

AEI Political Report

Alito on the March

While many Americans are still undecided about Supreme Court nominee Samuel Alito, a plurality approve of his nomination. His level of support is similar to that of Chief Justice John Roberts at this point in his confirmation hearings.

Q: As you may know, [Samuel Alito/John Roberts] is the federal judge nominated to serve on the Supreme Court. Would you like to see the Senate vote . . . ?

	Alito	Roberts
Yes, vote in favor	49%	52%
No, do not	29	26
No opinion	22	22

Source: Gallup/CNN/USA Today, December 2005 and August 2005.

Q: Would you say that Supreme Court nominee [Samuel Alito/John Roberts] is more conservative than you would like, not conservative enough, or just about right?

	Alito	Roberts
More conservative than I would like	26%	29%
Not conservative enough	8	8
Just about right	39	41
Don't know	27	22

Source: Quinnipiac University, November–December 2005 and July 2005.

Bush v. Gore: Five Years Later

Five years ago, on January 6, Congress certified George W. Bush as the winner of the 2000 presidential election. Vice President Gore presided over the validation of the results. The response of most Americans was calm, reflecting a fundamental confidence in the system.

At no point during the 36-day-long imbroglio over the 2000 vote did Americans see a constitutional crisis. Political partisans' views of the Supreme Court were affected by the outcome, but the overall level of confidence in the Court did not change. Huge majorities felt that their own vote had been counted properly or fairly, but people were less sure about the votes of those in Florida, and they worried about the election system's capacity. (Four years later, in October 2004, 91 percent told ABC News that they were confident that their vote would be counted accurately). As for the legitimacy of the election, people made an interesting distinction. In a CBS News/*New York Times* question from mid-December 2000, 53 percent said Bush legitimately won the election (40 percent said he did not). But around 80 percent told Gallup interviewers that they would accept Bush as the legitimate president if he were declared the winner. More than seven in ten felt that way about Gore.

2000

Q: Do you feel your vote was counted properly on November 7?

Yes	92%
No	1

Source: Zogby International, December 2000.

2004

Q: How confident are you that your own vote for president in 2004 will be accurately counted this year . . . ?

Asked of Likely Voters

Confident	91%
Not confident	8

Source: ABC News/*Washington Post*, October 2004.

And what about Floridians? How do they feel now about their state's much maligned election system? In 2004, political scientists Mark Pritchett and Susan MacManus designed a survey sponsored by the Collins Center for Public Policy in Florida to explore their attitudes. More than eight in ten Floridians rated as excellent or good the ease of using the voting machines, and separately, the ease of understanding the ballot, and confidence that their vote would count.

Good News From Iraq?

Most polls about Iraq focus on the U.S. role there. Few have examined how Americans feel ordinary Iraqis are faring. A mid-November Harris Interactive poll provides some answers.

Q: For each of the following, please indicate whether you feel the situation is getting . . . ?

	Better	Worse
Overall life for Iraqis	68%	28%
Overall infrastructure for Iraqis	62	30
Security for Iraqi civilians	52	43

Source: Harris Interactive, November 2005.

Q: Now thinking about the past two years, do you think Iraq has made real progress toward establishing a democratic government, or don't you think Iraq has made any progress in this area?

Yes, Iraq has made real progress	63%
Has not	34

Source: Gallup/CNN/USA Today, December 2005.

Enron's Effect

With the Enron trial set to begin on January 17, *Political Report* decided to look again at attitudes toward business.

Americans are in a sour mood these days, and that attitude is affecting their views of many institutions. Business is no exception. In the 2005 Gallup poll, 22 percent had a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in big business, 45 percent some confidence, and 31 percent very little. Those numbers put big business on a par with Congress and far behind the military (74 percent had a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in it). Positive feelings about business are down from the levels of the late 1990s, when robust economic performance boosted confidence across the board. In Pew's polling from 1999, 73 percent had a favorable opinion of business. Only 45 percent give that response today.

The low ratings today notwithstanding, the business scandals do not appear to have scarred business permanently. One possible explanation: most Americans don't believe the kinds of behavior that they heard and read about at Enron would happen at their own companies.

Bush in the Polls

Two thousand five was a tough year for President Bush in public opinion polls. As the chart below shows, his approval rating on major issues has dropped since January. The bright spot for the president is that polls taken on his performance in December have shown a small improvement from those taken in November.

On personal characteristics, people are now evenly divided as to whether the president has strong qualities of leadership. A majority have a lot or some confidence in Bush's ability to handle a crisis, though these numbers have dropped significantly since September 11. They still think, however, that he has more honesty and integrity than most people in public life.

Q: Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling . . . ?

	Approval	
	Dec. 2005	Jan. 2005
Terrorism	52%	58%
Foreign affairs	42	47
The economy	40	50
The situation in Iraq	39	42
Immigration	28	34

Source: Gallup/CNN/USA Today, December 2005.

Q: Do you think George W. Bush has strong qualities of leadership, or not?

	Dec. 2005
Yes	49%
No	48

Q: How much confidence do you have in George W. Bush's ability to handle a crisis: a lot, some, a little, or none at all?

A lot	31%
Some	26
A little	23
None at all	19

Q: Do you think George W. Bush has more honesty and integrity than most people in public life?

Yes, more	41%
No, less	22
Same	29

Source: CBS News/*New York Times*, December 2005.



O Come All Ye Faithful

Polls show that America is a deeply religious country. Substantial majorities say they believe in God. In a late November Fox News/Opinion Dynamics poll, 67 percent said they prayed everyday, and an additional 13 percent said they prayed several times a week.

A still robust 64 percent (down from 73 percent in 1937) told Gallup recently that they are members of a church or synagogue. In 1939, when Gallup first asked the question, 41 percent of Americans said they had attended church in the last seven days. When Gallup repeated that question in 2004, 43 percent gave that response.

Americans worry that religion is losing its hold on the population. In the new Fox News poll, 60 percent said America is a less spiritual nation today than it was twenty-five years ago, while a quarter said it was more so. Seventy-seven percent said the courts had gone too far in taking religion out of public life. In another question, a near majority said religion was under attack in America today.

Q: Which one of the following is closer to your view . . . ?

Religion is under attack in America today	49%
Religion has too much influence in America today	17
The current standing of religion in America is just about right	22

Q: Around this time of year, there is talk about whether holiday decorations on public property should include a nativity scene. Some say nativity scenes should not be on public property because this violates the separation of church and state. Others say it is acceptable for nativity for scenes to be on public property because they are part of the historical celebration of Christmas. What is your view?

Nativity scenes should be allowed	83%
No	12

Source: Fox News/Opinion Dynamics, November 2005.

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New Year’s Resolutions

Slightly more than four in ten of those surveyed told Fox News/Opinion Dynamics interviewers last year that they made New Year’s resolutions. When those who had made resolutions in the previous year were asked whether they had kept them, about half said they had and half said they had not.

Current Commentary

“Presidential Campaign Financing Is Broken, but We Can Fix It”

AEI resident scholar Norman J. Ornstein warns that the campaign finance system for presidential candidates could handicap both parties in 2008.

<http://www.aei.org/publication23538>

“Pollitics”

AEI resident fellow Karlyn H. Bowman discusses the latest poll numbers on torture, good news from Iraq, China, trade, exercise, and the family dinner hour.

<http://www.aei.org/publication23539>

“Dems Need a Big Wave”

AEI research fellow John C. Fortier argues that despite Republican woes it’s still a tall order for Democrats to take back Congress.

<http://www.aei.org/publication23535>

“Three Cheers for Wal-Mart”

AEI adjunct scholar Richard Vedder and AEI research assistant Bryan O’Keefe say that much of the criticism of Wal-Mart is overblown, and that the retailer is good for America.

<http://www.aei.org/publication23455>

“Jewish Babies”

AEI senior fellow Ben Wattenberg and former AEI research assistant Jeremy Kadden discuss the implications of Jewish birthrates.

<http://www.aei.org/publication23547>

