



CBS NEWS/NEW YORK TIMES POLL
FOR RELEASE: Friday, January 16, 2009
6:30 pm EST

THE PRESIDENCY OF GEORGE W. BUSH

January 11-15, 2009

President George W. Bush will leave office with some of the most negative job evaluations ever. His final approval rating of 22% is the lowest final rating for an outgoing president since Gallup began asking about presidential approval more than 70 years ago.

Assessments of Bush's handling of two critical issues -- the war in Iraq and the economy -- are poor. He does better on the issue of terrorism - his strongest area during his years as president - but less than a majority approve of his handling of the issue.

22% approve of the way George W. Bush has handled his job as president over the last eight years; 73% disapprove. His final approval rating, the lowest of any president, is far below the final ratings of recent two-term Presidents: Bill Clinton (68%) and Ronald Reagan (68%). Harry Truman had previously had the lowest end-of-term approval (32%).

PRESIDENTIAL FINAL APPROVAL RATINGS
(Presidents who have finished their terms)

Table with 4 columns: President Name, Approve, Disapprove, and Source. Rows include George W. Bush (1/09), Bill Clinton (1/01), George H.W. Bush (1/93), Ronald Reagan (1/89), Jimmy Carter (1/81), Gerald Ford (12/76), Lyndon Johnson (1/69), Dwight Eisenhower (12/60), and Harry Truman (12/52).

\*Question wording slightly different

Views of President Bush's popularity are highly partisan. Only 6% of Democrats approve of the job he has done as president, while 57% of Republicans approve.

BUSH'S FINAL APPROVAL RATING - BY PARTY ID

Table with 4 columns: Rating, Rep, Dem, Ind. Rows for Approve and Disapprove.

GEORGE W. BUSH: A PRESIDENCY OF HIGHS AND LOWS

President George W. Bush has the distinction of having the highest approval rating for a president as well as the lowest.

In November 2008, just before the presidential election, only 20% approved of the job he was doing as president - the lowest of any president since Gallup began asking the question in 1938.

President Bush enjoyed a high approval rating of 90% -- the highest of any president -- following the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks in 2001.

**GEORGE W. BUSH - HIGHS AND LOWS**

	<u>Final</u>	<u>Low</u>	<u>High</u>
	1/2009	11/2008	10/01
Approve	22%	20%	90%
Disapprove	73	72	5

Bush 43 edged out his father, George H.W. Bush, for the highest rating of any president. Bush 41 received an 88% approval rating in 1991 amid the success of the first Gulf War.

Harry Truman comes closest to President Bush's record low approval rating of 20%. In February 1952, just 22% of Americans approved of the job Truman was doing as president.

**HIGHEST RATINGS OF PAST PRESIDENTS**

	Approve	Disapprove
<b>George W. Bush (10/2001)</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>5</b>
George H. W. Bush (3/1991)	88%	8
Harry Truman (6/1945)	87%	3 Gallup
Franklin Roosevelt (1/1942)	84%	9 Gallup
John F. Kennedy (4/1961)	83%	5 Gallup
Dwight Eisenhower (12/1956)	79%	11 Gallup
Lyndon Johnson (2/1964)	79%	9 Gallup
Bill Clinton (1/1998)	73%	24
Gerald Ford (8/1974)	71%	3 Gallup
Richard Nixon (11/1969)	67%	19 Gallup
Ronald Reagan (4/1981)	67%	18
Jimmy Carter (4/1977)	64%	20

**LOWEST RATINGS OF PAST PRESIDENTS**

	Approve	Disapprove
<b>George W. Bush (11/2008)</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>72</b>
Harry Truman (2/1952)	22%	64 (Gallup)
Richard Nixon (8/1974)	24%	66 (Gallup)
Jimmy Carter (7/1979)	26%	56
George H. Bush (7/1992)	31%	59
Lyndon Johnson (8/1968)	35%	52 (Gallup)
Bill Clinton (9/1994)	36%	51
Gerald Ford (1/1975)	37%	39 (Gallup)
Ronald Reagan (1/1983)	41%	47
Dwight Eisenhower (3/1958)	48%	36 (Gallup)
Franklin Roosevelt (8/1939)	48%	43 (Gallup)
John F. Kennedy (9/1963)	56%	29 (Gallup)

## GEORGE W. BUSH: A LOOK BACK

In February 2001, the CBS News Poll took its first measure of the job Bush was doing as president: 53% of Americans approved and only 21% disapproved. That rating soared to 90% a few weeks after the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001.

The 43<sup>rd</sup> President's overall ratings tapered off some but remained high throughout the remainder of 2001 and 2002. And in March 2003, after the initial days of the U.S. war in Iraq, 68% of Americans approved of the job Bush was doing as president.

By the fall of 2003, as the fighting in Iraq continued, Bush's approval rating began to decline. In November of that year, 49% approved of the job he was doing (the first time his approval rating was below 50%). The President, however, did experience an uptick in his approval immediately after the capture of Saddam Hussein in December 2003.

His rating began to suffer again as the prison abuse at Abu Ghraib came to light in the spring of 2004. In May 2004, just 41% of Americans approved of the job Bush was doing as President - his lowest rating to date at that point in time.

Heading into the 2004 presidential election, 49% of Americans approved of the President's job. Just after he was re-elected, 51% approved - the last time a majority approved of the job Bush was doing. But at no time during his second term in office would his approval rating reach 50%.

For the most part, the President's job rating continued to decline throughout his second term. In October 2005, with images of Hurricane Katrina still in the minds of many, his approval rating dipped below 40% for the first time, and in January 2007, fewer than 30% of Americans approved of the job Bush was doing.

In a poll conducted just before the 2008 presidential election, only 20% of Americans said they approved of the job President Bush was doing as President - the lowest rating for any president. 72% disapproved.

### GEORGE W. BUSH JOB RATING - KEY TRENDS

		*Low*									*High*	
	1/09	11/08	9/08	1/07	10/05	5/04	12/03	11/03	3/03	10/01	2/01	
Approve	22%	20%	22%	28%	37%	41%	60%	49%	68%	90%	53%	
Disapprove	73	72	70	64	58	52	33	42	26	5	21	
Don't know	5	8	8	8	5	7	7	9	6	5	26	

### OTHER (MOSTLY NEGATIVE) EVALUATIONS OF THE PRESIDENT

When they look back on his eight years in office, half of all Americans think George W. Bush has been a poor president. 33% think he has been an average president. Only 17% say he has been either a very good or a good president. This evaluation is more negative than the ones Americans gave both the current President's predecessor, Bill Clinton, and the President's father, George H.W. Bush.

**WHAT KIND OF PRESIDENT?**

	G.W. Bush 1/2009	Bill Clinton 1/2001	G.H.W Bush 1/1993
Very good	5%	21%	7%
Good	12	38	33
Average	33	30	48
Poor	50	11	12

The President has fallen short of expectations: As Bush was preparing to enter the White House in January 2001, 43% thought he would be a very good or good president. Only 12% thought he would be a poor one.

**GEORGE W. BUSH - WHAT KIND OF PRESIDENT?**

	1/2009	1/2001
Very good	5%	14%
Good	12	29
Average	33	42
Poor	50	12

Opinions of President Bush personally have also taken a hit. He receives his lowest favorability rating of his presidency in this poll. Just 26% of Americans view the President favorably. 60% view him negatively. In February 2001, a month into his presidency, 42% of Americans had a favorable opinion of George W. Bush.

**VIEWS OF GEORGE W. BUSH**

	1/2009	2/2001
Favorable	26%	42%
Not favorable	60	24
Undecided/haven't heard enough	13	32

**BUSH ON THE ISSUES**

With the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 and the U.S. military action in Iraq two years later, terrorism and the Iraq war have come to define George W. Bush's presidency; and the nation's struggling economy has recently had an impact as well. He receives low marks for his handling of the war in Iraq, but does better on the issue of terrorism.

President Bush never received stellar ratings on the economy but as the nation's economic concerns have become more severe, his rating on the issue has plummeted.

**BUSH'S HANDLING OF THE ISSUES DURING THE LAST EIGHT YEARS**

	Terrorism	Iraq	Economy
Approve	47%	25%	17%
Disapprove	48	71	77

## War in Iraq

When the U.S. took military action against Iraq nearly six years ago, the public was behind President Bush. A majority approved of the President's action and in April 2003 79% of Americans approved of the way Bush was handling the situation there - his highest rating ever on this question.

However, as the war continued and the U.S. casualties increased, public support began to wane. A year after the war began, fewer than half (49%) of Americans approved of the President's handling of it. In December 2006, only 21% approved of Bush's handling of the situation in Iraq - his lowest rating ever on this issue.

The last time a majority of Americans approved of the President's handling of the Iraq war was immediately after the capture of Saddam Hussein in December 2003.

### **BUSH'S HANDLING OF IRAQ**

	Now	4/2008	*Low*	3/2004	12/2003	*High*	3/2003
Approve	25%	29%	21%	49%	57%	79%	69%
Disapprove	71	64	75	43	36	17	27

## Terrorism

Terrorism has been the President's strongest area throughout his presidency. In December 2001, 90% of Americans approved of his handling of the campaign against terrorism - his highest rating ever. The President continued to receive positive marks on the issue throughout his first term. But an unpopular war began to taint even these evaluations of him. In October 2005, for the first time, fewer than half of Americans approved of President Bush's handling of terrorism.

### **BUSH'S HANDLING OF TERRORISM**

	Now	12/2007	*Low*	10/2005	*High*
Approve	47%	40%	39%	46%	90%
Disapprove	48	52	53	46	6

## The Economy

In September 2008, amid the collapse and subsequent bailout of some of the nation's financial institutions, just 16% approved of the President's handling of the economy - a record low for him. His highest rating on the economy came in October 2001, shortly after the 9/11 attacks.

### **BUSH'S HANDLING OF THE ECONOMY**

	Now	10/2008	*Low*	*High*	3/2001
Approve	17%	18%	16%	71%	55%
Disapprove	77	72	76	15	28

**VICE PRESIDENT DICK CHENEY**

Vice President Dick Cheney also leaves office with a negative rating: at 13% favorable it matches the lowest since he assumed office. 44% of Americans now view him unfavorably. This is a reversal from March 2001, when CBS News took its first measure of Cheney's favorability as Vice President. Back then, 34% held a favorable opinion of the Vice President; only 11% viewed him unfavorably.

**VIEWS OF DICK CHENEY**

	Now	5/2007	3/2001
Favorable	13%	13%	34%
Not favorable	44	39	11
Undecided/haven't heard enough	42	47	55

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This poll was conducted among a random sample of 1,112 adults nationwide, interviewed by telephone January 11-15, 2009. Phone numbers were dialed from RDD samples of both standard land-lines and cell phones. The error due to sampling for results based on the entire sample could be plus or minus three percentage points. The error for subgroups is higher.

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q36 Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush has handled his job as President over the last eight years?

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **			
	*** Party ID ***			
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
Approve	22	57	6	18
Disapprove	73	34	93	73
DK/NA	5	9	1	9

q37 Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush has handled the economy during the last eight years?

Approve	17	49	4	13
Disapprove	77	42	93	80
DK/NA	6	9	3	7

q38 Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush has handled the situation with Iraq during the last eight years?

Approve	25	64	6	23
Disapprove	71	31	91	72
DK/NA	4	5	3	5

q39 Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush has handled the campaign against terrorism during the last eight years?

Approve	47	87	26	48
Disapprove	48	12	70	47
DK/NA	5	1	4	5

q40 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?

					Mar07a
					%
Favorable	26	72	7	20	30
Not favorable	60	16	86	58	55
Undecided	11	11	7	15	13
Haven't heard enough	2	1	0	4	2
Refused	1	0	0	3	0

q41 Overall, what kind of President do you think George W. Bush has been -- a very good President, a good President, an average President, or a poor President?

Very good	5	18	1	2
Good	12	34	3	9
Average	33	36	20	44
Poor	50	12	76	45
DK/NA	0	0	0	0

q42 Is your opinion of Dick Cheney favorable, not favorable, undecided, or haven't you heard enough about Dick Cheney yet to have an opinion?

**\*\* TOTAL RESPONDENTS \*\***

**\*\*\* Party ID \*\*\***

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	May07a
	%	%	%	%	%
Favorable	13	41	2	8	13
Not favorable	44	16	66	37	39
Undecided	22	25	16	28	23
Haven't heard enough	20	16	16	25	24
Refused	1	2	0	2	1

	<b>UNWEIGHTED</b>	<b>WEIGHTED</b>
Total Respondents	1112	
Total Republicans	281	237
Total Democrats	416	439
Total Independents	415	436