

CONGRESS, ETHICS AND JACK ABRAMOFF

January 5-8, 2006

In the wake of news of ethics problems for some members of Congress and a guilty plea and promise to testify in a political corruption investigation by a top Washington lobbyist, Congress' job approval rating has sunk to its lowest level since 1996. But the public's concern is bi-partisan: most Americans think both Republicans and Democrats will be implicated in the political corruption investigation involving that lobbyist.

CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL

Recent scandals appear to have taken a toll on views of Congress as a whole. While ratings of Congress have been low for most of 2005, in this poll just 27% approve of the job Congress is doing. Congress' job approval reached its previous lowest level for 2005 (29%) in May of last year, amidst the Senate's filibuster fight and just two months after Congress' involvement in the Terri Schiavo case. But the last time ratings of Congress were at this current level was in July 1996.

CONGRESS JOB APPROVAL

	Now	12/2005	5/2005	1/2005
Approve	27%	33%	29%	44%
Disapprove	57	53	55	39

Majorities of Republicans and Democrats as well as Independents disapprove of the job Congress is doing.

Congress' approval ratings were lower shortly before the 1994 midterm election (just before the Republican Party's electoral takeover), dropping as low as 20%.

Recent events may have contributed to Congress' low approval rating. Majority Leader Tom DeLay announced he would not seek to return to his position as Majority Leader in the middle of interviewing for this poll, and two thirds of Americans have heard or read at least a little about the political corruption investigation involving Jack Abramoff and his guilty pleas to three felony charges, including conspiracy to bribe government officials.

HEARD OR READ ABOUT ABRAMOFF CASE

A lot	14%
Some	31
Not much	23
Nothing	32

This situation has drawn somewhat less public attention than the early stages of some past political scandals. Last summer, 76% had read at least a little about the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) leak investigation. After the indictment of Lewis "Scooter" Libby, Vice President Cheney's Chief of Staff, the number paying attention to that matter increased.

Back in January 1997, 85% had heard or read about alleged illegal campaign contributions to the Democratic Party from foreign businessmen. In 1994, a similar number - 87% - had heard or read about the Whitewater investigation when it was in its early stages.

HEARD OR READ ABOUT VARIOUS POLITICAL SCANDALS

	<u>Abramoff</u> <u>Case</u>	<u>Plame</u> <u>leak</u>	<u>Campaign</u> <u>contributions</u>	<u>White-</u> <u>water</u>
	Now	8/2005	1/1997	1/1994
A lot	14%	19%	20%	17%
Some	31	35	38	40
Not much	23	22	27	30
Nothing	32	23	15	12

But among those who heard or read at least a little about the Abramoff investigation, six in ten think Abramoff's testimony will involve members of both parties equally. 23% think Abramoff's testimony will involve mostly Republicans, while just 1% thinks it will involve mostly Democrats.

WHO WILL MOSTLY BE INVOLVED IN ABRAMOFF'S TESTIMONY?

(Among those who have heard or read about Abramoff case)

Republicans	23%
Democrats	1
Both parties equally	62

However, Republicans in Congress are nearly twice as likely as their Democratic counterparts to be seen as the party that is more financially corrupt. Three in 10 view the parties as equally financially corrupt. In January 1990, the gap between the parties was much narrower. 20% said the Republicans in Congress were more financially corrupt, and nearly the same number - 16% - said it was the Democrats.

WHICH PARTY IS MORE FINANCIALLY CORRUPT?

	Now	1/1990
Republicans in Congress	34%	20%
Democrats in Congress	18	16
Same	30	38

The responses are virtually unchanged when the word "financially" is removed from the question. 36% of Americans say the Republicans are more corrupt, while 16% think the Democrats are. Another 30% say the parties are equally corrupt.

Despite the recent ethical problems facing some Republican members of Congress, including former House Majority Leader Tom Delay, the Republican Party still runs even with the Democrats when it comes to having higher ethical standards. But they have lost the lead they had on this issue in 1999. Then, Republicans had a 23-point advantage over the Democrats on having higher ethical standards.

WHICH PARTY HAS HIGHER ETHICAL STANDARDS?

	Now	12/2005	11/1999
Republicans	34%	34%	46%
Democrats	34	31	23

This poll was conducted among a nationwide random sample of 1,151 adults, interviewed by telephone January 5-8, 2006. The error due to sampling for results based on the entire sample could be plus or minus three percentage points.

CBS NEWS POLL
Congress, Ethics and Jack Abramoff
January 5-8, 2006

q9 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Congress is handling its job?

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **				
	***** Party ID *****				
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Dec05a
	%	%	%	%	%
Approve	27	36	25	24	33
Disapprove	57	52	59	58	53
DK/NA	16	12	16	18	14

q17 Regardless of how you usually vote, do you think the Republican party or the Democratic party has higher ethical standards?

Republican party	34	69	13	26	34
Democratic party	34	8	64	26	31
Both (vol.)	4	2	4	5	6
Neither (vol.)	17	15	11	23	14
DK/NA	11	6	8	20	15

q19 Do you think the Republicans in Congress are more financially corrupt, or are the Democrats in Congress more financially corrupt?

	** HALF SAMPLE X **				Jan90
Republicans	34	11	62	29	20
Democrats	18	33	11	13	16
Same (vol.)	30	35	14	40	38
DK/NA	18	21	13	18	26

q20 Do you think the Republicans in Congress are more corrupt, or are the Democrats in Congress more corrupt?

	** HALF SAMPLE Y **			
Republicans	36	6	60	33
Democrats	16	38	6	12
Same (vol.)	30	37	22	34
DK/NA	18	19	12	21

q53 How much have you heard or read about the political corruption investigation involving Jack Abramoff, the Washington lobbyist who recently pled guilty to charges of fraud, tax evasion and conspiracy to bribe public officials? Would you say you have heard or read a lot, some, not much, or nothing at all?

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **			
	***** Party ID *****			
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
A lot	14	12	18	11
Some	31	34	28	31
Not much	23	23	17	27
Nothing	32	30	36	31
DK/NA	0	1	1	0

q54 As part of a broader investigation into political corruption, Jack Abramoff agreed to testify about his business dealings, which may involve government officials in Washington. Based on what you have heard or read, do you think Abramoff's testimony will involve mostly Republicans, mostly Democrats, or will his testimony involve both parties equally?

** AMONG THOSE WHO ANSWERED A LOT,
SOME, OR NOT MUCH IN Q 53**

	***** Party ID *****			
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
Mostly Republicans	23	10	42	16
Mostly Democrats	1	2	0	1
Both equally	62	75	51	63
DK/NA	14	13	7	20

	<u>UNWEIGHTED</u>	<u>WEIGHTED</u>
Total Respondents	1151	
Total Republicans	342	316
Total Democrats	372	382
Total Independents	437	453
Half Sample X	585	573
Half Sample Y	566	578