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**For The People & The Press**

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**A Year Later...**

**PUBLIC DISSATISFIED WITH DEMOCRATIC LEADERS, BUT STILL HAPPY  
THEY WON**

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## A Year Later...

### PUBLIC DISSATISFIED WITH DEMOCRATIC LEADERS, BUT STILL HAPPY THEY WON

A year after the Democratic Party won control of both houses of Congress, Americans are increasingly dissatisfied with the party's congressional leaders. Just 31% approve of their job performance, down 10 points since February.

Despite these tepid ratings, most Americans (54%) say that they are happy that the Democrats won control of Congress in last year's elections. That represents a modest decline since last November, but positive views of the Democratic congressional victory have remained stable since March. At least in part, this reflects the fact that Republican leaders are blamed about as often as Democratic leaders for Congress' lack of productivity.

#### Disapproval of Democratic Leaders, Yet Most Still Happy They Won

	Feb 2007	Apr 2007	Jul 2007	Oct 2007
<i>Job of congressional Democratic leaders</i>	%	%	%	%
Approve	41	36	33	31
Disapprove	36	43	54	54
Don't know/Refused	<u>23</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>15</u>
	100	100	100	100
	Nov 2006	Mar 2007	Jul 2007	Oct 2007
<i>Happy Democrats won control of Congress?</i>	%	%	%	%
Happy	60	54	50	54
Unhappy	24	32	35	29
Don't know/Refused	<u>16</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>17</u>
	100	100	100	100

The latest national survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, conducted Oct. 17-23 among 2,007 adults, finds that the public gives Congress low marks for productivity. Overall, 43% say the current Congress has accomplished less than recent sessions, while just 5% say it has accomplished more; 42% say it has accomplished about the same as past sessions. These ratings are comparable with those for the Republican-led Congress in 2006, shortly before it was voted out of power.

Unlike last year, however, the public apportions the blame for Congress's perceived lack of productivity fairly evenly. Among those who say Congress has been less productive than in the past, 26% blame Democratic leaders, up from just 10% a year ago. But about as many (30%) blame Republican leaders, while 34% blame both parties. In October 2006, fully 59% blamed Republican leaders for Congress accomplishing less than usual.

#### Congress No More Productive, Blame More Evenly Spread

	Oct 2006	Oct 2007
<i>Congress has accomplished...</i>	%	%
More than usual	6	5
Less than usual	39	43
About the same	47	42
Don't know/Refused	<u>8</u>	<u>10</u>
	100	100
<i>If Congress did less, who is to blame?*</i>		
Republican leaders	59	30
Democratic leaders	10	26
Both (Vol)	21	34
Neither/Other (Vol)	4	5
Don't know/Refused	<u>6</u>	<u>5</u>
	100	100

\* Based on those who say Congress has accomplished less than usual.

## Dem Leaders Lose Favor

A majority of Americans (54%) disapprove of the job Democratic congressional leaders are doing, up sharply from February (36%) but consistent with July. Opinions of the Democratic congressional leadership mirror opinions of Republican congressional leaders in mid-to-late 2006. In October 2006, shortly before the power-shifting election, 33% approved of Republican congressional leaders, while 56% disapproved.

	Feb <u>2007</u>	Apr <u>2007</u>	Jul <u>2007</u>	Oct <u>2007</u>
<i>Disapprove of Dem cong leaders</i>	%	%	%	%
Total	36	43	54	54
Republican	58	66	79	76
Democrat	16	19	25	35
Independent	41	49	63	56

Though just more than half of Democrats (51%) approve of what their party's leaders are doing, disapproval has more than doubled (16% to 35%) among Democrats between February and October, and half of that increase emerged between July and October. As the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress approaches the end of its first year, 56% of independents disapprove, up from 41% in February. More than three-quarters (76%) of Republicans disapprove of Democratic congressional leaders (up 18 points from February).

A majority of Americans (54%) say they are happy that the Democratic Party won control of Congress. As expected, there continue to be large partisan differences in opinions about the outcome of last year's elections; 87% of Democrats are happy that the Democratic Party wrested control of Congress from the GOP, compared with just 16% of Republicans. Half of independents say they are happy that the Democratic Party gained control of Congress, although most independents (56%) disapprove of the job performance of Democratic congressional leaders.

## Independents Blame Both Parties

Last year, the public gave the Republican-led Congress poor marks for productivity, and the ratings for the current Congress are equally low. Those who believe Congress has accomplished less than in the past are more divided than in October 2006 in their view of which party is to blame for the lack of productivity.

Compared with last year, independents are much more likely to say both parties are at fault: 49% volunteer that both parties' leaders are responsible for Congress getting less done, nearly double the number in October 2006 (27%). Notably, only 18% of independents blame Democratic leaders; that is only a modest increase from October 2006 (11%), when Democrats were still in the minority.

Most Democrats who think the current Congress has gotten less done put the responsibility on Republicans (58%). Last year, when Republicans led both houses of Congress, 84% of Democrats blamed GOP leaders in Congress for its low productivity. Very few Democrats who think Capitol Hill accomplishments are down put the responsibility on their party's leaders: 6% do in 2007, up from 2% in 2006. However, there has been a large increase in the proportion of Democrats volunteering that both parties are to blame: 24% say so now, up from 10% in 2006.

	Rep leaders	Dem leaders	(Vol) Both	(Vol) Neither/ Other	DK
	%	%	%	%	%
<i>October 2007</i>					
Total	30	26	34	5	5=100
Republican	9	61	26	1	3=100
Democrat	58	6	24	7	5=100
Independent	22	18	49	7	4=100
<i>October 2006</i>					
Total	59	10	21	4	6=100
Republican	16	39	38	3	4=100
Democrat	84	2	10	2	2=100
Independent	46	11	27	7	9=100

Based on those who say Congress has accomplished less than usual.

As expected, Republicans are more critical of the Democratic-led Congress than they were in assessing the Republican-led Congress a year earlier: 61% of Republicans who think this Congress has accomplished less than recent predecessors blame Democratic leaders for it. By comparison, just 16% of Republicans blamed the ruling Republican leaders last year, while 39% blamed Democratic leaders. About one-in-four Republicans (26%) say both parties are to blame, down from 38% in 2006.

### More Favor Dems Getting Tougher on Iraq

The proportion of Americans saying Democratic leaders in Congress are not going far enough in challenging President Bush's Iraq policies has been increasing fairly steadily since March, when 40% expressed this view; the October figure is 47%. The remainder of the public is divided over whether Democratic leaders have gone too far (21%) or have taken an approach that is about right (23%).

Partisan differences on this question are stark: Almost two-thirds of Democrats (65%) say party leaders are not going far enough in challenging the administration's Iraq policies, up nine points since March.

Just 21% of Republicans share this view. Among independents, 48% say Democrats are not challenging President Bush's policies on Iraq enough, while 19% say Democratic leaders are going too far and 23% say they are handling the situation about right.

<i>In challenging Bush about Iraq, Dem leaders are going...</i>	Mar 2007	Jun 2007	Jul 2007	Sep 2007	Oct 2007
	%	%	%	%	%
Too far	23	22	29	22	21
Not far enough	40	41	38	42	47
About right	30	25	24	25	23
Don't know	7	12	9	11	9
	100	100	100	100	100

## Party Images

In our year-ahead report on the 2008 election, the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press found that the Democratic Party continues to hold substantial advantages on a number of traits related to empathy, the ability to bring about needed change, managerial competence and honesty. For the most part, these advantages remain about as large as they were in October 2006, despite the low grades that the public gives for the performance of Democratic congressional leaders. (See “A Year Ahead, Republicans Face Difficult Political Terrain,” Oct. 31, 2007).

On the specific question of which party is better able to manage the federal government, the Democratic Party holds a 12-point advantage over the GOP; that is about the same lead the Democratic Party held on this trait a year ago, though somewhat narrower than its advantage in March of this year. During the last presidential campaign, in July 2004, about as many people said the Republican Party could better manage the federal government as said the Democratic Party (37% Republican Party/40% Democratic Party).

Democrats' Continuing Image Advantage				
<i>Which party...</i>	Dem	Rep	Other/	<i>Dem</i>
Is concerned	<u>Party</u>	<u>Party</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>adv.</u>
about people like me	%	%	%	
October 2007	54	25	21=100	+29
March 2007	55	26	19=100	+29
Oct 2006	55	27	18=100	+28
July 2004	50	30	20=100	+20
<b>Can bring</b>				
<b>needed change</b>				
October 2007	48	26	26=100	+22
March 2007	52	26	22=100	+26
Oct 2006	48	28	24=100	+20
July 2004	46	35	19=100	+11
<b>Can better manage</b>				
<b>the government</b>				
October 2007	44	32	24=100	+12
March 2007	47	31	22=100	+16
Oct 2006	44	34	22=100	+10
April 2006	39	35	26=100	+4
Oct 2005	41	35	24=100	+6
July 2004	40	37	23=100	+3
<b>Is more honest</b>				
<b>and ethical</b>				
October 2007	40	26	34=100	+14
March 2007	43	25	32=100	+18
Oct 2006	41	27	32=100	+14
April 2006	36	28	36=100	+8
Oct 2005	40	30	30=100	+10
July 2004	37	34	29=100	+3
<b>Selects better</b>				
<b>candidates</b>				
October 2007	41	32	27=100	+9
March 1998	33	32	35=100	+1
July 1994	36	40	24=100	-4
May 1990	22	32	46=100	-10
January 1988	24	31	45=100	-7

## **ABOUT THIS SURVEY**

Results for this survey are based on telephone interviews conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International among a nationwide sample of 2,007 adults, 18 years of age or older, from October 17-23, 2007 (1,507 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 500 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 199 who had no landline telephone). Both the landline and cell phone samples were designed by Survey Sampling, Inc.

The combined landline and cell phone data were weighted using demographic weighting parameters derived from the March 2006 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey, along with an estimate of current patterns of telephone status in the U.S. derived from the 2006 National Health Interview Survey, using an iterative technique that simultaneously balances the distributions of all weighting parameters. The weighting procedure also accounted for the fact that respondents with both landline and cell phones had a greater probability of being included in the sample.

The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press will be releasing a detailed analysis of the landline and cell phone samples in the coming weeks.

For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling is plus or minus 2.5 percentage points. For results based on Form 1 (N=1,008) or Form 2 (N=999), one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling is plus or minus 3.5 percentage points. For results based on Democratic and Democratic-leaning registered voters (N=837) the margin of error is plus or minus 4 percentage points. For Republican and Republican-leaning registered voters (N=648) the margin of error is plus or minus 4.5 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.

## **ABOUT THE CENTER**

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 seven 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**  
**OCTOBER 2007 POLITICAL SURVEY**  
**FINAL TOPLINE**  
**October 17-23, 2007**  
**N=2007**

**QUESTIONS 1 AND 2 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED**

**ASK FORM 1 ONLY [N=1008]:**

Q.3F1 Do you approve or disapprove of the job the Democratic leaders in Congress are doing? **[IF DK ENTER AS DK. IF DEPENDS PROBE ONCE WITH: Overall do you approve or disapprove of the job the Democratic leaders in Congress are doing? IF STILL DEPENDS ENTER AS DK]**

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>Don't know</u>
October, 2007	31	54	15=100
July, 2007	33	54	13=100
June, 2007	34	49	17=100
April, 2007	36	43	21=100
March, 2007 <sup>1</sup>	37	42	21=100
February, 2007	41	36	23=100
Mid-January, 2007	39	34	27=100
Early October, 2006	35	53	12=100
June, 2006	32	50	18=100
March, 2006	34	46	20=100
January, 2006	34	48	18=100
Early November, 2005	36	44	20=100
Early October, 2005	32	48	20=100
Mid-September, 2005	36	45	19=100
Mid-May, 2005	39	41	20=100
Mid-March, 2005	37	44	19=100
Early February, 2004	38	42	20=100
June, 2002	47	36	17=100
May, 2002	42	37	21=100
February, 2002	49	30	21=100
Early September, 2001	49	30	21=100
June, 2001	50	28	22=100

**ASK FORM 2 ONLY [N=999]:**

And thinking about Congress...

Q.4F2 Compared to recent Congresses, would you say THIS Congress has accomplished more, accomplished less, or accomplished about the same amount?

	<u>More</u>	<u>Less</u>	<u>Same amount</u>	<u>Don't know</u>
October, 2007	5	43	42	10=100
October, 2006	6	39	47	8=100
Early September, 2006	7	37	49	7=100
June, 2006	7	43	42	8=100
April, 2006	8	38	48	6=100

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1 In March 2007 the question was worded: "Do you approve or disapprove of the policies and proposals of the Democratic leaders in Congress?"

**QUESTION 4F2 CONTINUED...**

	<u>More</u>	<u>Less</u>	<u>Same Amount</u>	<u>Don't know</u>
Early November, 2002 (RVs)	11	27	54	8=100
June, 2002	16	22	56	6=100
July, 2000	21	15	55	9=100
August, 1999	15	20	60	5=100
Early October, 1998(RVs)	24	23	49	4=100
Early September, 1998	25	15	55	5=100
Early August, 1998	18	15	60	7=100
November, 1997	23	12	59	6=100
April, 1997	10	22	59	9=100
Gallup, October, 1994	10	36	51	3=100

**ASK IF "LESS" (2 IN Q.4F2) [N=447]:**

Q.5F2 Who do you think is most to blame for this [READ AND ROTATE]?

	<u>Republican leaders</u>	<u>Democratic leaders</u>	<u>(VOL.) Both</u>	<u>(VOL.) Neither/ Someone else</u>	<u>(VOL.) Don't know</u>
October, 2007	30	26	34	5	5=100
October, 2006	59	10	21	4	6=100
June, 2006	56	16	22	2	4=100
April, 2006	58	13	21	4	4=100

**NO QUESTION 6, 11, 14-19, 22, 25-29.**

**QUESTIONS 5, 7-10, 12-13, 20-21, 23-24, 30-38 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED.**

**ASK ALL IN LANDLINE SAMPLE ONLY [N=1507]:**

Thinking more generally about the political parties...

Q.39 Please tell me if you think each phrase I read better describes the REPUBLICAN Party and its leaders or the DEMOCRATIC Party and its leaders. (First,) which party do you think (INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE)

	<u>Republican Party</u>	<u>Democratic Party</u>	<u>(VOL.) Both equally</u>	<u>(VOL.) Neither</u>	<u>(VOL.) DK/ Ref</u>
a. Can better manage the federal government	32	44	5	9	10=100
March, 2007	31	47	3	8	11=100
Early October, 2006	34	44	3	9	10=100
April, 2006 <sup>2</sup>	35	39	3	15	8=100
January, 2006	34	40	4	12	10=100
Early October, 2005	35	41	3	13	8=100
July, 2004	37	40	4	9	10=100
Early September, 1998	37	32	8	12	11=100
August, 1997	39	33	4	16	8=100
July, 1996	45	32	4	12	7=100
April, 1995	49	30	3	13	5=100
July, 1994	43	31	4	17	5=100

2 In April 2006 and earlier, the question was worded: "Which party do you think is better described by the phrase.... Able to manage the federal government well."



**QUESTION 39 CONTINUED...**

	Republican	Democratic	(VOL.) Both	(VOL.) Neither	(VOL.) DK/ Ref
	<u>Party</u>	<u>Party</u>	<u>equally</u>		
May, 1993	36	32	2	17	13=100
July, 1992	30	36	1	23	10=100
May, 1990	28	20	12	31	9=100
May, 1988	33	30	10	17	10=100
January, 1988	30	28	12	20	10=100
May, 1987	24	25	13	28	10=100
b. Governs in a more honest and ethical	26	40	6	19	9=100
March, 2007	25	43	4	18	10=100
Early October, 2006	27	41	4	18	10=100
April, 2006 <sup>3</sup>	28	36	4	23	9=100
January, 2006	30	37	4	19	10=100
Early October, 2005	30	40	6	18	6=100
July, 2004	34	37	5	15	9=100
Early September, 1998	31	28	6	23	12=100
March, 1998	28	32	7	24	9=100
August, 1997	28	33	5	26	8=100
July, 1996	38	37	2	18	5=100
April, 1995	35	36	4	19	6=100
July, 1994	32	35	6	21	6=100
c. Can bring about the kind of changes the country needs	26	48	5	11	10=100
March, 2007	26	52	4	9	9=100
Early October, 2006	28	48	4	10	10=100
April, 2006	32	47	2	12	7=100
Early October, 2005	32	48	4	9	7=100
July, 2004	35	46	3	7	9=100
Early September, 1998	34	40	7	8	11=100
March, 1998	32	45	7	8	8=100
August, 1997	38	40	4	11	7=100
July, 1996	39	46	2	7	6=100
April, 1995	51	34	4	7	4=100
July, 1994	39	42	4	10	5=100
May, 1993	30	49	2	10	9=100
July, 1992	24	47	2	16	11=100
May, 1990	27	31	13	18	11=100
May, 1988	27	43	9	11	10=100
January, 1988	28	37	14	11	10=100
May, 1987	26	36	14	14	10=100
d. Is more concerned with the needs of people like me	25	54	4	8	9=100
March, 2007	26	55	2	7	10=100
Early October, 2006	27	55	3	8	7=100

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3 In April 2006 and earlier, the question was worded: "Which party do you think is better described by the phrase... Governs in an honest and ethical way."

**Q.39 CONTINUED...**

	Republican <u>Party</u>	Democratic <u>Party</u>	(VOL.) Both <u>equally</u>	(VOL.) <u>Neither</u>	(VOL.) DK/ <u>Ref</u>
April, 2006 <sup>4</sup>	28	52	3	10	7=100
Early October, 2005	30	52	5	7	6=100
July, 2004	30	50	5	8	7=100
Early September, 1998	31	46	5	9	9=100
March, 1998	30	51	4	8	7=100
August, 1997	31	49	3	10	7=100
July, 1996	35	50	2	7	6=100
April, 1995	39	49	2	7	3=100
July, 1994	35	49	4	8	4=100
May, 1990	21	42	12	18	7=100
May, 1988	23	51	8	11	7=100
January, 1988	22	47	11	13	7=100
e. Selects better candidates for office <sup>5</sup>	32	41	6	10	11=100
March, 1998	32	33	12	12	11=100
July, 1994	40	36	6	13	5=100
May, 1990	32	22	21	17	8=100
May, 1988	28	30	13	19	10=100
January, 1988	31	24	18	18	9=100
May, 1987	27	26	25	13	9=100

**QUESTIONS 40-41, 44-52 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED  
NO QUESTIONS 42-43**

**ASK ALL IN LANDLINE SAMPLE ONLY [N=1507]:**

Thinking about Congress..

Q.53 Are you happy or unhappy that the Democratic Party won control of Congress in last year's election?<sup>6</sup>

		July <u>2007</u>	March <u>2007</u>	Mid- Nov <u>2006</u>	-----Republican Party-----				
					Dec <u>2002</u> <sup>7</sup>	Nov <u>1998</u>	April <u>1995</u>	March <u>1995</u>	Dec <u>1994</u>
54	Happy	50	54	60	48	47	52	55	57
29	Unhappy	35	32	24	34	32	36	31	31
<u>17</u>	Don't know/Refused	<u>15</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>12</u>
100		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

4 In April 2006 and earlier, the question was worded: "Is concerned with the needs of people like me."

5 In March 1998 and earlier, the question was worded "selects good candidates for office."

6 The phrase "in last November's election" was added to the question in July 2007. It was changed to "in last year's election in October 2007.

7 In December 2002, the question was worded: "In general, are you happy or unhappy that the Republican Party won control of the U.S. Senate?" In November 1998, the question was worded: "Are you happy or unhappy that the Republican Party maintained control of the U.S. Congress? In April 1995 and before, the question was worded: "Generally, are you happy or unhappy that the Republican Party won control of the U.S. Congress."

Q.54 Do you think Democratic leaders in Congress are going too far or not far enough in challenging George W. Bush's policies in Iraq, or are they handling this about right?

		Sept	July	June	March
		<u>2007</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2007</u>
21	Too far	22	29	22	23
47	Not far enough	42	38	41	40
23	About right	25	24	25	30
<u>9</u>	Don't know/Refused	<u>11</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>7</u>
100		100	100	100	100

**QUESTIONS 55-63 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED**