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AMERICAN ELECTORATE PESSIMISTIC, DOUBTS BUSH; NO RUSH TO DEMOCRATS

Diageo/Hotline Poll Finds Record Low Approval Rating for Bush; Americans Concerned About Corruption

NEW YORK – October 19, 2005 – As the Iraq War, Hurricane Katrina, high gas prices and Harriet Miers' Supreme Court nomination dominate the public's attention, Americans are increasingly pessimistic about the direction of the country, less supportive of President Bush's policies and doubtful of his competence in appointing key officials. At the same time, there has been no major shift in support for Democrats.

The new Diageo/Hotline Poll of 500 registered voters, conducted by Financial Dynamics with analysis by Ed Reilly (D) and Ed Rollins (R), found 60% of Americans say the country is headed in the wrong direction, with only 26% saying the country is headed in the right direction. Bush's job approval also fell to 41%, an eight-point drop since July and the lowest approval in the history of this poll.

Most Americans think Bill Clinton did a better job appointing officials than George W. Bush (52% to 32%). Specifically, 47% of Americans think Bush chose Harriet Miers primarily because of personal ties, while only 15% thought she was chosen for her quality and experience. By comparison, only 26% of Americans think Bush appointed John Roberts to the Supreme Court because of "personal ties."

Despite this growing skepticism towards Bush, there has been no major shift in support for Congressional Democrats over the past three months. When asked about generic party support for Congressional elections, Democrats have a nine-point edge over Republicans (40% to 31%), but Democratic support has only increased one point since July.

"Republicans have real problems with Hurricane Katrina, corruption and ethics inquiries, but those problems have not yet driven many voters to Congressional Democrats," said Chuck Todd, Editor-in-Chief of *The Hotline*.

Government corruption is also on Americans' minds. Over half of Americans think Tom DeLay did something "unethical" or "illegal" (55%); only 11% say he did nothing "seriously wrong." Slightly more Americans think Congress is more likely to be corrupt than Wall Street (40% to 36%), but these views are polarized by party. More Republicans say Wall Street is corrupt, while more Democrats say Congress is corrupt.

Americans also believe the risk of corruption varies by the government officials involved. In general, Americans say federal elected officials are more likely to be corrupt than local or state elected officials (24%, 18% and 13%, respectively), but these expectations also vary widely by party. Republicans are more skeptical of local and state government (25% and 17%), while Democrats and independents think the Federal government is more likely to be corrupt (28% and 26%).

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The Diageo/*Hotline* Poll also tested the favorability of several prominent people. Tom DeLay has a rating of 16% favorable and 45% unfavorable. Karl Rove has a rating of 16% favorable and 30% unfavorable, and he is better known by Democrats than Republicans or Independents (53% of Democrats have an opinion, compared to 46% of Republicans and 41% of Independents). Cindy Sheehan has a rating of 17% favorable and 25% unfavorable, and independents are split on her 18% favorable and 19% unfavorable. Hillary Clinton has a rating of 56% favorable and 37% unfavorable overall, and her unfavorable rating is 31% among independents.

To obtain complete poll results please see www.diageohotlinepoll.com
To schedule an interview with Ed Rollins, Ed Reilly or Chuck Todd, contact Rachel Fox at Rachel.Fox@fd.com or (202) 434-0611.

Methodology

The Diageo/*Hotline* Poll was conducted by telephone between October 12 and October 16, 2005 among a random sample of 500 Virginia registered voters ages 18 and older. The results have a +/-4.4% error margin. Complete results available at www.diageohotlinepoll.com

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