

# AEI Political Report

## People in the News

Q: I'm going to read you the names of several individuals or groups. Please tell me whether you . . . ?

### Have a favorable opinion of



Note: Not all individuals shown.

Source: Fox News/Opinion Dynamics, February 2006.

## Oprah for President?

In its early February poll, Fox News and Opinion Dynamics threw in a few ringers with a question about presidential prospects, and they didn't fare well. Twenty-four percent thought Oprah would make a good president, and 11 percent felt that way about Donald Trump. Sixty percent thought Rudy Giuliani would, 55 percent felt that way about John McCain, and 50 percent about Hillary Clinton. Only 45 percent thought John Kerry would, and 34 percent about Al Gore.

Q: I'm going to read you a list of names—for each one, please tell me if he/she . . . ?

### Would make a good president



Source: Fox News/Opinion Dynamics, February 2006.

## AEI POLITICAL REPORT CONTRIBUTORS

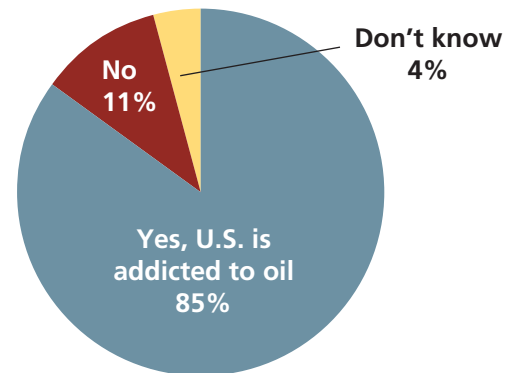
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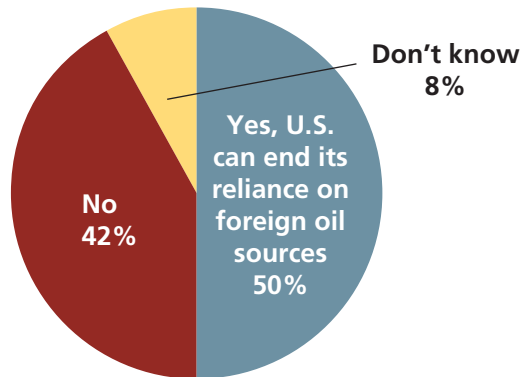
## Addicted to Oil?

In his State of the Union address, President George Bush described America as "addicted to oil." As the Pew data below show, Americans agree. People are skeptical, however, that we can end our dependence on foreign oil any time soon.

Q: Would you say the United States is addicted to oil?



Q: Do you think the United States can end its reliance on foreign oil sources within the next two decades?



Source: Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, February 2006.

Q: Do you . . . ?



Source: Gallup, February 2006.

## Iraq at Year Three: Public Unease

On the third anniversary of the Iraq war, a bare majority (51 percent) in a February Pew poll said that the United States made the right decision in using military force there, while 44 percent said we made the wrong one. In the same poll, 13 percent said our military effort was going “very well” there, 38 percent “fairly well,” 29 percent “not too well,” and 17 percent “not at all well.”

What do Americans want to do now? Gallup’s data below show that the proportion wanting to remove all our troops has almost doubled since 2003, but it is still a minority sentiment. Pew’s latest question is framed differently and finds that 50 percent want to keep U.S. troops there until “the situation has stabilized,” while 46 percent want to bring our troops home “as soon as possible.”

*Q: Which comes closest to your view about what the U.S. should do about the number of U.S. troops in Iraq . . . ?*

	December 2003	December 2005
Send more troops	14%	9%
Keep the number of troops the same as it is now	40	25
Withdraw some	27	38
Withdraw all	15	26

Source: Gallup, CNN, *USA Today*, latest that of December 2005.

## Election Reform: AEI and Brookings Look Ahead

After the 2000 election debacle, America set out to reform the way it conducts elections. In 2002, Congress enacted the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), which for the first time provides federal money to states and localities to improve their voting systems. Since the passage of HAVA, there has been a flurry of activity, including the purchase of new voting machines, the introduction of provisional voting, and the development of computerized statewide databases.

To monitor HAVA’s progress and to bring important new research on election reform to policymakers in Washington, AEI and Brookings have just launched the AEI-Brookings Election Reform Project ([www.electionreformproject.org](http://www.electionreformproject.org)). The project is funded by the John L. and James H. Knight Foundation and co-directed by AEI’s Norman J. Ornstein and Thomas Mann of Brookings. John C. Fortier of AEI is senior counselor to the project. The Election Reform Project will follow the progress of the reforms described above through the 2006 and 2008 elections.

Senator Barack Obama (D-Ill.) was the keynote speaker at the project’s inaugural event that also featured Paul DeGregorio; chairman of the Election Assistance Commission, and Deborah Markowitz, secretary of state of Vermont.

## Election Facts

- ☛ Over 20 percent of the population voted before election day in 2004, either by absentee ballot or at an early voting polling place. This number is up from about 5 percent in 1980.
- ☛ Some states have very high rates of early and absentee voting. Oregon votes 100 percent by mail, and absentee ballots in Washington State make up over 70 percent of the vote. In 2004, Texans and Tennesseans saw about 50 percent of their votes cast early at early voting polling places.
- ☛ According to an Election Data Services report, punch card voting (which produced the famous hanging and pregnant chads), lever machines, and paper voting are on the way out. About 80 percent of voters will use optical scan and electronic voting machines in 2006.
- ☛ According to a new study by Electionline.org, in the past three years, the number of states requiring all voters to show some form of identification has gone from 11 to 22.

## Democrats Rising?

For the past four years, Gallup has combined all the interviews the organization conducted each year to develop a valuable composite measure of party identification. In 2005, 47.7 percent of the sample described themselves as Democrats or leaning to the Democratic Party and 43.2 percent as Republicans or leaning to the Republican Party. This is the largest Democratic advantage (4.5 percentage points) in four years.

Using the 42,000 interviews conducted in 2005, Gallup was able to look at party identification at the state level. Republicans have a clear advantage (defined by the pollster as a lead of 3 percentage points or more) in 14 states and Democrats in 29. Last year the GOP led in 19 states, and the Democrats in 22. The five most Republican and most Democratic states are listed at the right.

Data such as these caused Washington pundit Stuart Rothenberg of *Roll Call* to suggest a "trade." Ben Nelson, a Democratic senator up for reelection in one of the most Republican-leaning states, would become a Republican, while Lincoln Chaffee, a Republican senator up for reelection in one of the most Democratic-leaning states, would become a Democrat.

### Most Republican-leaning states:

	Republican or lean-Republican percentage
Utah	60.8%
Wyoming	60.2
Nebraska	56.9
North Dakota	56.1
Idaho	53.2

### Most Democratic-leaning states:

	Democrat or lean-Democrat percentage
District of Columbia	80.3%
Rhode Island	61.1
Delaware	63.3
Massachusetts	56.7
Connecticut	55.5
New York	55.2

Source: The Gallup Organization, 2005.

## The Politics of Gadgets

Republicans tend to be wealthier than Democrats, and that fact may explain the differences in ownership of the items shown below. Republicans are more likely than Democrats, for example, to own CD and DVD players and computers. But in many areas, ownership is surprisingly similar. Virtually identical proportions of Republicans and Democrats own high definition TVs, gaming consoles, and MP3 players such as iPods.

A Gallup survey taken at about the same time as the AP/Ipsos one below found similar levels of ownership. Young people more than older ones and men more than women were more likely to have nifty stuff.

*Q: I'm going to read you a list of devices and services you might have in your home or car. For each one, please tell me if anyone in your household has or uses the device or service.*

	National	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
<b>Own</b>				
CD Player	88%	92%	83%	94%
VCR	88	88	89	87
DVD Player	82	86	76	82
Personal computer	75	81	71	76
Cell Phone	75	80	75	74
Gaming Console	39	37	36	43
Portable Gaming Device	30	31	30	32
High Definition TV	28	26	26	31
DVR Recorder, like Tivo	25	29	24	26
MP3 Player, like an iPod	24	26	21	24
Satellite Radio, like XM	14	18	12	11

Source: AP/Ipsos Public Affairs, December 2005.