

**THE YEAR IN REVIEW: PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH'S
APPROVAL RATINGS IN 2005**

President Bush experienced a loss of public confidence on many key fronts in 2005, according to an analysis of the polling conducted by CBS News throughout the year. He began the year (and his second term in office) with lower job approval ratings than other modern two-term presidents did, and his approval rating continued to drop during the year.

Several policy issues no doubt contributed to this drop. The war in Iraq was volunteered by Americans who disapproved of Bush as the main reason they did so. But there was also the attempted Social Security overhaul and the Bush Administration's response to Hurricane Katrina - areas in which the public expressed doubts about the President's leadership and proposals.

Bush's 49% approval rating in January 2005 was lower than Nixon's 51% in January 1973, and much lower than Clinton's 60%, Reagan's 62%, and Eisenhower's 74% at that point in their presidencies.

**BUSH VS. OTHER PRESIDENTS:
APPROVAL RATINGS ON THE EVE OF SECOND INAUGURATIONS**

| | <u>Date</u> | <u>Approve</u> | <u>Disapprove</u> |
|---------------|-------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Bush | 1/2005 | 49% | 46 |
| Clinton | 1/1997 | 60% | 32 |
| Reagan | 1/1985 | 62% | 29 |
| Gallup Polls: | | | |
| Nixon | 1/1973 | 51% | 37 |
| Eisenhower | 1/1957 | 74% | 14 |

But that 49% approval rating was the highest rating the President received in all of 2005. By April, a majority of the public disapproved of the job he was doing. Bush finished the year with a 40% approval rating in December, an improvement from his low point in late October, when only 35% approved.

PRESIDENT BUSH'S 2005 APPROVAL RATINGS

| | 1/2005 | 4/2005 | 8/2005 | 10/2005 | 12/2005 |
|------------|--------|--------|--------|---------|---------|
| Approve | 49% | 44% | 41% | 35% | 40% |
| Disapprove | 46 | 51 | 51 | 57 | 53 |

The President also began the year with mediocre ratings on handling foreign policy, the economy, and the situation in Iraq. He received

his most positive evaluation on handling the war on terrorism, which had historically been his strongest area.

In January, just two in five Americans approved of President Bush's handling of foreign policy, the economy and Iraq. And like his overall approval rating, those numbers continued to drop as the year progressed. By December, 36% approved of his handling of foreign policy and the war in Iraq, and 38% approved of his handling of the economy. Not even half approved of his handling of the war on terrorism -- down from 56% at the start of the year.

BUSH'S APPROVAL RATINGS

| | 1/2005 | 12/2005 |
|----------------|--------|---------|
| Terrorism | 56% | 48% |
| Foreign policy | 42% | 36% |
| Economy | 42% | 38% |
| Iraq | 40% | 36% |

Bush has not convinced Americans that the war in Iraq is paying off in terms of their own safety from terrorism. In a December poll, 35% today said the U.S. is safer as a result of the war, but 22% said they are less safe, and 41% said the war has had no impact. In early 2004, more Americans felt the war was contributing to U.S. safety.

IRAQ WAR IS MAKING THE U.S..

| | 12/2005 | 1/2004 |
|--------------------------|---------|--------|
| Safer from terrorism | 35% | 50% |
| Less safe from terrorism | 22 | 18 |
| No difference | 41 | 29 |

Americans did not think President Bush shared their priorities. In a CBS News Poll conducted in May, six in 10 Americans said they didn't think the President shared their priorities for the country; just 34% felt he did. In October, views were much the same. These are the lowest marks Bush has received on this question since the eve of his first inauguration, when CBS News first asked it.

DOES BUSH SHARE YOUR PRIORITIES FOR THE COUNTRY?

| | 10/2005 | 5/2005 | 10/2004* | 9/2003 | 1/2001 |
|-----|---------|--------|----------|--------|--------|
| Yes | 32% | 34% | 49% | 41% | 44% |
| No | 65 | 61 | 48 | 56 | 46 |

*asked of registered voters

In December, CBS News and The New York Times asked Americans who disapproved of the President's performance to volunteer their own reasons for that opinion. The war in Iraq was by far the biggest reason given -- more than half of those who disapproved gave that response. Smaller numbers said that the President was doing a bad job generally, that he is dishonest, or mentioned his positions on other domestic issues.

WHY DISAPPROVE OF BUSH'S JOB? (12/2005)

Asked of those who disapprove of Bush's job

| | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| Iraq war | 53% |
| Doing a bad job generally | 8 |
| Dishonest | 8 |
| Other domestic issues | 6 |
| Other personal qualities | 5 |
| Economy/jobs | 4 |

IRAQ

The violence in Iraq continued to take a toll, and by April a majority of Americans thought things in Iraq were going badly for the U.S. there. In December, 52% said things were going badly, while 46% thought the war was going well.

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

| | 12/2005 | 5/2005 | 4/2005 | 2/2005 |
|-------|---------|--------|--------|--------|
| Well | 46% | 41% | 48% | 53% |
| Badly | 52 | 57 | 50 | 47 |

In January, 45% thought taking military action against Iraq was the right thing to do. By October, 41% felt that way, and the percentage that believed the U.S. should have stayed out of Iraq had risen to 55%. Views became somewhat more positive in December, although the country remained divided; 48% thought the war was the right thing, while 48% thought it was not. In 2003, just after the war began, 69% of Americans felt it was the right thing to do.

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

| | 12/2005 | 10/2005 | 1/2005 |
|------------------------|---------|---------|--------|
| Right thing | 48% | 41% | 45% |
| Should have stayed out | 48 | 55 | 49 |

Many Americans felt the President was not accurately describing the situation there.

BUSH DESCRIBES THE SITUATION IN IRAQ:

| | 12/2005 |
|--------------------------|---------|
| Better than it really is | 58% |
| Worse than it really is | 4 |
| Accurately | 33 |

And by the fall, the percentage of Americans who felt U.S. troops should leave Iraq had risen. In September, 52% felt troops should leave as soon as possible.

U.S. TROOPS IN IRAQ SHOULD...

| | 9/2005 | 2/2005 | 6/2004 |
|---------------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| Stay as long as it takes | 42% | 55% | 54% |
| Leave as soon as possible | 52 | 40 | 40 |

By December, 28% wanted all troops out of Iraq immediately, and another three in 10 wanted troop levels decreased. 58% said they wanted a time-table for troop withdrawal -- something the President said he would not do.

SHOULD U.S. SET TIMETABLE FOR TROOP WITHDRAWAL?

| | 12/2005 |
|-----|---------|
| Yes | 58% |
| No | 39 |

Polls conducted late in the year showed that most Americans felt the President did not have a clear plan for victory in Iraq or for getting troops out, and most were uneasy about his handling of the war.

DOES GEORGE W. BUSH HAVE A PLAN FOR...

| | 12/2005 | |
|----------------------|---------|----|
| | Yes | No |
| Victory in Iraq | 25% | 68 |
| Bringing troops home | 25% | 70 |

CONFIDENT PRES. BUSH WILL MAKE THE RIGHT DECISIONS ON IRAQ

| | 9/2005 |
|-----------|--------|
| Confident | 35% |
| Uneasy | 63 |

HURRICANE KATRINA

A September CBS News Poll showed that President Bush's response to Hurricane Katrina met with disapproval -- only 38% approved, while 58% disapproved.

BUSH'S HANDLING OF RESPONSE TO KATRINA

| | 9/2005 |
|------------|--------|
| Approve | 38% |
| Disapprove | 58 |
| Don't know | 4 |

Many felt that the President had acted too slowly in responding to the disaster that followed the storm.

BUSH'S RESPONSE TO KATRINA WAS...

| | 9/2005 |
|-----------------------|--------|
| Too quick | 1% |
| Too slow | 65 |
| About the right speed | 32 |

There was more fallout for the President as a result of the disaster. In that September poll, just 48% of Americans thought the President had strong qualities of leadership - the lowest number ever for the President in this poll. (In the weeks after the attacks of September 11th, 2001, 83% of Americans said the President had strong qualities of leadership.) Later in September, 53% thought the President was a strong leader.

| DOES PRES. BUSH HAVE STRONG QUALITIES OF LEADERSHIP? | | | |
|---|--------|-----------------|--------|
| | 9/2005 | 9/2004 (Voters) | 9/2001 |
| Yes | 48% | 64% | 83% |
| No | 49 | 34 | 14 |

Moreover, just 32% expressed "a lot" of confidence in the President's ability to handle a crisis. This was a sharp change from four years ago when, in the weeks after the 9/11 attacks, 66% expressed "a lot" of confidence in Bush's ability to handle a crisis.

| CONFIDENCE IN BUSH'S HANDLING OF A CRISIS | | |
|--|--------|--------|
| | 9/2005 | 9/2001 |
| A lot | 32% | 66% |
| Some | 19 | 24 |
| A little | 25 | 7 |
| None | 23 | 2 |

SOCIAL SECURITY

Many Americans were skeptical that the Social Security system was in the "crisis" the Administration claimed, and 56% felt Americans were being told it was in a crisis so political leaders could make the changes they wanted to the program.

There was little enthusiasm for the President's proposal to change the current system. Skepticism about the Bush plan remained even while many Americans (especially those under 30) doubted whether the Social Security system would provide them with retirement benefits.

Throughout the year, the public was divided as to whether allowing personal investment accounts was a good idea -- but 70% were against such accounts if it meant their benefits would be cut.

| LETTING INDIVIDUALS INVEST SOME SOCIAL SECURITY ON THEIR OWN IS... | | | | | |
|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | 6/2005 | 5/2005 | 4/2005 | 2/2005 | 1/2005 |
| A good idea | 45% | 47% | 45% | 43% | 45% |
| A bad idea | 50 | 47 | 49 | 51 | 50 |

Americans' unease with the President's plan to add individual investment accounts to Social Security continued during the early part of the year. By July, the President was receiving mostly negative assessments of his handling of the issue.

BUSH'S HANDLING OF SOCIAL SECURITY

| | 7/2005 | 5/2005 |
|------------|--------|--------|
| Approve | 29% | 26% |
| Disapprove | 58 | 62 |

In June, only 27% were confident in the President's handling of the matter, while 66% were uneasy.

BUSH'S HANDLING OF SOCIAL SECURITY

| | 6/2005 |
|-----------|--------|
| Confident | 27% |
| Uneasy | 66 |

THE SUPREME COURT

In 2005 President Bush had the opportunity to appoint two justices to the Supreme Court -- one a Chief Justice. In January, a 44% plurality expected the people he chose would be about right ideologically, while 33% thought his appointments would be more conservative than they would like.

In August the public had a positive impression of the President's first nominee, Judge John Roberts, although many didn't know much about him, and in September by three to one they favored his confirmation as Chief Justice. 71% expected Justice Roberts to be confirmed, including majorities of both Democrats and Republicans.

President Bush followed his nomination of John Roberts with Harriet Miers -- a nomination that was met with more criticism among political observers, and some skepticism from the public. Just days after her nomination, views of Miers were more mixed than they were for Roberts: 11% had a favorable opinion of her, 11% were unfavorable. 14% thought she should be confirmed, while 13% thought she should not be.

After Miers' eventual withdrawal from consideration, the President nominated Judge Samuel Alito. A December poll showed that the public's view of Alito was more favorable than for Miers, but not as positive as views of Roberts were when he was nominated.

OPINION OF SUPREME COURT NOMINEES

| | Roberts 8/2005 | Miers 10/2005 | Alito 12/2005 |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Favorable | 22% | 11% | 14% |
| Unfavorable | 8 | 11 | 10 |
| Undecided/haven't heard enough | 69 | 77 | 75 |

SHOULD THEY BE CONFIRMED BY THE SENATE?

| | Roberts 9/2005 | Miers 10/2005 |
|-----------|-------------------|------------------|
| Yes | 35% | 14% |
| No | 10 | 13 |
| Can't say | 49 | 70 |

By October, more than half of Americans said they were uneasy about the President's Supreme Court choices.

BUSH'S SUPREME COURT NOMINEES:

| | 10/2005 | 7/2005 |
|-----------|---------|--------|
| Confident | 38% | 46% |
| Uneasy | 54 | 52 |

THE ECONOMY AND THE DIRECTION OF THE COUNTRY

There was one bright spot for the President in late 2005 -- the economy. Although the President's approval rating on handling the economy was lower in December (38%) than it was at the start of the year (42%), assessments of the nation's economy rose at the end of the year. In December, a majority of Americans felt the condition of the national economy was somewhat or very good -- a major improvement since October, and the highest percentage saying so since July.

VIEWS OF THE ECONOMY

| | 12/2005 | 10/2005 |
|------|---------|---------|
| Good | 55% | 47% |
| Bad | 43 | 51 |

Americans also became less pessimistic about the direction of the country toward the end of the year. While 31% of Americans believed the country was heading in the right direction, 60% of Americans said the country was on the wrong track - down 8 points from October.

DIRECTION OF THE COUNTRY

| | 12/2005 | 10/2005 |
|-----------------|---------|---------|
| Right direction | 31% | 27% |
| Wrong track | 60 | 68 |

TERRI SCHIAVO

In March, controversy erupted about disconnecting the feeding tube from Terri Schiavo, a patient who had lain in a coma for many years. Most Americans felt the tube should not be re-inserted.

In response to the involvement of some government figures in the case, the vast majority of Americans felt that Congress and the President should stay out of the Schiavo matter.

**SHOULD CONGRESS AND THE PRESIDENT
BE INVOLVED IN SCHIAVO MATTER?**

| | |
|-----|-----|
| Yes | 13% |
| No | 82 |