New Yorkers say state's economy "worsening"

By William Kates
The Associated Press

SYRACUSE -- A growing number of New Yorkers describe the state's economy as worsening, and only one out of three are optimistic about the state's financial well-being in the year ahead, according to an annual poll.

The number of New Yorkers who described the state economy as worsening over the past year increased from 36 percent in 2006 to 43 percent in 2007, according to the Empire State Poll, a yearly telephone survey conducted by Cornell University's Survey Research Institute.

Past polls had shown New Yorkers expressing growing faith in the state's economy since 2003, when confidence was at its lowest with nearly 80 percent of respondents saying conditions were worsening.

Half of Upstate residents believed the state's economy worsened over the past year, while only 9 percent thought it had improved. Downstate, 27 percent of residents thought the economy had improved, while only 39 percent said it was worse.

Meanwhile, 34 percent of New Yorkers expected the state's economy to improve during the next year, up from about 23 percent in 2006 and the most optimistic outlook uncovered by the poll during its five years.

The optimism was greater downstate (39 percent) than Upstate (26 percent) and is likely a carry over from a new governor taking office, Miller said. Downstate residents may have been buoyed because that region has seen more of an economic resurgence than upstate, she said.

Taxes remained among the most pressing issues for New Yorkers, both at the community and state levels, cited by nearly one in every five residents (18 percent). However, it was considerably more of a concern for Upstate residents, with 29 percent listing it as the top problem, compared to 9 percent of people downstate.

The poll was conducted by telephone with 800 New York residents between Jan. 25 and March 28, 2007, and its results released exclusively to The Associated Press. For purposes of the poll, downstate was defined as New York, Rockland, Kings, Richmond, Westchester, Suffolk, Queens, Nassau and Bronx counties. The poll's margin of error was 3.5 percent for statewide results and 4.9 percent for upstate-downstate comparisons.