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MAJORITY CITE DISSATISFACTION WITH CURRENT STATE OF POLITICS; CORRUPTION, PARTISANSHIP TOP CONCERNS

BUSH FAVORABILITY RATINGS DECLINE AMONG REPUBLICAN, INDEPENDENT VOTERS

Diageo/Hotline Poll Conducted by Financial Dynamics Finds Slip in Republican Support for Reelection in Congress

Republicans Seen as Party Most Likely to be Corrupt; Democrats as Prone to Partisan Bickering

NEW YORK, May 25, 2006 – A majority of voters are dissatisfied with the current state of politics in the United States today, with 67% expressing dissatisfaction and only 31% expressing satisfaction. Only 2% of voters said they were “very satisfied” with the current state of politics in the United States. 20% of Democratic voters and 29% of Independents are somewhat or very satisfied with the current state of politics in the country, while 48% of Republicans say the same.

When asked why they are dissatisfied with the current state of politics today, “too much corruption” was cited as the primary reason by 39% and 43% of voters in a split sample question. Voters identified partisanship as the second most common reason for dissatisfaction: “Republicans and Democrats fight too much” (29%, Split Sample B) and “Democrats and Republicans don’t work together” (23% Split Sample A) were cited as specific complaints among voters.

Against this negative backdrop of voter sentiment toward the general state of politics, President Bush’s favorability ratings continue to decline, precipitously among Republicans and Independent voters. Overall, the president’s current approval rating is 37%, with 61% expressing disapproval of his job performance. In the February Diageo/Hotline Poll, 45% of respondents expressed approval of the president’s job performance, with 52% disapproving. The president’s job approval has dropped 13 points among Republicans (70% approval in May vs. 83% in February) and 8 points among Independents (33% approval in May vs. 41% in February).

“A thirteen point decline in Republicans who approve of Bush should be a red flag for GOP candidates,” said Chuck Todd, Editor-in-Chief of *The Hotline*. “Bush is no longer dropping in approval among his adversaries, but also among his base. The effects of this will be seen as the midterms get closer.”

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Bush's approval rating on the war in Iraq also continues to decline. 34% of voters approve of his handling of the war in Iraq, compared to 42% approval in February (61% disapproval in May vs. 54% disapproval in February). During the same period, opposition to the war in Iraq rose as the most pressing issue facing the country today from 13% percent in February to 21% in May. Opposition to war in Iraq has emerged as the most important issue among voters, followed by the economy (14%).

The Diageo/*Hotline* Poll of 801 registered voters, conducted by Financial Dynamics from May 18 to 21, with analysis by Ed Reilly (D) and Ed Rollins (R), found that the polarization of American politics is a major concern for voters. When asked to compare the problem of conflict between the political parties in this country, 78% of voters said that conflict between political parties is a problem (45% "very serious"/ 33% "somewhat serious"), while only 14% said the conflict between political parties is a "minor" problem.

A majority of voters, including a majority of Democrats and Republicans, think Americans and political parties are more deeply divided now than in recent years:

- 60% of voters say Americans are more deeply divided on major issues than they have been in past several years; and
- 61% of voters say Democrats and Republicans are more deeply divided on major issues than they have been in past several years.
- 43% say Republicans and Democrats are "opposing" each other rather than "working together" (12%) compared to previous years.

With the battle for Congress in November beginning to take shape, voter perceptions and approval of Congress show increasing problems for Republicans in 2006. The percentage of Republicans who say they will vote to reelect their current member of Congress is hovering just above 30%. This is a six-point drop from February and the lowest point in the Diageo/*Hotline* Poll this year. The majority of voters (59%) say they have "a lot" of interest in the 2006 elections, while only 37% have a favorable view of Congress. In terms of favorability, Republicans in Congress have a 53% unfavorable rating among voters, while Democrats in Congress have a 42% unfavorable rating.

More troubling for Republicans in Congress are general traits of political parties identified by voters. Republicans are seen more likely to be corrupt than Democrats (29%-16%), while Democrats are considered to be more open to working with the other party than Republicans (36%-20%) and more open to moderate ideas (48%-26%).

The Diageo/*Hotline* Poll also tested some potential head-to-head presidential match-ups in 2008. A match-up between Senator Hillary Clinton and Senator John McCain, which the Diageo/*Hotline* Poll tracks on a monthly basis, shows McCain beating Clinton by a 49%-38% margin, a figure that is relatively unchanged from February (50% McCain, 40% Clinton). In another hypothetical match-up between former Vice President Al Gore and McCain, McCain beats Gore by a 51%-33% margin.

To obtain complete poll results please see www.diageohotlinepoll.com

To schedule an interview with Ed Rollins, Ed Reilly or Chuck Todd, contact Megha Narayan at (212) 850-5600 or Megha.Narayan@fd.com

Methodology

The Diageo/*Hotline* Poll was conducted by telephone from May 18 to 21 among a random, nationally representative sample of 801 registered voters (margin of error +/- 3.5%), ages 18 and older.

Complete results available at www.diageohotlinepoll.com

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