

CBS NEWS/NEW YORK TIMES POLL  
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CONGRESS, POLITICS AND THE 2006 ELECTION  
July 21-25, 2006

Four months before Election Day, continued low approval ratings for Congress and the President translate into a Democratic lead in the expected vote this fall. If the midterm elections for the U.S. House of Representatives were held today, 45% of registered voters say they would support the Democratic candidate, while 35% would support the Republican.

**2006 CONGRESSIONAL VOTE**  
(Among registered voters)

Democrat	45%
Republican	35

More than half of voters do not think of their vote as about party control. But among registered voters who do, the Democrats have an advantage. 29% see their vote as a vote to help put Democrats in control of Congress, while just 18% say their vote is a vote to help keep Republicans in control.

**VOTE FOR CONGRESS WILL BE:**  
(Among registered voters)

To help Democrats gain control	29%
To help Republicans keep control	18
About something else	51

About as many voters say President Bush will have an impact on their vote. 47% of voters say that the President will be a factor, and by more than two to one those people will be voting against him. This is a reversal from the last midterm elections in 2002, when 26% of voters said their Congressional vote was a vote for George W. Bush, and 16% said they were voting against him.

**VOTE FOR CONGRESS WILL BE:**  
(Among registered voters)

	Now	7/2002
Vote for Bush	14%	26%
Vote against Bush	33	16
Not about Bush	48	51

Voters were less likely in previous midterm elections to say presidents would be factors in their votes than they are today. And in the past those voters who said they would be were either positive or evenly divided.

**PAST PRESIDENTS: WILL YOUR VOTE FOR CONGRESS BE A...**

(Among registered voters)

	Now (GW Bush)	9/1998 (Clinton)	10/1990 (GHW Bush)	9/1986 (Reagan)
Vote for the President	14%	17%	19%	26%
Vote against the President	33	15	15	16
Not about the President	48	63	61	51

Congressional job approval remains low. 28% of Americans now approve of the job Congress is doing, up just two points from last month. Republicans and Democrats alike disapprove.

**CONGRESS' JOB APPROVAL**

	Now	6/2006	5/2006	7/2002	8/1994
Approve	28%	26%	23%	49%	22%
Disapprove	58	60	64	38	67

Approval ratings of Congress were higher in the summer prior to the 2002 midterm elections, when Republicans gained six seats. Back then, 49% approved of the job Congress was doing. In August 1994, just months before the Republican takeover of Congress, only 22% of Americans approved of the job Congress was doing.

As is typically the case, while Americans disapprove of the legislature's performance, they give their own representative better marks. 57% now approve of the job their representative is doing, up from 53% in May. Two months before the 1998 midterm elections, 69% of Americans approved of their member of Congress - the highest ever in the CBS News/New York Times Poll. Today's number is closer to that in September 1994 when Americans gave their own representative a 56% approval rating.

**OWN REPRESENTATIVE'S JOB APPROVAL**

	Now	5/2006	9/1998	9/1994
Approve	57%	53%	69%	56%
Disapprove	27	31	16	17

Overall, Americans continue to say the country is on the wrong track. 66% say so, while 28% say it is on the right path. These are about the same sentiments as last month.

**PARTIES AND POLITICS**

52% of Americans have a favorable view of the Democratic Party, compared to 43% who view the Republicans favorably. While views of Democrats have changed little since May, Republicans have made some gains.

**VIEWS OF THE PARTIES**

	Now	5/2006
<u>Democratic Party</u>		
Favorable	52	55%
Unfavorable	41	37
<u>Republican Party</u>		
Favorable	43	37%
Unfavorable	51	57

Democrats continue to hold their lead over the Republicans as the party best able to make the right decisions about the war in Iraq, but that lead has narrowed since May. Democrats enjoy a 6-point lead on the issue today, compared to their 18-point advantage two months ago. Republicans continue to have the edge on dealing with terrorism. On ensuring a strong economy, where Democrats have historically held a significant lead, the Democrats now have a 12-point advantage.

**WHICH PARTY IS BETTER AT...?**

	Republican	Democratic
Dealing w/ terrorism	42%	36
Ensuring a strong economy	36%	48
Handling the war in Iraq	36%	42

**PARTY LEADERS AND CANDIDATES**

Views of some key party leaders are similar to what they were in May. On the Democratic side, Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton receives somewhat more negative views than she did in the spring. Also, the release of former Vice President Al Gore's documentary on global warming has not improved his favorable ratings. He continues to receive mostly negative reviews from the public.

**VIEWS OF DEMOCRATS**

	<u>Hillary Clinton</u>		<u>Al Gore</u>	
	Now	5/2006	Now	5/2006
Favorable	32%	34%	30%	28%
Unfavorable	39	35	37	39
Undecided/ No opinion	29	32	32	33

When it comes to Republicans, President Bush's unfavorable ratings continue to be higher than his favorable ratings, as is the case for Vice President Dick Cheney. Senator John McCain receives positive views from the public, but nearly six in 10 Americans are undecided or have no opinion of this potential 2008 presidential candidate.

**VIEWS OF REPUBLICANS**

	<u>George W. Bush</u>		<u>Dick Cheney</u>		<u>John McCain</u>	
	Now	5/2006	Now	5/2006	Now	5/2006
Favorable	32%	29%	20%	20%	28%	31%
Unfavorable	50	55	44	49	13	15
Undecided/ No opinion	16	16	36	31	58	53

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This poll was conducted among a nationwide random sample of 1127 adults, interviewed by telephone July 21-25, 2006. The error due to sampling for results based on the entire sample could be plus or minus three percentage points. Error for subgroups may be higher.

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q2 Do you feel things in this country are generally going in the right direction or do you feel things have pretty seriously gotten off on the wrong track?

	*** TOTAL RESPONDENTS ***				
	**** Party ID ****				
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Jun06a
	%	%	%	%	%
Right direction	28	55	7	23	27
Wrong track	66	38	88	70	69
DK/NA	6	7	5	7	4

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

Approve	28	36	24	24	26
Disapprove	58	52	63	61	60
DK/NA	14	12	13	15	14

q10 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?

					May06a
Approve	57	65	56	51	53
Disapprove	27	23	27	31	31
DK/NA	16	12	17	18	16

q13 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 ***				May06a
Republican	35	79	3	24	33
Democratic	45	9	88	36	44
Other (Vol.)	1	0	1	2	1
Won't vote (Vol.)	1	1	0	1	0
Depends (Vol.)	13	7	5	26	13
DK/NA	5	4	3	11	9

q14 Do you think of your vote for Congress this fall as a vote for George W. Bush, a vote against George W. Bush, or don't you think of your vote this fall as being about George W. Bush's presidency?

					May06a
Vote for Bush	14	30	4	8	13
Vote against Bush	33	11	59	27	36
Bush not a factor	48	55	31	57	45
DK/NA	5	4	6	8	6

q15 Do you think of your vote for Congress this fall as a vote to help put Democrats in control of Congress, a vote to help keep Republicans in control of Congress, or will your vote be about something else?

Put Dems in	29	4	65	16
Keep Reps in	18	44	2	8
Something else	51	49	32	72
DK/NA	2	3	1	3

q16 Is your opinion of George W. Bush favorable, not favorable, undecided, or haven't you heard enough about George W. Bush yet to have an opinion?

	*** TOTAL RESPONDENTS ***				May06a
	Total	**** Party ID ****			
	Rep	Dem	Ind		
	%	%	%	%	
Favorable	32	69	6	24	29
Not favorable	50	17	80	51	55
Undecided	15	13	11	22	13
Haven't heard enough	1	0	2	2	3
Refused	2	1	1	1	0

q17 Is your opinion of Dick Cheney favorable, not favorable, undecided, or haven't you heard enough about Dick Cheney yet to have an opinion?

Favorable	20	44	4	13	20
Not favorable	44	14	71	44	49
Undecided	20	24	13	22	19
Haven't heard enough	16	16	12	20	12
Refused	0	2	0	1	0

q18 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?

Favorable	32	10	56	29	34
Not favorable	39	71	13	34	35
Undecided	21	13	26	23	23
Haven't heard enough	8	6	5	13	9
Refused	0	0	0	1	0

q19 Is your opinion of John McCain favorable, not favorable, undecided or haven't you heard enough about John McCain yet to have an opinion?

Favorable	28	34	23	29	31
Not favorable	13	17	13	10	15
Undecided	29	23	34	28	25
Haven't heard enough	29	27	29	32	28
Refused	1	0	1	1	1

q20 Is your opinion of Al Gore favorable, not favorable, undecided, or haven't you heard enough about Al Gore yet to have an opinion?

Favorable	30	10	51	29	28
Not favorable	37	66	12	35	39
Undecided	24	17	27	27	25
Haven't heard enough	8	8	8	8	8
Refused	1	0	2	1	0

q32 In general, is your opinion of the Democratic party favorable or not favorable?

Favorable	52	21	85	49	55
Not favorable	41	75	11	38	37
DK/NA	7	4	4	13	8

q33 In general, is your opinion of the Republican party favorable or not favorable?

	*** TOTAL RESPONDENTS ***				
	**** Party ID ****				
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	May06a
	%	%	%	%	%
Favorable	43	85	11	37	37
Not favorable	51	14	85	52	57
DK/NA	6	1	4	11	6

q34 Regardless of how you usually vote, do you think the Republican Party or the Democratic Party is more likely to make the right decisions about the war in Iraq?

Republican party	36	75	6	30	30
Democratic party	42	12	77	36	48
Both (Vol.)	1	1	1	2	3
Neither (Vol.)	7	3	7	9	5
DK/NA	14	9	9	23	14

q35 Regardless of how you usually vote, do you think the Republican Party or the Democratic Party is more likely to ensure a strong economy?

Republican party	36	71	10	31	36
Democratic party	48	20	80	44	46
Both (Vol.)	1	1	1	2	2
Neither (Vol.)	4	2	3	6	5
DK/NA	11	6	6	17	11

q36 Regardless of how you usually vote, do you think the Republican Party or the Democratic Party is more likely to make the right decisions when it comes to dealing with terrorism?

Republican party	42	81	14	34	40
Democratic party	36	9	66	33	35
Both (Vol.)	4	3	4	6	6
Neither (Vol.)	4	0	5	6	4
DK/NA	14	7	11	21	15

	<u>UNWEIGHTED</u>	<u>WEIGHTED</u>
Total Respondents	1127	
Total Republicans	351	351
Total Democrats	390	374
Total Independents	386	402