

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  
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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:  
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**Public Wants More Coverage on Issues, Less on Fundraising**  
**POLITICAL DIVIDE IN VIEWS OF CAMPAIGN COVERAGE**

At this early stage of the 2008 campaign, about half of the public believes that press coverage of the Democratic and Republican presidential candidates has been fair. But there are sizable partisan differences in evaluations of campaign coverage. Notably, a plurality of Republicans believes the press has gone too easy on Democratic candidates.

Fully 45% of Republicans say that the press has been too easy in the way it has covered Democratic presidential candidates, while 38% say that the coverage has been fair. By contrast, only about a quarter of Democrats (24%) say the press has gone too easy in covering GOP candidates; most Democrats (53%) believe the coverage of the opposition candidates has been fair.

A similar, though less dramatic, pattern is evident in partisans' views of press coverage of their own party's candidates. About half of Republicans (47%) say that coverage of GOP candidates has been fair, but a sizable minority (30%) believes it has been too tough. Democrats are more satisfied with coverage of the Democratic presidential field; 58% say it has been fair, compared with just 14% who say it has been too tough.

<b>Republicans More Critical of Campaign Coverage</b>				
<i>Press coverage of</i>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Rep</u>	<u>Dem</u>	<u>Ind</u>
<i>GOP candidates has been...</i>	%	%	%	%
Too easy	20	9	24	21
Too tough	15	30	7	14
Fair	48	47	53	47
Don't know	<u>17</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>18</u>
	100	100	100	100
<i>Press coverage of</i>				
<i>Dem candidates has been...</i>				
Too easy	25	45	14	23
Too tough	9	3	14	10
Fair	50	38	58	52
Don't know	<u>16</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>15</u>
	100	100	100	100

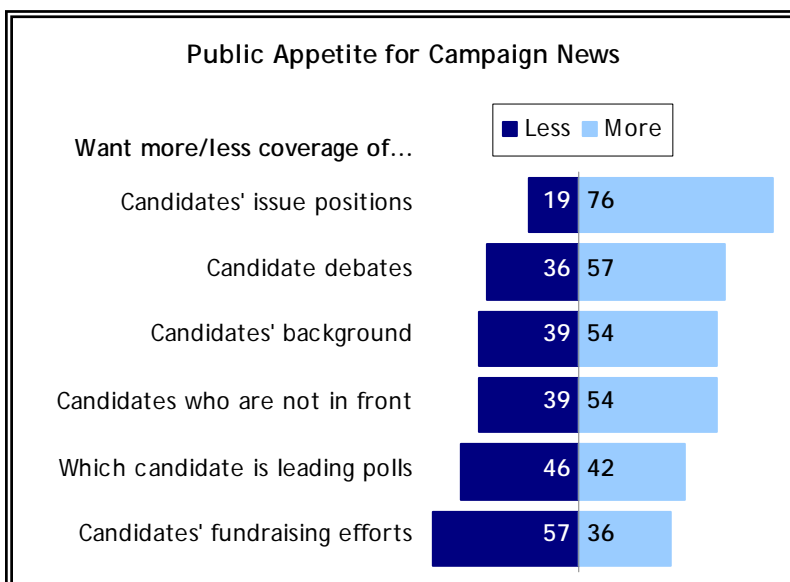
These findings are based on the most recent installment of the weekly *News Interest Index*, an ongoing project of the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press. The index, building on the Center's longstanding research into public attentiveness to major news stories, examines news interest as it relates to the news media's agenda. The weekly survey is conducted in conjunction with The Project for Excellence in Journalism's *News Coverage Index*, which

monitors the news reported by major newspaper, television, radio and online news outlets on an ongoing basis.

The survey shows that Americans want more coverage of a number of aspects of the 2008 campaign, especially of the candidates’ positions on the issues. Roughly three-quarters of the public (76%) say they would like to see more coverage of candidates’ positions on the issues.

In addition to hearing more about policy issues, majorities want more coverage about the candidates’ debates (57%), and their personal backgrounds and experiences (54%).

In a campaign in which there are unusually crowded fields in both parties – and with the press devoting most coverage to the frontrunners – 54% also say they want to hear more about “candidates who are not frontrunners.”



The public shows less appetite for some other aspects of campaign coverage – notably, which candidate is ahead in the polls, and the candidates’ fundraising efforts. Slightly more say they want *less* coverage about who is leading in the polls than say they want more coverage of this (46% vs. 42%). Fully 57% say they want less coverage of candidate fundraising, compared with just 36% who want to hear more about fundraising efforts.

### Partisans Agree on Issue Coverage

Large majorities of independents (78%), Democrats (76%) and Republicans (73%) agree that they would like to see more press coverage of the candidates’ stances on issues. Majorities of all three groups also want more coverage of debates, candidates’ backgrounds, and the candidates who are not frontrunners.

<i>Like to see more coverage of...</i>	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%
Candidates’ issue positions	73	76	78
Candidate debates	57	61	56
Candidates’ personal backgrounds	51	61	50
Candidates who are not frontrunners	57	52	56
Which candidate is leading in polls	37	54	38
Candidates’ fundraising efforts	25	45	35

However, Democrats (54%) are much more likely than Republicans (37%) or independents (38%) to say they would like to see more coverage of which candidate is ahead in the polls. And while there is fairly tepid interest across the political spectrum in coverage of candidate fundraising, 45% of Democrats say they want more coverage of the campaign money chase compared with 35% of independents and 25% of Republicans.

## About the News Interest Index

The *News Interest Index* is a weekly survey conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press aimed at gauging the public's interest in and reaction to major news events.

This project has been undertaken in conjunction with the Project for Excellence in Journalism's *News Coverage Index*, an ongoing content analysis of the news. The News Coverage Index catalogues the news from top news organizations across five major sectors of the media: newspapers, network television, cable television, radio and the internet. Each week (from Sunday through Friday) PEJ will compile this data to identify the top stories for the week. The News Interest Index survey will collect data from Friday through Monday to gauge public interest in the most covered stories of the week.

Results for the weekly surveys are based on telephone interviews among a nationwide sample of approximately 1,000 adults, 18 years of age or older, conducted under the direction of ORC (Opinion Research Corporation). For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling is plus or minus 3.5 percentage points.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls, and that results based on subgroups will have larger margins of error.

For more information about the Project for Excellence in Journalism's News Coverage Index, go to [www.journalism.org](http://www.journalism.org).

## About the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press

The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press is an independent opinion research group that studies attitudes toward the press, politics and public policy issues. We are sponsored by The Pew Charitable Trusts and are one of six projects that make up the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan "fact tank" that provides information on the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world.

The Center's purpose is to serve as a forum for ideas on the media and public policy through public opinion research. In this role it serves as an important information resource for political leaders, journalists, scholars, and public interest organizations. All of our current survey results are made available free of charge.

All of the Center's research and reports are collaborative products based on the input and analysis of the entire Center staff consisting of:

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**PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS**  
**MAY 24-27, 2007 NEWS INTEREST INDEX OMNIBUS SURVEY**  
**FINAL TOPLINE**  
**N=1,011**

**ROTATE Q.3 AND Q.4**

Q.3 Would you say the press has been too easy, too tough, or fair in the way it has covered the Republican candidates for the 2008 presidential election?

20 Too easy  
 15 Too tough  
 48 Fair  
 17 Don't know/Refused (VOL.)  
 100

Q.4 Would you say the press has been too easy, too tough, or fair in the way it has covered the Democratic candidates for the 2008 presidential election?

25 Too easy  
 9 Too tough  
 50 Fair  
 16 Don't know/Refused (VOL.)  
 100

Q.5 Still thinking about the 2008 presidential campaign, would you like to see MORE coverage or LESS coverage of [INSERT ITEM; ROTATE]? How about, [INSERT ITEM; ROTATE] - would you like to see MORE coverage of this or LESS coverage of this?

		<u>More coverage</u>	<u>Less coverage</u>	<u>(VOL) Same amount</u>	<u>DK/ Refused</u>
a.	The candidates' personal backgrounds and experiences	54	39	4	3=100
	June, 2000 <sup>1</sup>	42	50	4	4=100
	October, 1991	46	41	8	5=100
b.	The candidates' positions on issues	76	19	3	2=100
	June, 2000 <sup>2</sup>	85	9	3	3=100
	October, 1991	80	11	5	4=100
c.	Which candidate is leading in the latest polls	42	46	6	6=100
	June, 2000	44	42	6	8=100
d.	The candidates who are not frontrunners	54	39	4	3=100
e.	The candidates' fundraising efforts	36	57	3	4=100
f.	The candidate debates	57	36	5	2=100
	June, 2000 <sup>3</sup>	64	28	5	3=100
	October, 1991	58	28	9	5=100

<sup>1</sup> In June, 2000 and October, 1991 the question asked about: "The candidates discussing their personal backgrounds and experiences."  
<sup>2</sup> In June, 2000 and October, 1991 the question asked about: "The candidates discussing their position on issues."  
<sup>3</sup> In June, 2000 and October, 1991 the question asked about: "The candidates debating each other."