

**CONGRESS, THE ABRAMOFF SCANDALS, AND THE ALITO NOMINATION**  
January 20-25, 2006

The corruption investigation involving Washington lobbyist Jack Abramoff may be sending shock waves under the Capitol dome, but many Americans suspect that the practice of giving and taking bribes is just business as usual in D.C. - and many see it as one practiced by both parties.

To most Americans, reports that lobbyists may have bribed members of Congress is not surprising: an overwhelming 77% say this is simply how things work in Congress, not just a few isolated incidents.

**LOBBYISTS' BRIBES OF CONGRESS ARE...**

Isolated incidents	16%
The way things work in Congress	77

Almost all Americans suspect that at least some Congressional representatives take bribes or gifts in exchange for legislative votes. A majority thinks at least half do. And 27% of Americans think most legislators make those trades.

**HOW MANY CONGRESSIONAL REPS TAKE BRIBES OR GIFTS FOR VOTES?**

Most	27%
About half	30
Some	36
Hardly any	5

Many Americans put a pox on both partisan houses: 36% say Democrats and Republicans are equally likely to trade a vote for a bribe or gift. Among those who chose between the parties, though, the Republicans appear to be getting the worst of the scandal right now: 28% say the Republicans in Congress are most willing to take bribes, while fewer than half that number - 13% - says the Democrats are.

**WHICH PARTY IS MORE LIKELY TO TAKE BRIBES?**

Both equally	36%
Republicans are	28
Democrats are	13
Don't know	20

Americans have more faith in their own Representative's integrity than they do in the legislative body as a whole. 55% say their own representative would likely refuse a bribe if offered one. 24% suspect he or she would accept it. The jury is still out for many, though - 21% don't know.

**WOULD YOUR OWN REPRESENTATIVE ACCEPT A BRIBE, IF OFFERED?**

Yes	24%
No	55
Don't know	21

The last time CBS News asked a version of this question, in 1980 in the wake of the ABSCAM investigation, the findings were about the same. 21% then said their representative would probably accept a bribe.

Most Americans are not closely following the investigation surrounding lobbyist Jack Abramoff: 60% say they're either not following closely or aren't following at all. Just 11% are following very closely.

**FOLLOWING NEWS ABOUT THE ABRAMOFF CASE?**

Very closely	11%
Somewhat closely	29
Not very closely/not at all	60

Democrats are more likely than Republicans to be following the story closely, though majorities of both parties are not.

**CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL**

The public continues to hold a dim view of Congress; just 29% approve of its job performance. 61% disapprove, the highest number in a decade.

**CONGRESS JOB APPROVAL**

	Now	1/9/2006	5/2005	1/2005
Approve	29%	27%	29%	44%
Disapprove	61	57	55	39

The Abramoff scandal may be having some drag on these ratings, at least among the relatively few Americans following the story. Those following the scandal closely give Congress lower approval ratings - fewer than two in ten approve - than those not following the story, of whom about one-third approve.

Congressional approval has historically been low, rarely rising above 50% in the thirty years the CBS News Poll has been asking about it. But the past year was a particularly rough one for Congress on this measure. Last January, this Congress garnered 44% approval as it was sworn in, only to see that rating tumble to 29% by the spring of 2005 after the Terri Schiavo case, and then hit 27% in the first week of 2006 after the Abramoff scandal had made headlines.

In January 2002, entering the last midterm election year, 47% approved of Congress' performance. In January 1998, 42% approved. In January 1994, the year Republicans were to take control, Congress' rating more closely resembled today's: 30% then approved.

As has historically been the case in Americans' views on Congress, Americans approve of their own representative even as they cast aspersions on the legislature as a whole (and just as they think most Congressmen take bribes, but their own Representative would not). Today a majority - 57% - approves of the job their own representative in Congress is doing.

**THE CONGRESSIONAL VOTE AND THE PARTIES**

More than nine months before the actual voting in November, 43% of registered voters would pick a generic Democrat for Congress while 34% would back a generic Republican if the midterm elections were being held today. These sentiments are much the same as in December.

**GENERIC CONGRESSIONAL BALLOT  
(Among registered voters)**

	Now	12/2005	1/2002
Republican	34%	33%	37%
Democratic	43	42	39
It depends	14	15	10
Don't know	6	8	14

National generic ballots are not perfect predictors of a Congressional election, though, because the conditions in each individual district vary.

The Democratic Party today also outscores the Republican Party in favorability ratings among Americans overall. 53% of all Americans have a favorable view of the Democrats while 44% say the same for the Republicans. This marks a slightly improved finding for the Democrats compared to one year ago, January 2005, and a slightly worsened one for Republicans.

**VIEWS OF THE PARTIES**

	Now	12/2005	1/2005	1/2002
<u>Democrats</u>				
Favorable	53%	46%	51%	58%
Unfavorable	40	43	41	34
<u>Republicans</u>				
Favorable	44%	42%	49%	58%
Unfavorable	51	50	44	33

Independents are somewhat more likely to hold a favorable view of the Democratic Party than of the Republican Party.

In general, more Americans say they want partisan checks and balances. 44% think a party that is NOT the President's party should control Congress. 32% think Congress and the Executive Branch should be run by the same party. Many Americans, though - 24% - do not have a view on this question.

Trust in government overall remains low: 67% say government only does the right thing some of the time, or never. Just 27% say it does the right thing most of the time and only 5% think it does the right thing all the time. These numbers are mostly unchanged since last fall. Although trust in government has not been high in more than a generation except for a short period after 9/11, it fell after the response to Hurricane Katrina and has not yet returned to prior levels.

**TRUST GOVERNMENT TO DO THE RIGHT THING?**

	Now	9/2005	7/2004
Always	5%	3%	4%
Most of the time	27	26	36
Some of the time	63	63	56
Never	4	6	3

**JOHN MCCAIN AND HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON**

Two of Congress' more prominent members (and possible 2008 Presidential candidates), Senators John McCain of Arizona and Hillary Rodham Clinton of New York, get at least somewhat more positive ratings.

On the Republican side, Senator John McCain is viewed very favorably by those who have an opinion -- Americans' positive impressions of McCain outweigh negative ones by almost a three-to-one margin. But in the spring of 2004, amidst a Presidential campaign when his name was floated as a potential Vice-President, McCain's ratings were even more positive - and more people could recall who McCain was. McCain's negative ratings remain low and have not changed much since 2004.

**OPINION OF JOHN MCCAIN**

	Now	5/2004
Favorable	34%	46%
Not favorable	12	9
Undecided/ Haven't heard	53	44

Unlike most politicians, including the President, McCain appears to be a Republican that Democrats like just as much as Republicans do. Independents who know of McCain overwhelmingly find him favorable. For all three groups, though, about half haven't formed an opinion yet.

**PARTISAN VIEWS OF JOHN MCCAIN**

	Reps	Dems	Inds
Favorable	35%	32%	35%
Not favorable	16	10	10
Undecided/ Haven't heard	49	57	55

Liberals, moderates and conservatives all hold more favorable than unfavorable views, of McCain - though conservatives are the most likely of the three groups to hold negative views.

Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton is much better known than McCain - but those who have opinions of the New York Senator are more closely divided about her. 37% hold a positive view while 35% have negative impressions, about the same as last spring.

**OPINION OF HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON**

	Now	5/2005	6/2003	1/1999	1/1996
Favorable	37%	36%	24%	55%	26%
Not favorable	35	31	32	20	36
Undecided/ Haven't heard	28	32	41	24	36

Favorable opinions of Hillary Rodham Clinton reached their highest levels at the height of the Lewinsky scandal and the impeachment of her husband, then- President Bill Clinton, in 1999 (55%). One of her low points came in January 1996 during the Whitewater and White House Travel Office scandals, when just 26% of Americans viewed her favorably. In June 2003, shortly after the publication of her book, Living History, more Americans expressed an unfavorable than favorable opinion of Hillary Rodham Clinton. In that poll, however, 41% of the public was undecided or unable to offer an opinion of her.

Democrats are overwhelmingly positive about the former first lady, with 64% viewing her favorably. But unlike McCain, Senator Clinton does not find support from opposing partisans. Two-thirds of Republicans hold a negative view of her and only one in five has no opinion. And Independents are more negative than positive.

**PARTISAN VIEWS OF HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON**

	Reps	Dems	Inds
Favorable	14%	64%	30%
Not favorable	66	6	36
Undecided/ Haven't heard	19	30	34

Hillary Clinton gets mostly positive views from women, with a 42% favorable rating compared to a 30% negative view. But men are more negative than positive about her, with 31% positive and 39% negative.

John McCain, by contrast, is viewed very favorably by men, by a 40% to 14% margin. Among women, he is less well known: 61% don't have an opinion of him. But the Arizona Senator is viewed favorably by almost three times as many women as view him unfavorably.

**GENDER VIEWS OF CLINTON, MCCAIN**

	<u>H.R. Clinton</u>		<u>J. McCain</u>	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Favorable	31%	42%	40%	28%
Not favorable	39	30	14	10
Undecided/ Haven't heard	30	28	46	61

Americans haven't elected a sitting U.S. Senator to the White House since John F. Kennedy in 1960.

**VIEWS ON SAMUEL ALITO**

The full Senate will soon take up the nomination of Judge Samuel Alito to the U.S. Supreme Court. The confirmation hearings for Judge Alito boosted public awareness of both him and his candidacy - but he still remains unknown to many Americans. Today 33% say he should be confirmed, and 18% says he should not - higher numbers, but about the same distribution, as earlier this month. Still, many Americans don't feel they know enough about Alito to say whether or not he should sit on the nation's highest court.

**SHOULD ALITO BE CONFIRMED BY THE SENATE?**

	Now	1/9/2006
Yes	33%	17%
No	18	9
Can't say	46	70

The Senate Judiciary Committee recommended the Supreme Court nomination of Judge Samuel Alito to the full Senate as this poll was being conducted, after four days of interviewing were completed. And much like the partisan vote split on the Judiciary committee, partisan views color opinions among the public, too. Six in ten Republicans favor Alito's approval by the full Senate but only one in ten Democrats do. Yet many in both parties feel they don't know enough to say. Conservatives with an opinion on the nomination strongly favor confirmation; liberals with an opinion oppose it.

Many more Americans now have an opinion of Alito than did earlier this month. Among those who have a view, opinions are mostly positive, just as they were nearly three weeks ago.

**OPINION OF SAMUEL ALITO**

	Now	1/9/2006	12/2005
Favorable	27%	16%	14%
Unfavorable	16	7	10
Undecided/haven't heard enough	56	77	75

Just under half of all Americans believe that most abortions in the United States will still be legal at the end of Bush's second term. Americans held similar views one year ago.

**BY THE END OF BUSH'S SECOND TERM MOST ABORTIONS IN THE U.S. WILL BE...?**

	Now	1/2005
Legal	47%	47%
Against the law	41	43

As a policy matter, Americans today want to see abortions remain available, though many would like stricter limits than are currently in place. Just one in five believes abortion should never be permitted. These views are much the same today as they have been since CBS News began asking this question fifteen years ago.

**ABORTION SHOULD BE...**

Generally available	38%
Available but with stricter limits	39
Not permitted	21

Views on abortion - particularly opposition to it - are related to views on Alito. Those who oppose all abortion are supportive of Alito's nomination, though many still don't have a view on it one way or the other. Those who feel abortion should be permitted, at least in some form, are more closely split over Alito's nomination.

**VIEWS ON ABORTION AND ALITO NOMINATION**

<u>Alito should be...</u>	<u>Abortion should be...</u>	
	<u>Permitted</u>	<u>Not permitted</u>
Confirmed	30%	47%
Not confirmed	21	7
Can't say	47	42

The Supreme Court recently upheld Oregon's state law that allows doctors to assist terminally-ill patients in ending their lives - and a majority of Americans agree with that decision. 56% favor the idea that a doctor should be allowed to assist a person in taking their own life if they have a disease that will ultimately destroy their mind and body and they wish to end their life; 37% oppose the idea.

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This poll was conducted among a nationwide random sample of 1229 adults, interviewed by telephone January 20-25, 2006. The error due to sampling for results based on the entire sample could be plus or minus three percentage points.

**CBS NEWS/NEW YORK TIMES POLL**  
**Congress, the Abramoff Scandals, and the Alito Nomination**  
**January 20-25, 2006**

q8 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Congress is handling its job?

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **				
	***** Party ID *****				
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Jan06a
	%	%	%	%	%
Approve	29	38	23	26	27
Disapprove	61	53	66	62	57
DK/NA	10	9	11	12	16

q9 How about the representative in Congress from your district? Do you approve or disapprove of the way your representative is handling his or her job?

					Dec05a
Approve	57	66	58	51	60%
Disapprove	25	19	27	29	24
DK/NA	18	15	15	20	16

q12 If the 2006 election for U.S. House of Representatives were being held today, would you vote for the Republican candidate or the Democratic candidate in your district?

	** REGISTERED VOTERS **				Dec05a
Republican	34	84	1	22	33
Democratic	43	4	89	32	42
Other (Vol.)	2	0	0	4	1
Won't vote (Vol.)	1	0	1	2	1
Depends (vol)	14	9	7	24	15
DK/NA	6	3	2	16	8

q13 Do you think it is better for the country to have a President who comes from the same political party that controls Congress or do you think it is better to have a President from one political party and the Congress controlled by another?

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **				Sep05b
Better when same party	32	48	30	21	32
Better when different party	44	26	52	52	41
DK/NA	24	26	18	26	27

q14 How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right -- just about always, most of the time, or only some of the time?

					Dec05a
Just about always	5	10	3	3	2
Most of the time	27	40	21	22	30
Only some of the time	63	46	71	68	65
Never (vol.)	4	2	5	5	2
DK/NA	1	2	0	2	1

q15 In general, is your opinion of the Republican party favorable or not favorable?

Favorable	44	88	12	38	42
Not favorable	51	10	84	52	50
DK/NA	5	2	4	10	8



q16 In general, is your opinion of the Democratic Party favorable or not favorable?

\*\* TOTAL RESPONDENTS \*\*  
 \*\*\*\*\* Party ID \*\*\*\*\*

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Dec05a
	%	%	%	%	%
Favorable	53	26	85	44	46
Not favorable	40	68	11	45	43
DK/NA	7	6	4	11	11

q22 Is your opinion of Hillary Rodham Clinton favorable, not favorable, undecided, or haven't you heard enough about Hillary Rodham Clinton yet to have an opinion?

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	May05c
Favorable	37	14	64	30	36
Not favorable	35	66	6	36	31
Undecided	21	12	26	24	19
Haven't heard enough	7	7	4	10	13
Refused	0	1	0	0	1

q23 Is your opinion of John McCain favorable, not favorable, undecided, or haven't you heard enough about John McCain yet to have an opinion?

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	May04b
Favorable	34	35	32	35	46
Not favorable	12	16	10	10	9
Undecided	24	28	25	22	22
Haven't heard enough	29	21	32	33	22
Refused	1	0	1	0	1

q24 Is your opinion of Supreme Court nominee Samuel Alito favorable, not favorable, undecided, or haven't you heard enough about Samuel Alito yet to have an opinion?

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Jan06a
Favorable	27	53	8	25	16
Not favorable	16	2	33	12	7
Undecided	23	17	23	26	18
Haven't heard enough	33	28	35	36	59
Refused	1	0	1	1	1

q34 By the end of George W. Bush's second term in office, do you think most abortions in the United States will be legal or will most abortions be against the law?

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Jan05b
Legal	47	47	42	52	47
Against the law	41	41	46	36	43
DK/NA	12	12	12	12	10

q40 As you may know, George W. Bush has nominated federal Judge Samuel A. Alito to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court. What do you think right now? Should the Senate vote to confirm Samuel Alito as a Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, or vote against Alito, or can't you say?

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Jan06a*
Vote for	33	63	10	31	17
Vote against	18	2	37	13	9
Can't say	46	33	49	52	70
DK/NA	3	2	4	4	4

\*Asked without intro: As you may know, George W. Bush has nominated federal Judge Samuel A. Alito to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court.

q47 Which of these comes closest to your view -- abortion should be generally available to those who want it, or abortion should be available but under stricter limits than it is now, or abortion should not be permitted?

** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **					
	***** Party ID *****				
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Dec05a
	%	%	%	%	%
Generally available	38	20	49	41	38
Available but limits	39	46	34	37	39
Should not be permitted	21	31	14	19	20
Don't know/No answer	2	3	3	3	3

q50 As you may know, there is a 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. How closely have you been following news about this case -- very closely, somewhat closely, not too closely, or not at all?

Very closely	11	8	16	9
Somewhat closely	29	26	30	29
Not too closely	29	32	28	29
Not at all	31	34	25	33
DK/NA	0	0	1	0

q51 Do you think recent reports that lobbyists may have bribed members of Congress are isolated incidents, or do you think this kind of behavior is the way things work in Congress?

Isolated incidents	16	22	14	11
The way things work	77	72	79	79
DK/NA	7	6	7	10

q52 How many members of Congress do you think accept bribes or gifts that affect their votes -- most, about half, some or hardly any?

** HALF SAMPLE A **				
Most	27	19	27	33
About half	30	29	29	31
Some	36	41	36	31
Hardly any	5	10	3	4
DK/NA	2	1	5	1

q53 Now think about all the members of Congress. How many of them do you think are financially corrupt -- most, about half, some, or hardly any?

** HALF SAMPLE B **					Mar92a^
Most	18	12	17	22	30
About half	25	22	27	26	28
Some	49	56	48	43	29
Hardly any	6	7	5	6	7
DK/NA	2	3	3	3	6

^Varied wording: Now think about all the members of the **U.S. House and Senate.**

q54 Who do you think is more likely to accept bribes or gifts that affect their votes, the Republicans in Congress or the Democrats in Congress?

\*\* TOTAL RESPONDENTS \*\*

	***** Party ID *****			
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
Republicans	28	4	57	21
Democrats	13	32	3	8
Both equal (vol.)	36	41	25	42
Neither (vol.)	3	3	2	4
DK/NA	20	20	13	25

q55 If your own Representative in Congress were offered a bribe, do you think he or she would probably accept it or probably refuse it?

Accept	24	18	24	29
Refuse	55	64	57	46
DK/NA	21	18	18	25

q80 If a person has a disease that will ultimately destroy their mind or body and they want to take their own life, should a doctor be allowed to assist the person in taking their own life, or not?

Should be allowed	56	44	59	63	Jul05b
Should not	37	50	33	30	54
DK/NA	7	6	8	7	39

	<u>UNWEIGHTED</u>	<u>WEIGHTED</u>
Total Respondents	1229	
Total Republicans	372	360
Total Democrats	388	412
Total Independents	469	456
Registered Voters	1094	1070
Half Sample A	637	623
Half Sample B	592	606