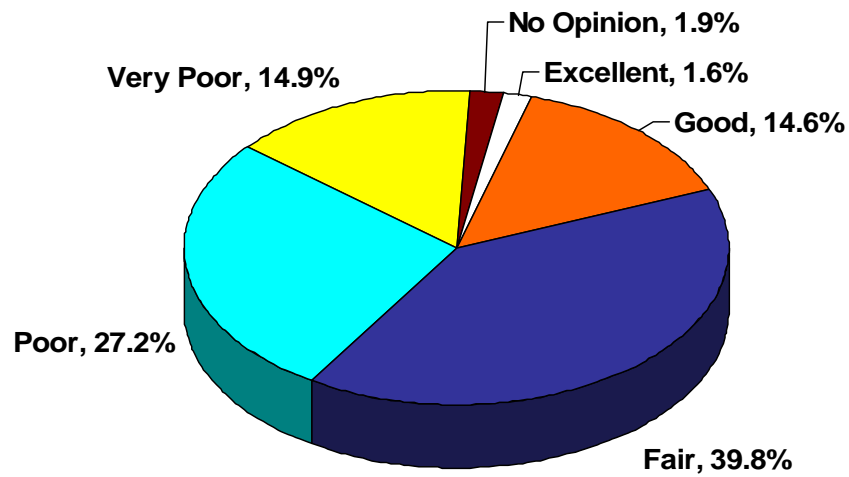
## Low Confidence in State Money Management

Sixteen percent of Alabamians believe that the State Government is doing an *excellent* (1.6%) or *good* (14.6%) job in handling its money. Meanwhile, 42% indicate that the State is doing a *poor* (27.2%) or *very poor* (14.9%) job of managing public funds. Alabamians were about equally divided between those who agreed (46%) that the cuts enacted by the State this year have created a more efficient and streamlined government versus those who disagreed (43%).

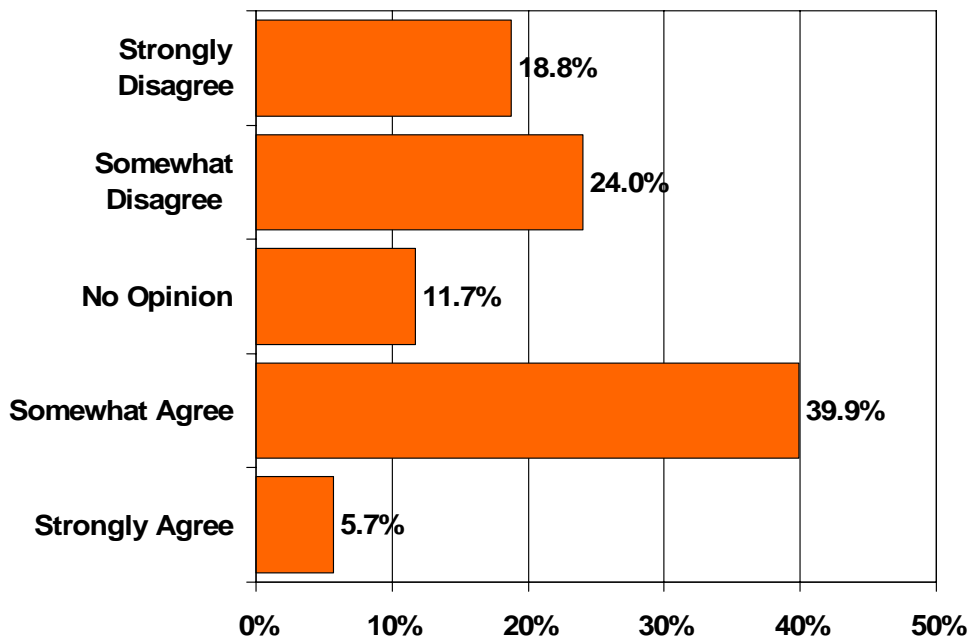
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<sup>1</sup> The survey of a random telephone sample of 1,018 Alabamians was conducted from October 12-27, 2004. The average estimated margin of error is less than +/- 3%.

## Few Alabamians Believe that the State Has Managed Its Money Well



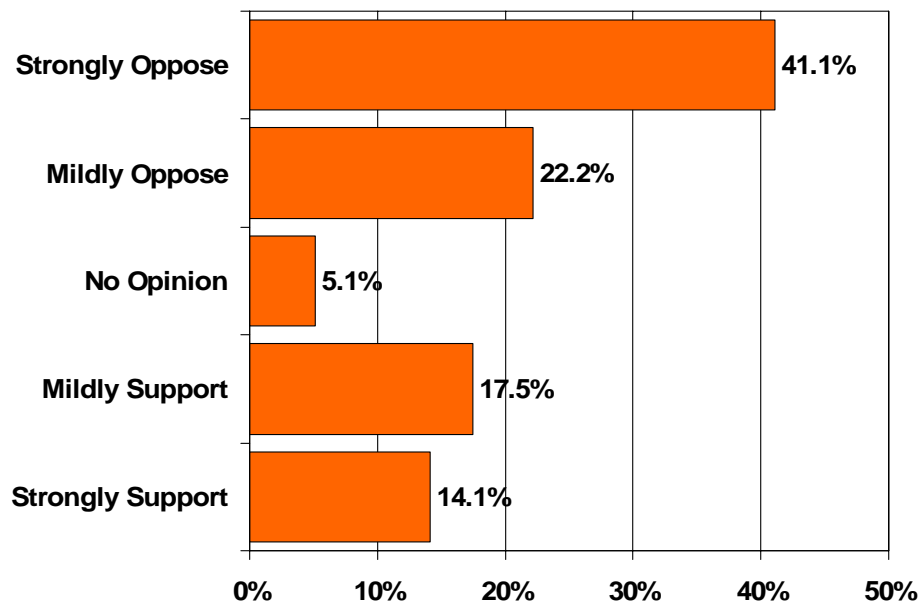
## Alabamians Are Divided Regarding Whether the 2004 State Budget Cuts have Led to a More Efficient and Streamlined Government



## Strong Opposition to Reducing State Employee Health Benefits

The public, by a two to one margin, expresses disapproval of cuts or reductions in state employee benefits, such as health insurance. Forty-one percent were *strongly opposed* to benefit reductions, compared to only 14% who *strongly supported* this measure.

## Public Opposition to Reduction of State Agency Employee Benefits



## Little Public Support for Other Spending Cuts

Opposition to cuts in basic State services is also very high. By more than a two to one margin, Alabamians reject cuts in senior health care services (68% opposed), cuts in senior citizen center programs (73% opposed), reductions in children health and nutrition services (75% opposed), and children's after-school programs (68% opposed). In addition there is near universal opposition to layoffs of teachers (88% opposed), and strong opposition to imposition of hiring freezes in the State Highway Patrol (76% opposed).

The only cut in expenditures that garners support among a majority of Alabamians (53%) is the imposition of a 10% or greater across the board cut in State agency budgets. Twenty-two percent *strongly support* these across the board cuts, but eighteen percent strongly oppose such actions.

## The Public is Opposed to Reductions in State Services

