



CBS NEWS POLL
 For release: May 1, 2006
 6:30 P.M. EDT

RISING CONCERNS: GAS PRICES, IRAQ AND THE COUNTRY'S DIRECTION
April 28-30, 2006

Concerns about the war in Iraq and the emerging issues of gas and oil prices and immigration appear to have made Americans pessimistic about the way things are going in this country. They also continue to keep the President's approval rating at its lowest level ever.

71% now say things in the U.S. have pretty seriously gotten off on the wrong track -- the highest number ever in the CBS News Poll. Only 24% say things are headed in the right direction. Last October when the country was still reeling from the fallout of Hurricane Katrina, 69% said things were off on the wrong track.

DIRECTION OF THE COUNTRY

	Now	3/2006	10/2005	4/2005
Right direction	24%	28%	26%	32%
Wrong track	71	66	69	62

Polls conducted by other organizations in 1979 and 1980 showed similar and even slightly more negative numbers. Today, even 45% of Republicans say things in the U.S. have seriously gotten off on the wrong track, while 49% say things are going in the right direction.

For George W. Bush, this means low approval ratings. Only 33% now approve of his job performance, his lowest approval rating yet in CBS News Polls. 58% disapprove. His approval rating among Republicans has dropped to 68%. Nearly one in four Republicans disapproves.

BUSH JOB APPROVAL

Approve	33%
Disapprove	58

Exactly three years since the President gave the speech declaring "major combat operations" in Iraq at an end, Americans say that war remains the most important problem facing the country. But gas prices (13%) now edges out the economy and jobs (12%) for second place. The previous time the issue of gas prices reached this level of concern was last August, when the average price of gas was about \$2.60 a gallon, less than it is today. 8% also mention the issue of immigration.

MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM

	Now	4/2006	3/2006	8/2005
War in Iraq	23%	27%	20%	24%
Gas and oil prices	13	4	4	14
Economy/jobs	12	13	13	13
Immigration	8	7	4	2

On all these issues - even in the assessment of his handling of the economy, which a majority of Americans believe is in good shape - the President receives extremely low approval ratings.

THE GAS PRICE HIKE

On this issue, the American people display a unity of opinion: just over eight in 10 Americans think the government should be addressing the recent rise in gas prices, and fewer than one in 10 -- and just a handful of Republicans -- think the government or the Bush Administration is doing much to address it.

Only 8% think the government in Washington is doing all it can reasonably be expected to do, while 87% thinks it could be doing more. That view is widespread across all political parties; only 14% of Republicans think the government is doing all it can, as do 4% of Democrats and 8% of Independents.

IS GOVT. DOING ALL IT CAN TO KEEP GAS PRICES DOWN?

	All	Reps.	Dems.	Inds.
Yes	8%	14%	4%	8%
No	87	81	92	87

Americans also believe whatever the President is doing may not be enough. Just 17% say they approve of the way the President is handling the issue of gas prices. Three in four disapprove. Even a majority of the members of the President's own party disapprove.

BUSH HANDLING GAS PRICES

	All	Reps.	Dems.	Inds.
Approve	17%	35%	6%	13%
Disapprove	74	56	87	75

Only 8% think the Administration has a clear plan for keeping the price of gas down. 82% think they haven't developed one yet. Only 13% of Republicans think the Administration has a clear plan in this area, while 71% thinks they do not.

DOES BUSH ADMIN. HAVE CLEAR PLAN FOR KEEPING GAS PRICES DOWN?

	All	Reps.	Dems.	Inds.
Yes	8%	13%	4%	9%
No	82	71	92	82

In September 2005, when gas prices rose in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, 12% thought the Administration had a clear plan for keeping gas prices down.

Americans clearly are looking to the government to address this issue. 83% of Americans think the government SHOULD be doing something to keep the price of gasoline down. Only 12% think the government should stay out of the matter. That sentiment is widespread across the political spectrum: 80% of Republicans, 81% of Independents and 88% of Democrats agree.

SHOULD THE GOVERNMENT DO SOMETHING ABOUT GAS PRICES?

Yes	83%
No	12

And Americans expect both the Executive and Legislative branches of government to have solutions. 29% think the Congress should have the lead responsibility for dealing with gas prices, 25% want the Secretary of Energy to take the lead, and another 24% think the President should do so.

WHO SHOULD HAVE RESPONSIBILITY FOR DEALING WITH AS PRICES?

Congress	29%
Secretary of Energy	25
President	24

By more than two to one, Americans think the Democrats would be more effective than the Republicans at keeping gas prices down. 47% of Americans think the Democratic Party is more likely to see to it that gas prices are low, while only 20% think the Republicans are more likely to do so. 12% think neither party would be able to do so.

WHICH PARTY WOULD SEE TO IT GAS PRICES ARE LOW?

Democrats	47%
Republicans	20
Neither	12

One in five Republicans think the Democrats would do a better job seeing to it that gas prices are low.

Americans would like to blame oil company greed for high gas prices. 64% place a great deal of the blame for gas price hikes on oil companies trying to increase their profits by raising prices, and another 24% think oil companies should receive some of the blame.

BLAME OIL COMPANIES FOR GAS PRICE HIKES?

A great deal	64%
Some	24
Not much/not at all	10

Concerns about gas prices may also affecting opinions about how the President is handling the economy generally. Despite the fact that 57% say the economy is in good shape, the President's approval rating on the economy is at his lowest.

BUSH APPROVAL ON THE ECONOMY

Approve	31%
Disapprove	58

THE WAR IN IRAQ

Not since the fall of 2004, when an election campaign helped President Bush re-state his case for the war, has a majority of Americans called the decision to invade Iraq the right thing to do. Today, three years after President Bush spoke aboard the USS Lincoln in front of the now-famous "Mission Accomplished" banner and declared "major combat operations" in Iraq at an end, just 44% of Americans say that taking action against Iraq was the right thing to do.

DID U.S. DO THE RIGHT THING GOING TO WAR WITH IRAQ?

	Now	4/2006	2/2006	5/2005	10/2004	12/2003	3/2003
Right thing	44%	43%	41%	47%	53%	62%	69%
Should have stayed out	51	53	54	49	42	34	25

During the initial phase of the conflict in March 2003, and also after Saddam Hussein was captured later that year, most called it the right thing.

41% say things are now going well in Iraq for the U.S., and most Americans - 55% - say things are going badly.

HOW ARE THINGS IN IRAQ GOING FOR U.S.?

	Now	4/2006	2/2006	2/2005	5/2004	12/2003	5/2003
Well	41%	41%	36%	53%	37%	65%	72%
Badly	55	58	62	47	60	33	24

In May 2003, 72% of Americans thought the war was going well. Two-thirds said so later that year, after the capture of Saddam Hussein. But that measure turned mostly negative in the spring of 2004, and the last time a majority said things were going well was in February 2005, soon after the Iraqis had held successful elections.

But many Americans still voice support for at least the first phase of the war -- removing Saddam Hussein. 36% say the U.S. was right to both oust Saddam and then stay to try to rebuild Iraq, while another 28% say they support the removal of Saddam but then wanted the U.S. to leave Iraq soon after. 33% think the U.S. ought never to have gotten involved in Iraq at all.

WHAT SHOULD THE U.S. HAVE DONE...?

Remove Saddam AND stay to rebuild Iraq	36%
Remove Saddam, then left Iraq	28
Never gotten involved in Iraq	33

Only 30% approve of the way President Bush is handling the war in Iraq - matching the low recorded in February. 64% disapprove.

BUSH'S HANDLING OF IRAQ

	Now	2/2006	5/2005	10/2004	5/2004	12/2003	5/2003
Approve	30%	30%	38%	45%	39%	59%	74%
Disapprove	64	65	57	50	58	35	21

Three years ago, three in four approved. Approval dipped in the fall of that year, but bounced back to 59% after the capture of Saddam Hussein in December. Since then, fewer than half the public has approved of the President's handling of Iraq. In the spring of 2004, that figure dropped below 40%. It rose somewhat that fall, but declined to under 40% again in the spring of 2005.

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld also receives his lowest approval rating to date. 33% now approve of the job Rumsfeld is doing as Defense Secretary, while 49% disapprove. In January 42% of Americans approved of the job he was doing.

57% of Republicans approve of Secretary Rumsfeld's performance while 64% of Democrats disapprove.

RUMSFELD JOB RATING

	Now	1/2006	5/2004
Approve	33%	42%	40%
Disapprove	49	45	46
Don't know	18	13	14

IMMIGRATION

Americans give the President low marks on handling immigration, now seen as one of the country's top problems. Just 28% approve of how George W. Bush is handling than issue, while 56% disapprove.

BUSH HANDLING IMMIGRATION

	All	Reps.	Dems.	Inds.
Approve	28%	47%	19%	21%
Disapprove	56	38	66	59

Fewer than half of Republicans approve of the President's handling of this issue.

TERRORISM

In this poll, just 3% name terrorism as the country's most important problem, down from 6% last month, and 12% last summer. Even with the lessened public focus on the issue, assessment of the President's handling of terrorism remains mixed at best.

45% of Americans approve of the way George W. Bush is handling the campaign against terrorism, while 45% disapprove. This is still the President's strongest issue; but since last fall fewer than half the country has approved.

BUSH HANDLING TERRORISM

Approve	45%
Disapprove	45

One new possible threat to the U.S. could come from Iran. But while tensions mount over Iran's nuclear program, most Americans see that nation as a threat that can still be contained by diplomacy. These views have not changed much since February.

IRAN IS...

	Now	2/2006
A threat requiring military action now	18%	20%
A threat that can be contained via diplomacy now	58	55
Not a threat to the U.S.	16	19

This poll was conducted among a nationwide random sample of 719 adults, interviewed by telephone April 28-30, 2006. The error due to sampling for results based on the entire sample could be plus or minus four percentage points. Error for subgroups may be higher.

CBS NEWS POLL

Rising Concerns: Gas Prices, Iraq and the Country's Direction

April 28-30 2006

q1 Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling his job as President?

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **				Apr06a
	Total	*** Party ID ***			
	%	Rep	Dem	Ind	%
Approve	33	68	6	32	37
Disapprove	58	23	88	55	56
DK/NA	9	9	6	13	7

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?

					Mar06a
Right direction	24	49	7	21	28
Wrong track	71	45	87	75	66
DK/NA	5	6	6	4	6

q3 What do you think is the most important problem facing this country today?

					Apr06a
War in Iraq	23	19	25	24	27
Gas costs/heating Oil	13	14	12	12	4
Economy / jobs	12	8	15	13	13
Immigration	8	10	7	8	7
Terrorism (general)	3	5	1	3	6
Poverty / Homelessness	3	2	6	1	4
The President/G.W. Bush	3	1	5	2	4
Health Care	3	1	3	4	5
Misc. Social Issues	3	2	4	3	1
Education	2	2	3	1	3
Defense / Military	2	6	0	1	2
Moral Values/Family Values	2	4	0	3	2
Other	19	22	16	19	18
DK/NA	4	4	3	6	4

q4 Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling the economy?

Approve	31	64	5	32	36
Disapprove	58	25	85	56	57
DK/NA	11	11	10	12	7

q5 Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling the situation with Iraq?

Approve	30	63	9	26	33
Disapprove	64	31	88	65	61
DK/NA	6	6	3	9	6

q6 Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling the campaign against terrorism?

** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **

*** Party ID ***

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Apr06a
	%	%	%	%	%
Approve	45	79	22	42	47
Disapprove	45	17	68	46	46
DK/NA	10	4	10	12	7

q7 Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling the issue of gasoline prices?

Approve	17	35	6	13
Disapprove	74	56	87	75
DK/NA	9	9	7	12

q8 Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling the issue of immigration?

Approve	28	47	19	21	26
Disapprove	56	38	66	59	53
DK/NA	16	15	15	20	21

q9 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Donald Rumsfeld is handling his job as Secretary of Defense?

					Jan06a
Approve	33	57	18	28	42
Disapprove	49	30	64	49	45
DK/NA	18	13	18	23	13

q10 BLANK

q11 Do you think members of the Bush Administration have a clear plan for keeping down the price of gasoline or haven't they developed one yet?

					Sep05b
Have a plan	8	13	4	9	12
Haven't developed one yet	82	71	92	82	81
DK/NA	10	16	4	9	7

q12 Do you think the government in Washington SHOULD try to do something to help keep gasoline prices down, or do you think the government should stay out of the matter?

Should do something	83	80	88	81
Should stay out	12	17	7	13
DK/NA	5	3	5	6

q13 Do you think the government in Washington is doing all it can reasonably be expected to do to help keep gasoline prices down or could it be doing more?

All that could be expected	8	14	4	8
Could be doing more	87	81	92	87
DK/NA	5	5	4	5

q14 Who do you think should take the lead responsibility in dealing with rising gasoline prices -- the President, the Congress, or the Secretary of Energy?

** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **

*** Party ID ***

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
The President	24	15	30	26
The Congress	29	31	30	27
Secretary of Energy	25	33	22	21
Someone else (vol.)	2	2	1	3
All equally (vol.)	12	9	12	16
None (vol.)	2	4	1	1
DK/NA	6	6	4	6

q15 Regardless of how you usually vote, do you think the Republican Party or the Democratic Party is more likely to see to it that gasoline prices are low?

Republican party	20	50	4	15
Democratic party	47	22	78	37
Both (Vol.)	2	2	2	2
Neither (Vol.)	12	13	7	17
DK/NA	19	13	9	29

q16 How much of the blame for the increase in gas prices do you put on oil companies trying to increase their profits by raising prices -- a great deal, some, not much, or none at all?

A great deal	64	61	73	56
Some	24	26	18	28
Not much	6	7	3	8
None at all	4	5	3	5
DK/NA	2	1	3	3

q17 BLANK

q18 Which comes closer to your opinion -- Iran is a threat to the United States that requires military action now, Iran is a threat that can be contained with diplomacy now, or Iran is not a threat to the United States at this time?

Threat requiring action now	18	28	12	16	Feb06b
Threat that can be contained	58	59	55	61	20
Not a threat at this time	16	8	26	13	55
DK/NA	8	5	7	10	19
					6

q19 How would you rate the condition of the national economy these days? Is it very good, fairly good, fairly bad, or very bad?

Very good	8	17	2	6
Fairly good	49	64	41	46
Fairly bad	27	14	32	31
Very bad	14	5	21	14
DK/NA	2	0	4	3

q20-21 BLANK

q22 Looking back, do you think the United States did the right thing in taking military action against Iraq, or should the US have stayed out?

** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **

*** Party ID ***

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Apr06a
	%	%	%	%	%
Right thing	44	77	19	42	43
Stayed out	51	18	77	50	53
Don't know/No answer	5	5	4	8	4

q23 How would you say things are going for the US in its efforts to bring stability and order to Iraq? Would you say things are going very well, somewhat well, somewhat badly, or very badly?

Very well	5	10	2	3	5
Somewhat well	36	56	23	33	36
Somewhat badly	29	22	35	29	27
Very badly	26	9	33	31	31
Don't know/No answer	4	3	7	4	1

q24 Which comes closer to your view about the Iraq war: 1. The U.S. was right to remove Saddam Hussein AND stay in Iraq to help build a new government there; 2. The U.S. was right to remove Saddam Hussein, but then should have left Iraq soon after that, or 3. The U.S. should never have gotten involved in Iraq in the first place.

					Mar06a
Right to remove and stay	36	67	15	33	35
Remove Saddam & left	28	24	30	30	22
Never gotten involved	33	9	53	34	40
DK/NA	3	0	2	3	3

	<u>UNWEIGHTED</u>	<u>WEIGHTED</u>
Total Respondents	719	
Total Republicans	204	197
Total Democrats	249	254
Total Independents	266	268