

AEI Political Report

One Year Out—How the Races Looked

It's useful to look back at candidate standings a year before the election to remind ourselves how much can change. In November 1975, Ted Kennedy led all comers among the Democratic faithful in Gallup's polling, including the eventual nominee, Jimmy Carter, who barely registered in the poll at 3 percent. On only two occasions in the modern era did the eventual Democratic nominee place first in the polls among fellow Democrats a year before the election. Republican voters have coalesced around their nominee earlier than the Democrats have.

November 1975

<i>Democrats' response</i>		<i>Republicans' response</i>	
Kennedy	23%	Reagan	31%
Wallace	19	Ford	23
Humphrey	17	Rockefeller,	9
McGovern,	7	Goldwater	
Scoop Jackson		Percy	6
Carter	3		

November 1979

<i>Democrats' response</i>		<i>Republicans' response</i>	
Kennedy	45%	Reagan	35%
Carter	32	Ford	24
Brown	9	Baker	15
Scoop Jackson	4	Connally	10
McGovern	3	G. H. W. Bush,	4
		Dole	

November 1983

<i>Democrats' response</i>	
Mondale	47%
Glenn	19
Jesse Jackson,	7
McGovern	
Cranston, Askew	3

October 1987

<i>Democrats' response</i>		<i>Republicans' response</i>	
Jesse Jackson	22%	G. H. W. Bush	47%
Dukakis	14	Dole	22
Simon	8	Robertson	7
Gore	7	Haig, Kemp	4
Gephardt	5		

November 1991

<i>Democrats' response</i>	
Cuomo	33%
Brown	15
Wilder	9
Kerrey	8
Harkin	7
Clinton	6

November 1995

<i>Republicans' response</i>	
Dole	45%
Gramm	10
Buchanan	6
Forbes	5
Alexander	4

November 1999

<i>Democrats' response</i>		<i>Republicans' response</i>	
Gore	58%	G. W. Bush	68%
Bradley	33	McCain	12
		Forbes	6
		Bauer, Hatch,	2
		Keyes	

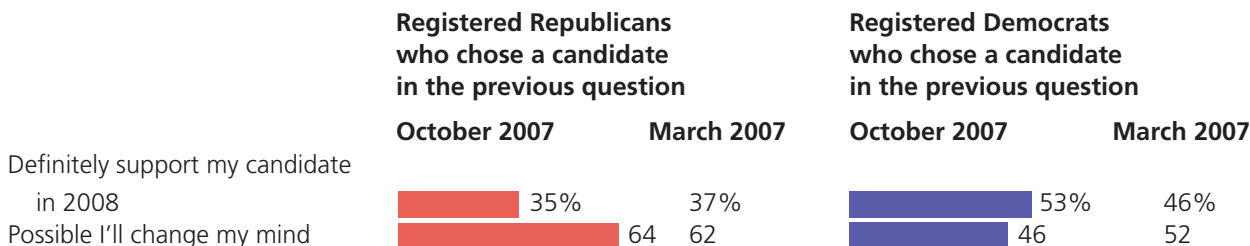
November 2003

<i>Democrats' response</i>	
Dean	16%
Lieberman	15
Clark	13
Gephardt	11
Edwards, Kerry	9

Source: The Gallup Organization.

As the CNN/ORC data below show, Democrats are more certain than Republicans that they will support their preferred candidate in the primaries. Democrats are also more certain of their candidate choice than they were in March.

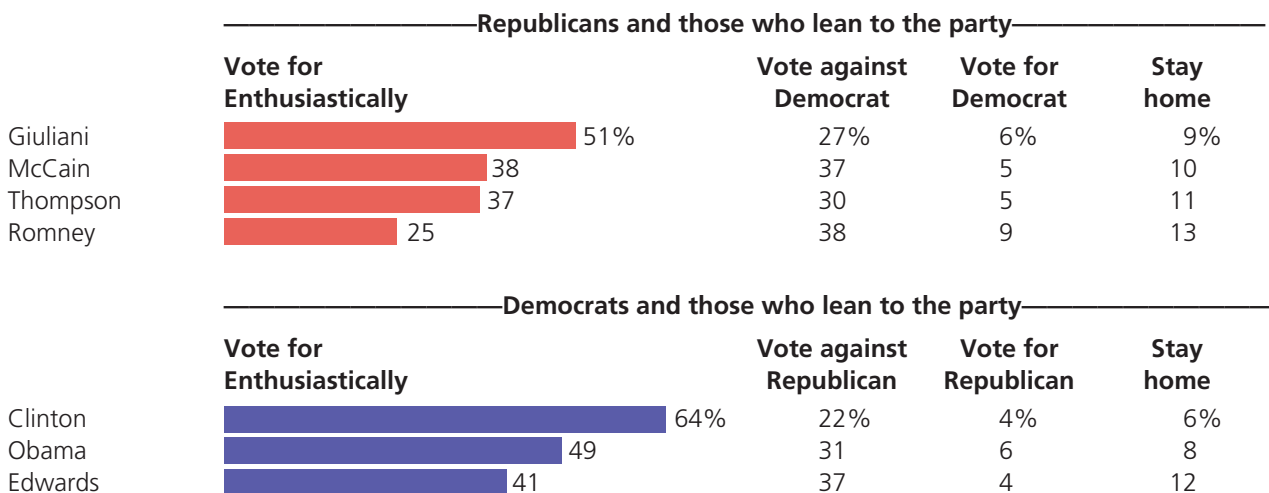
Q: *Would you say you will . . . ?*



Source: CNN/Opinion Research Corporation.

The frontrunners in both parties inspire more enthusiasm than those in second, third, or fourth place.

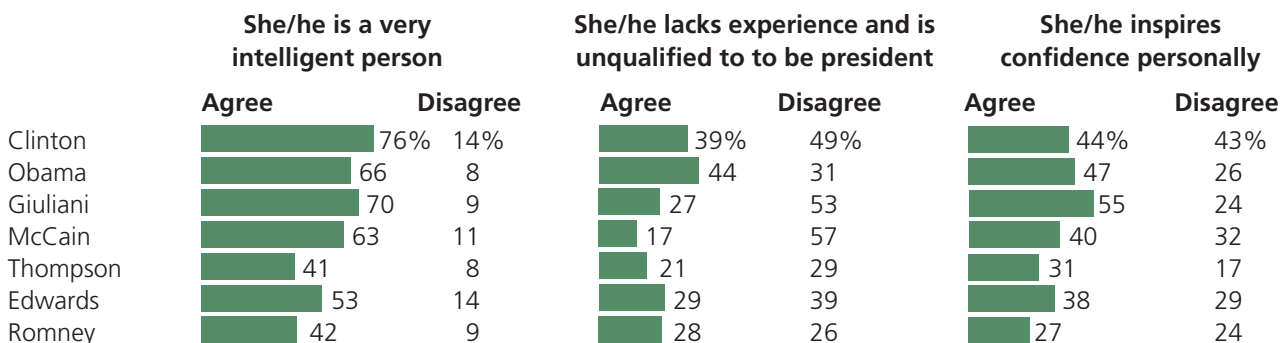
Q: *If _____ wins the _____ nomination for president, which would best describe your reaction . . . ?*



Source: The Gallup Organization, October 2007.

Most Americans think the presidential candidates are intelligent, although many of them are still not well known. McCain and Giuliani are least likely to be seen as unqualified, and Giuliani leads the group in inspiring confidence.

Q: *Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements about . . . ?*



Source: Harris Interactive, March–September 2007.

Feminists for Hillary

About one in five Americans consider themselves feminists today. The proportion rises to 26 percent among women. In polls taken over the past eighteen years, no more than a third of women have ever called themselves feminists. Clinton leads by a mile among the small group of self-described feminists.

Q: Do you consider yourself to be . . . ?

A feminist 22%
 No 75

Voter preferences

	Clinton	Giuliani
Feminists	64%	30%
Not feminists	46	48
All men	45	48
All women	57	39
Married women	48	47
National response	51	43

Source: ABC News/Washington Post, September 2007.

The Comeback Kid Is Back . . .

Q: Would you say you . . . ?

Approve of the way Bill Clinton handled his job as president 66%
 Disapprove 32

Source: ABC News/Washington Post, September 2007.

Q: Do you personally feel . . . ?

Comfortable with the idea of Bill Clinton back in the White House 60%
 Uncomfortable 30

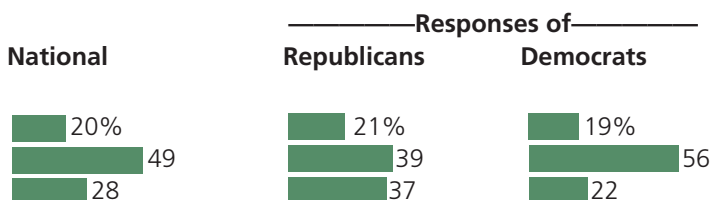
Source: ABC News/Washington Post, September 2007.

Note: A late October *Los Angeles Times*/Bloomberg poll asked a different question and found that 49 percent of registered voters thought that it would be a good thing for the country if Bill Clinton is in a position to offer advice on domestic and foreign policy issues (if Hillary wins the election), and 23 percent a bad thing. Twenty-two percent said it would not make any difference one way or another.

Q: In deciding your vote for president, is . . . ?

The candidate's personal life is more important than the candidate's positions on the issues 49%
 Less important 28
 The same 20

Source: Fox News/Opinion Dynamics, October 2007.



Contentious Clinton?

In the latest Gallup poll, Hillary Clinton is running 29 percentage points ahead of Barack Obama among Democrats, a finding that is mirrored in other national polls. She is running 22 points ahead of Obama in the latest New Hampshire poll conducted by Marist College, too. Clinton's lead nationally among Democrats has exceeded 20 percentage points in each of six Gallup polls taken since August. She's led the Democratic field in every Gallup poll this year. Among Democrats who say they are extremely likely to participate in their state's primary or caucus, her lead in the latest poll is also large.

Clinton's net favorable rating isn't as positive as Obama's or Edwards's. Her "unfavorable" ratings remain high. In a late October *Los Angeles Times*/Bloomberg poll, nearly a third of Democrats and Democratic primary/caucus voters agreed with the statement that she was "too polarizing a candidate, making it difficult for her to win the November presidential election." Fifty-two percent of Democrats disagreed.

	Favorable	Unfavorable	Net Favorable
Hillary Clinton	53%	44	+9
Barack Obama	53	32	+21
John Edwards	48	34	+14

Source: The Gallup Organization, October 2007.

Q: Do you . . . ?

Democrats' response*

Agree, Hillary Clinton is too polarizing a candidate, making it difficult for her to win the November presidential election 32%
 Disagree 52
 Don't know 16

Note: * Self-identified Democrats and Democratic primary/caucus voters.

Source: *Los Angeles Times*/Bloomberg, October 2007.

Ron Paul's Appeal

Although no one expects Ron Paul to get the Republican nod, the ten-term representative and former Libertarian Party candidate for president has developed a following and has raised more than \$8 million in his quixotic quest.

Just how large is the libertarian community in the United States? When Gallup asked in November 2006 whether people were familiar with certain terms as they related to politics, 20 percent said they were “very familiar” with the term “libertarian,” 36 percent were “somewhat familiar,” and 27 percent “not too familiar.” When those people were asked whether the term applied to them, 12 percent said it did.

The results of another Gallup polling exercise shown below classify 21 percent of the population as libertarians. A Democracy Corps (D) poll found that 45 percent of Americans were drawn to the bedrock libertarian value that “government should stop trying to tell people what to do—whether they own a gun, use an off-road vehicle, or drive an SUV,” compared to 48 percent who said government regulation of products often improves safety and protects consumers. The CATO Institute, a libertarian think tank, recently published a [study](#) on Americans and their attitudes toward libertarianism, libertarian values, and the implications for voting.

Q: Does the term libertarian . . . ?

Applies to me personally	12%
Does not	88

Source: The Gallup Organization, November 2006.

Note: Asked of those who said they were very, somewhat, or not too familiar with the term.

Q: (1) Some people think the government is trying to do too many things that should be left to individuals and business. (2) Others think that government should do more to solve our country's problems. Which comes closer to your own view? (3) Some people think the government should promote traditional values in our society. (4) Others think the government should not favor any particular set of values. Which comes closer to your own view?

Pure Liberal (2 and 4)	Populist (2 and 3)	Libertarian (1 and 4)	Pure Conservative (1 and 3)
21%	20%	21%	25%

Source: The Gallup Organization, latest that of September 2006.

Al Gore: Awards and Elections Are Different

Q: Would you like to see . . . ?

Al Gore run for president in 2008	41%
No, would not	54

Source: The Gallup Organization, October 2007.

Debating Points

AEI resident fellow [Michael Barone](#) and AEI resident scholar [Norm Ornstein](#) wrote columns recently on the subject of presidential debates. Both argue that the current system makes candidates too risk averse and contributes to a political dialogue that is well below the poverty line. They propose two different, but not mutually exclusive, approaches.

Barone [calls for](#) primary debates with the leading Democrats and Republicans together so that candidates will be forced to talk to the country as a whole and not just their respective bases. Essentially, this format would force candidates to jettison their weaker arguments and platitudes which Barone says would be easily “punctured” by the opposing party’s candidates.

Ornstein [advocates](#) using the Goldwater-Kennedy general election debate model where the nominees agree to a series of debates in different formats—some with moderators, some without—so that Americans get more than scripted answers and political “motherese.” Ornstein notes, “This kind of campaign would be a sharp departure from the usual. The times demand it.”



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Hazy Health Care Situation?

Americans trust the Democrats and Hillary Clinton more than the Republicans and other candidates to come up with good policies for the health care system. Thirty-eight percent trust Mrs. Clinton on this score, the highest of any candidate, but it's hardly a ringing endorsement.

Although both Republicans and Democrats are concerned about health care, they have different views about the system and different approaches to reform. Republicans are more likely than Democrats to believe it is the responsibility of individuals to secure their own health insurance (45 to 13 percent). In terms of reform, Republicans put more emphasis on controlling costs and Democrats on providing coverage for the uninsured. Only small numbers say that health care will not be an important issue in their vote next November or that they will only vote for a candidate who shares their views on the subject. Nearly seven in ten say a candidate's position on health care will be "just one of many important factors" that might affect their vote for president.

Q: How much do you trust each of the following to come up with good policies for improving and reforming the U.S. healthcare system?

	A great deal/ To some extent	Not much/ Not at all
Republicans	26%	58%
Democrats	39	45
Clinton	38	47
Edwards	34	45
Giuliani	31	48
McCain	26	50
Obama	36	44
Romney	18	50
Richardson	12	51
Thompson	24	46

Source: Harris Interactive, September 2007.

Q: Which of the following statements comes closest to your view . . . ?

	National	Rep.	Dem.
It is the government's responsibility to ensure that its citizens have health insurance	29%	13%	39%
It is the employer's responsibility to ensure that their employees have health insurance	23	19	19
It is the responsibility of individuals to secure their own health insurance without the help of the government or their employer	24	45	13

Source: Los Angeles Times/Bloomberg, October 2007.

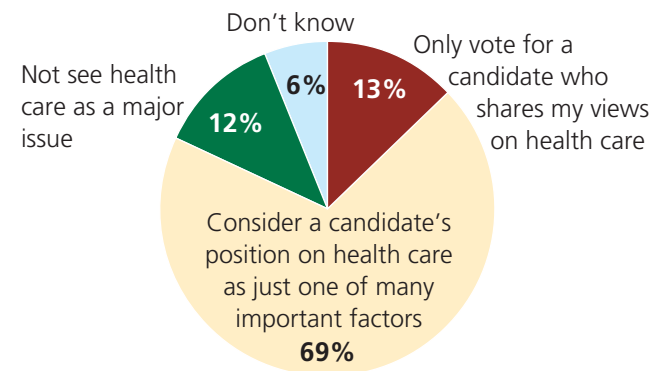
Q: Thinking about the U.S. healthcare system today, what one issue would you most like to see addressed by the presidential candidates?

	National	Rep.	Dem.
Providing coverage for people who are uninsured	30%	21%	37%
Slowing the inflation of the costs of medical care	25	33	23
Reducing the costs of prescription drugs	16	15	15
Improving the quality of medical care	11	11	9
Improving government's response to catastrophes, epidemics and other public health emergencies	7	6	8

Source: Harris Interactive, September 2007.

Note: Only the top five responses shown.

Q: Thinking about how the issue of health care might affect your vote for president, would you . . . ?

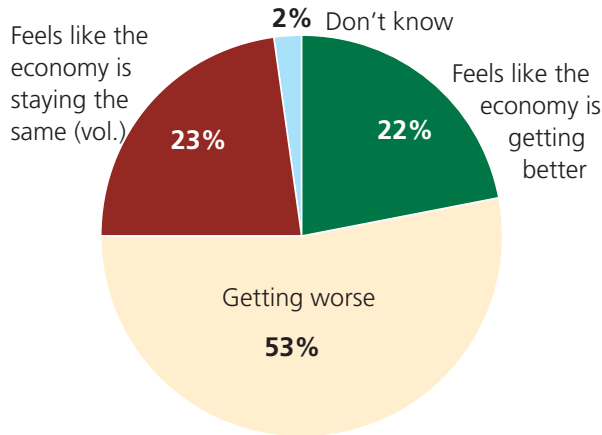


Source: PSRA/Kaiser Family Foundation, October 2007.

Note: Health care tends to rank just behind Iraq as a top issue in Campaign 2008.

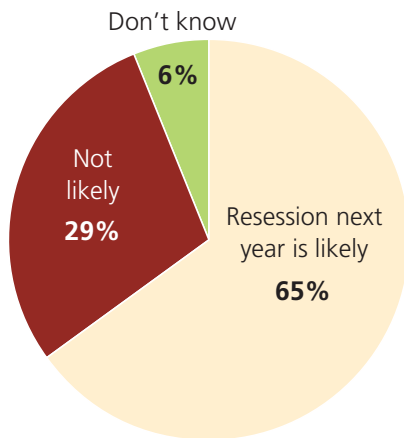
Poll Paradox? The Economy Is Getting Worse for Me, and I'm OK

Q: For you and your family . . . ?



Source: Fox News/Opinion Dynamics, October 2007.
 Note: Seventy percent of Democrats, 49 percent of independents, and 36 percent of Republicans said it felt like the economy was getting worse for them and their families.

Q: In your opinion, how likely is it that the nation could face an economic recession in the next year . . . ?



Source: Los Angeles Times/Bloomberg, October 2007.

Q: For each of the following items I read, please tell me whether you . . . ?

Feel confident about	
The future security of my job	82%
My own personal financial future	80
About making decisions about my personal financial investments	80
The U.S. stock market	65
That I am saving enough money for my retirement	62

Source: Fox News/Opinion Dynamics, October 2007.

Q: First, what, if anything, worries you most about your personal financial situation in the . . . ?

Worry about this aspect of my personal financial situation in the	Short-term		Long-term	
Income is not enough to meet expenses	11%		7%	
Health insurance/cost of healthcare	9		13	
Job security concerns/possible loss of job	7		3	
Rising cost of living/inflation	6		7	
Housing costs	4		4	
College expenses	4		6	
Taxes	3		3	
Debt (non-specific)	3		2	
Social Security benefits	3		8	
Stock market downturn/crash	3		4	
Currently unemployed/trying to find a job	2		3	
Recession	2		3	
Retirement savings/retirement income	—		18	

Source: The Gallup Organization, September 2007.
 Note: Wordings slightly varied between short-term and long-term. Responses below 3 percent not shown.

Q: Which political party do you think . . . ?



Source: Fox News/Opinion Dynamics, October 2007.

The State of Real Estate

Q: What's your impression about the real estate market in your area . . . ?

Over the past year, home prices in my area have		In the next few years, home prices in your area will	
Gone up a lot	28%	Go up a lot	17%
Gone up a little	22	Go up a little	36
Gone down a little	25	Go down a little	28
Gone down a lot	15	Go down a lot	8

Source: PSRA/Pew Research Center, September 2007.

Congress

Q: Do you . . . ?

Approve of the way Congress is handling its job	22%
Disapprove	69%

Q: Do you think Congress supports Bush's political agenda . . . ?

Too much	33%
Too little	37%
About right	19%

Source: Los Angeles Times/Bloomberg, October 2007. Note: Sample is registered voters.

Coming Back for More

As we go to press, it appears that there will be twenty-eight rematches in the 2008 House of Representative elections. In 2006, Democrats defeated twenty-two Republican incumbents on their way to a 31-seat pickup. Of the declared rematches, three (IN-09, KS-02, and NH-01) will be Republicans attempting to reclaim the seats that they lost in 2006. The other races listed here are possible rematches.

In the 1996 election after the 1994 Republican takeover of the House, only two Democratic former congressmen tried to reclaim their seats. Both won.

2008 House Race Rematches

Democrat	District	Election 2006	Kerry/Bush 2004	Republican
Diane Benson	AK-AL	40/57	36/61	Don Young
Charlie Brown	CA-04	46/49	37/61	John Doolittle
Russ Warner	CA-26	38/57	44/55	David Dreier
Joe Baca	CA-43	65/35	58/41	Scott Folkens
Dennis Spivack	DE-AL	39/57	53/46	Michael Castle
Joe Roberts	FL-01	31/69	28/72	Jeff Miller
Charlie Stuart	FL-08	46/53	45/55	Ric Keller
Christine Jennings*	FL-13	50/50	44/56	Vern Buchanan
Clint Curtis	FL-24	42/58	45/55	Tom Feeney
Larry Grant	ID-01	45/50	30/69	Bill Sali

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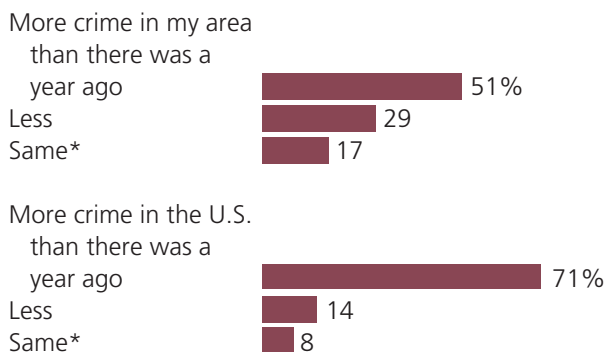
2008 House Race Rematches (continued)

Democrat	District	Election 2006	Kerry/Bush 2004	Republican
<i>Baron Hill</i>	IN-09	50/46	40/59	Mike Sodrel
<i>Nancy Boyda</i>	KS-02	51/47	39/59	Jim Ryun
Andrew Duck	MD-06	39/59	34/65	<i>Roscoe Bartlett</i>
Sharon Renier	MI-07	46/51	45/54	<i>Tim Walberg</i>
Nancy Skinner*	MI-09	46/52	49/51	<i>Joseph Knollenberg</i>
<i>Carol Shea-Porter</i>	NH-01	51/48	48/51	Jeb Bradley
Linda Stender	NJ-07	48/50	47/53	<i>Mike Ferguson</i>
Steve Harrison	NY-13	43/57	45/55	<i>Vito Fossella</i>
Dan Maffei	NY-25	49/51	50/48	<i>James Walsh</i>
Eric Massa	NY-29	48/51	52/57	<i>Randy Kuhl</i>
Larry Kissell	NC-08	50/50	45/54	<i>Robin Hayes</i>
Vic Wulsin	OH-02	49/51	36/64	<i>Jean Schmidt</i>
<i>Darlene Hooley</i>	OR-05	54/43	49/50	Mike Erickson
<i>Nick Lampson</i>	TX-22	52/42	35/64	Shelley Sekula Gibbs
Judy Feder	VA-10	41/57	44/55	<i>Frank Wolf</i>
Darcy Burner	WA-08	49/51	51/48	<i>Dave Reichert</i>
<i>Steve Kagen</i>	WI-08	51/49	44/55	John Gard*
Gary Trauner*	WY-AL	48/48	26/69	<i>Barbara Cubin</i>

Note: Incumbents indicated by *italics*. * Denotes likely-to-run but still unannounced rematch candidate.

More Crime?

Q: Is there more crime in your area than there was a year ago?



Note: * Means volunteered response.
Source: The Gallup Organization, October 2007.

A Center Right Country

Q: How would you describe your own political philosophy—conservative, moderate, or liberal?

	Political philosophy		
	Conservative	Moderate	Liberal
1970s	32	40	18
1980s	36	40	18
1990s	38	41	18
2000s (so far)	35	40	18

Source: Harris Interactive, February 2007.



Cheney's Influence

Q: Do you think Dick Cheney has . . . ?

Too much influence	36%
Too little	17
About the right amount	35

Source: Fox News/Opinion Dynamics, September 2007.

Conspiracy Theories: Oliver Stone Is Not Alone

Conspiracy theories are alive and well in America. Roughly 70 percent of Americans told ABC News in 2003 that there was a cover up of John F. Kennedy's assassination. Fifty-five percent think it is very or somewhat likely that the government is withholding information on the existence of UFOs according to a Fox News/Opinion Dynamics question from 1998. It should come as no surprise, then, that a sizeable minority of Americans believe in conspiracy theories about 9/11.

Q: There are three main schools of thought regarding the 9/11 attacks. The first theory is the official story, and maintains that nineteen Arab fundamentalists executed a surprise attack which caught U.S. intelligence and military forces off guard. The second theory known as *Let It Happen* argues that certain elements in the U.S. government knew the attacks were coming but consciously let them proceed for various political, military, and economic motives; and the third theory *Made It Happen* contends that certain U.S. government elements actively planned or assisted some aspects of the attacks. Based upon your knowledge of 9/11 events and their aftermath, which theory are you more likely to agree with?

Believe official story about 9/11	64%
Certain elements in U.S. government let it happen	26
Elements in the U.S. government actively planned and assisted	5

Source: Zogby International, August 2007.

Q: If a terrorist attack were to happen before the 2008 presidential election, do you think it would . . . ?

Help a Democrat win	Help a Republican win	No difference
36%	35%	18%

Source: Fox News/Opinion Dynamics, September 2007.

A Little Honesty about Race, Religion, and Obesity

Q: If you honestly assessed yourself, would you say that you have at least some feelings of prejudice against . . . ?

Yes, have some feelings of prejudice against

Overweight people*	35%
Racist feelings	34
Muslims	27
Hispanics	10
Jews	6

Source: ABC News/*Good Morning America*, September 2007.

Note: * Question wording was "negative feelings" not "feelings of prejudice."

Current Commentary

"Tax Reform Should Move to Congress' Front Burner in 2008"

AEI resident scholar Norm Ornstein discusses the ins and outs of tax reform in the near future. His assessment: tax reform is necessary and possible but not likely in the immediate future.

<http://www.aei.org/publication27010/>

"Wrong Man for the Job"

AEI research fellow John Fortier argues that Michael Mukasey should not be attorney general.

<http://www.aei.org/publication27012/>

"Numbers: Aging, SCHIP, China, and More"

AEI senior fellow Karlyn Bowman analyzes the latest public opinion data, focusing on the elderly, SCHIP, China, the president's ratings, and Al Gore.

<http://www.american.com/archive/2007/october-10-07/numbers-10-19-07>