

THE FIELD POLL

THE INDEPENDENT AND NON-PARTISAN SURVEY
OF PUBLIC OPINION ESTABLISHED IN 1947 AS
THE CALIFORNIA POLL BY MERVIN FIELD

Field Research Corporation

222 Sutter Street, Suite 700
San Francisco, CA 94108-4411
(415) 392-5763 FAX: (415) 434-2541
EMAIL: fieldpoll@field.com
www.field.com/fieldpollonline

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Release #2200

Release Date: **Sunday, June 4, 2006**

**CALIFORNIANS' APPRAISALS OF
BUSH'S JOB PERFORMANCE NOW
LOWER THAN ANY PRESIDENT SINCE
NIXON. CONGRESS ALSO RATED
VERY NEGATIVELY. FEINSTEIN
REMAINS STRONG FAVORITE FOR RE-
ELECTION.**

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by Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

The views that California voters have of George W. Bush's performance as President has reached yet another new low. The latest *Field Poll* finds just 28% approve of the job Bush is doing, while 65% disapprove.

Bush's 28% level of approval is the lowest rating given to any sitting U.S. President in California since August 1974, shortly before Richard Nixon resigned from office following the Watergate scandal.

The state's voters give similarly low job marks to the U.S. Congress, with 23% approving and 64% disapproving. While there are large partisan differences in the views that voters have of Bush, there is more of a bipartisan consensus with regard to the poor performance of Congress. Contributing to these appraisals is the view held by two in three voters (64%) that the direction of the U.S. is seriously off on the wrong track.

The electorate's overall negative assessment of the Congress does not carry over to its views about California's senior Senator, Dianne Feinstein. When she is paired against Republican former State Senator Richard Mountjoy in a simulated November general election match-up, Feinstein is favored for re-election by a nearly two to one margin (54% to 28%).

These are the findings from the latest *Field Poll* conducted in late-May among a random sample of 986 registered voters statewide.

Trend of Bush's job performance in office

Table 1 summarizes the trend of California voter appraisals of Bush's job performance from twenty separate *Field Polls* taken since Bush took office in January 2001. The President's high point came shortly after the 9/11 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, when greater than seven in ten Californians approved of the way he was performing his duties. However, Bush's overall approval declined precipitously throughout 2004 and 2005 and has continued this year.

Table 1
Trend of overall job appraisals of George W. Bush as President
(among California registered voters)

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Late-May 2006	28%	65	7
April 2006	32%	62	6
February 2006	38%	56	6
Late October 2005	34%	60	6
August 2005	38%	55	7
June 2005	36%	56	8
February 2005	41%	56	3
October 2004	43%	54	3
August 2004	41%	55	4
May 2004	43%	52	5
February 2004	43%	51	6
January 2004	52%	42	6
September 2003	46%	48	6
August 2003	50%	45	5
July 2003	51%	43	6
July 2002	63%	28	9
January 2002	72%	21	7
September 2001 (post-9/11 attack)	74%	16	10
September 2001 (pre-9/11 attack)	41%	48	11
May 2001	42%	44	14

* Less than 1/2 of 1%.

Comparing the lowest *Field Poll* ratings of all U.S. Presidents since Nixon

Bush's current 28% approval rating is now lower than the lowest rating given his father in July 1992, when 37% approved of President George Herbert Walker Bush's performance in office, shortly before his re-election defeat to Bill Clinton. It is also lower than the 33% approval rating which Californians gave to Jimmy Carter in July 1980, prior to his losing the Presidency to Ronald Reagan.

However, Bush's poor marks haven't reached the record low job appraisal given to Nixon in August 1974, shortly before he resigned from office.

Table 2
Californians' lowest ratings of previous U.S. Presidents since Richard Nixon
(among California registered voters)

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
<u>George W. Bush (R)</u> Late-May 2006	28%	65	7
<u>Bill Clinton (D)</u> August 1993	45%	52	3
<u>George H.W. Bush (R)</u> July 1992	37%	62	1
<u>Ronald Reagan (R)</u> March 1982	53%	47	*
<u>Jimmy Carter (D)</u> July 1980	33%	66	1
<u>Gerald Ford (R)</u> November 1975	47%	51	2
<u>Richard Nixon (R)</u> August 1974	24%	70	6

* Less than 1/2 of 1% (R) denotes Republican (D) denotes Democrat.

Note: For surveys conducted prior to October 1994, job performance was measured among all adults using a five-point scale, which was converted to the two-point approve-disapprove scale for comparative purposes.

Subgroup analysis of Bush's performance

Democrats are nearly uniform in their disapproval of Bush's performance as President, with 86% disapproving and just 10% approving. Non-partisans are also very negative in their assessments of Bush, with 74% rating him negatively and 16% positively. Only Republicans continue to view the President positively overall, although their impressions are now less than two to one positive (59% to 33%).

All other major subgroups of the state's voting population rate Bush more negatively than positively, with the exception of political conservatives, who approve by a 56% to 36% margin. By contrast, just 6% of political liberals approve of the President's performance in office, while 93% disapprove.

Table 3
Current job appraisal of President Bush – by subgroups
(among California registered voters)

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Statewide	28%	65	7
<u>Party</u>			
Democrats	10%	86	4
Republicans	59%	33	8
Non-partisans/others	16%	74	10
<u>Area</u>			
Coastal California	24%	69	7
Inland California	39%	56	5
<u>Region</u>			
Los Angeles County	25%	67	8
Other Southern California	33%	60	7
Central Valley	39%	54	7
San Francisco Bay Area	16%	77	7
Other Northern California*	31%	66	3
<u>Gender</u>			
Men	30%	64	6
Women	27%	66	7
<u>Age</u>			
18-29	30%	65	5
30-39	23%	71	6
40-49	29%	65	6
50-64	24%	66	10
65 or older	35%	61	4
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>			
White (non-Hispanic)	30%	65	5
Latino	25%	64	11
Black/African-American*	9%	90	1
Asian/other	32%	54	14
<u>Political ideology</u>			
Conservative	56%	36	8
Middle-of-the-road	19%	72	9
Liberal	6%	93	1
<u>Education</u>			
High school graduate or less	36%	55	9
Some college/trade school	30%	65	5
College graduate	25%	66	9
Post graduate work	19%	77	4

* Small sample base.

Congressional job appraisals also near record low

California voters also hold a very negative view of the job the U.S. Congress is doing. Currently, just 23% approve, while 64% disapprove of its performance. These ratings are very similar to those observed in April, and are among the lowest ratings ever given that institution since *The Field Poll* began measuring the job performance of the U.S. Congress in 1992.

One of the distinguishing features of voter impressions of Congress is its bi-partisan consensus. Not only do 70% of Democrats disapprove of the job the nation's law-making body is doing, but about six in ten Republicans (59%) and non-partisans (61%) also disapprove.

Table 4
Overall job performance of the U.S. Congress
(among California registered voters)

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Late-May 2006	23%	64	13
April 2006	24%	66	10
August 2004	33%	52	15
April 2003	50%	39	11
April 2002	48%	39	13
January 2002	54%	33	13
December 2001	57%	32	11
May 2001	51%	38	11
January 2001	53%	35	12
August 2000	54%	34	12
June 2000	40%	48	12
February 2000	42%	42	16
October 1999	30%	60	10
March 1999	37%	54	9
April 1998	44%	40	16
November 1997	31%	59	10
August 1997	38%	53	9
May 1997	31%	55	4
February 1997	36%	49	15
February 1996	25%	68	7
May 1995	44%	51	5
September 1994	32%	62	6
February 1993	33%	65	2
September 1992	33%	65	2
March 1992	28%	71	1
January 1992	32%	66	2
<u>Party (Late May 2006)</u>			
Democrats	18%	70	12
Republicans	29%	59	12
Non-partisans/others	22%	61	17

Note: For surveys conducted prior to February 1996, job performance was measured among all adults using a five-point scale, which was converted to the two-point approve-disapprove scale for comparative purposes.

Two in three believe U.S. is heading in wrong direction

Contributing to the very negative appraisals that California voters have of the President and the Congress is the fact that nearly two in three (64%) believe the country is seriously off on the wrong track, while just 28% feel it is moving in the right direction.

These findings are similar to those found in April and are also among the poorest assessments of the country's overall direction since 1992, when the U.S. was in the midst of a prolonged recession.

Table 5
Are things in the U.S. generally going in the right direction, or
do you feel things are seriously off on the wrong track?
(among California registered voters)

	<u>Wrong track</u>	<u>Right direction</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Late-May 2006	64%	28	8
April 2006	64%	26	10
February 2006	55%	36	9
Late October 2005	60%	30	10
August 2005	60%	33	7
June 2005	58%	34	8
February 2005	57%	36	7
October 2004	58%	38	4
August 2004	56%	38	6
May 2004	54%	37	9
February 2004	52%	35	13
January 2004	44%	47	9
September 2003	49%	44	7
August 2003	50%	44	6
July 2003	50%	43	7
September 2002	41%	47	12
July 2002	44%	47	9
January 2002	26%	60	14
December 2001	27%	68	5
September 2001 (pre-9/11 attack)	49%	43	8
January 2001	34%	55	11
2000 (average)	25%	67	8
1999 (average)	37%	54	9
1998 (average)	32%	57	11
1997 (average)	45%	44	11
1996 (average)	49%	34	17
1995 (average)	54%	33	13
1994 (average)	50%	41	9
1993 (average)	50%	42	8
1992 (average)	82%	16	2
<u>Party (Late May 2006)</u>			
Democrats	78%	15	7
Republicans	46%	47	5
Non-partisans/others	66%	23	11

Feinstein holds near two to one lead over her Republican challenger for re-election

Despite the low assessments that voters have of the Congress, Californians appear inclined to re-elect U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein this year. When matched against her GOP challenger, former State Senator Richard Mountjoy, in a simulated November general election match-up, the incumbent holds a large 54% to 28% lead. These results are similar to two prior measures between Feinstein and Mountjoy dating back to February of this year.

Table 6
November general election preferences between
Feinstein and Mountjoy for U.S. Senate
(among likely general election voters)

	<u>Feinstein (D)</u>	<u>Mountjoy (R)</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Undecided</u>
Total statewide – Late May	54%	28	3	15
– April	59%	31	2	8
– February	56%	28	1	15
<u>Party</u>				
Democrats	83%	4	2	11
Republicans	21%	60	3	16
Non-partisans/others	49%	28	3	20
<u>Area</u>				
Coastal counties	58%	25	2	15
Inland counties	46%	37	3	14
<u>Region</u>				
Los Angeles County	59%	20	4	15
Other Southern California	44%	39	2	15
Central Valley	48%	38	1	13
San Francisco Bay Area	68%	18	3	11
Other Northern California*	53%	29	8	10
<u>Political ideology</u>				
Conservative	23%	61	3	13
Moderate	63%	16	2	19
Liberal	84%	4	4	8
<u>Gender</u>				
Male	50%	36	4	10
Female	58%	22	3	17
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>				
White non-Hispanic	51%	32	2	15
Latino*	65%	15	4	16
Black/African-American*	80%	5	6	9
Asian/other*	53%	29	3	15

* Small sample base. (D) denotes Democrat (R) denotes Republican

Note: All subgroups are from Late May 2006 survey.

Information About The Survey

Sample Details

The findings in this report are based on a random sample survey of 986 Californians registered to vote. Interviewing was conducted in English and Spanish between the period May 23-31, 2006. Findings in the U.S. Senate race are based on 702 likely voters in the November general election.

Telephone households were sampled using a random digit dial methodology, which randomly selects operating landline telephone exchanges within all area codes serving California households in proportion to population. Within each exchange, random samples of telephone numbers are created by adding random digits to each selected telephone exchange. This method gives each phone listing an equal chance of being selected and permits access to all landline telephone numbers both listed and unlisted.

According to statistical theory, 95% of the time results from the overall registered voter sample have a sampling error of +/- 3.2 percentage points, while findings relating to the U.S. Senate election have a sampling error of +/- 3.8 percentage points. There are other possible sources of error in any survey other than sampling variability. Different results could occur because of differences in question wording, sampling, or sequencing or through undetected omissions or errors in interviewing or data processing. Extensive efforts were made to minimize such potential errors.

Questions Asked

Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling his job as President?

Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way the U.S. Congress is doing its job?

Thinking about the country overall, do you think things in the U.S. are generally going in the right direction, or do you feel things are seriously off on the wrong track?

ASKED OF LIKELY VOTERS IN THE GENERAL ELECTION:

If the November general election for U.S. Senate were being held today and the candidates were Republican, Immigration Control Consultant Richard Mountjoy and Democrat, incumbent U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein, for whom would you vote for U.S. Senate – Mountjoy or Feinstein?