

AEI Political Report

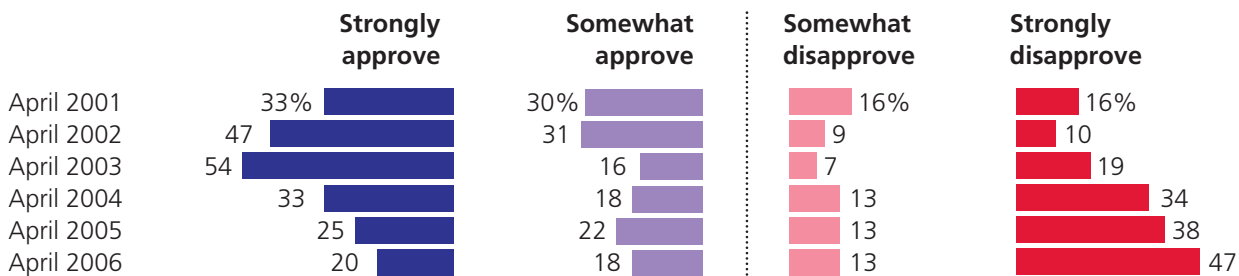
Partisan Passion

In early April, the ABC News/*Washington Post* poll reported that only 6 percent of Democrats approved of the way George W. Bush is handling his job as president, while 81 percent of Republicans did. That is a partisan chasm of 75 percentage points. Over Bush's entire presidency, the gap has averaged 54 points in the ABC/*Post* polls. That's similar to what it was for Bill Clinton (52 points) and Ronald Reagan (50 points) over the course

of their presidencies. The president's father didn't arouse such sharp partisan passion. The average gap between Democrats and Republicans on presidential job approval during his tenure was 35 percentage points.

One of the striking features of many polls today is the proportion that *strongly* disapproves of the job the president is doing. In the ABC/*Post* poll, 47 percent gave that response.

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



Source: ABC News/*Washington Post*, latest that of April 2006.

Things Could Be Worse: A Look Abroad

President Bush's approval ratings have reached new lows recently, but many of his counterparts abroad are doing even worse. French president Jacques Chirac and prime minister Dominique de Villepin's favorable numbers are now at 29 percent and 30 percent, respectively, according to a new Ipsos-*Le Point* poll. In Great Britain, the latest MORI survey shows Tony Blair with 31 percent approval. The only major European outlier is Germany's new chancellor, Angela Merkel. When asked if they were content with the political work of Angela Merkel, 69 percent of those surveyed by ARD-Deutschland responded affirmatively.

South of the border, Mexican President Vicente Fox seems to be enjoying substantial popularity in a recent Consulta Mitofsky poll. Sixty-three percent of those surveyed approved of how Mr. Fox was handling the country.

Government Waste

In time for Tax Day, ABC News/*Washington Post* pollsters updated a question the organization first asked in 1985. Today, people say that over half of every dollar collected in federal taxes is wasted.

Q: On another subject, out of every dollar the federal government collects in taxes, how many cents do you think are wasted?

1985	43 cents
1990	46
1995	51
2000	46
2006	51

Note: Not all data points shown.
Source: ABC News/*Washington Post*, April 2006.

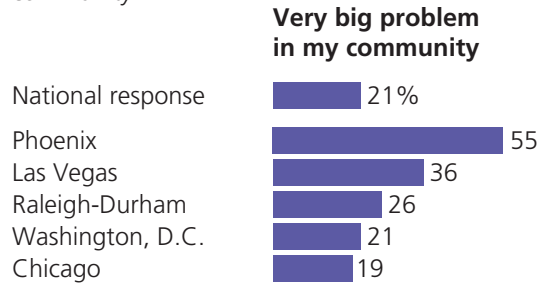
Immigration Attitudes

A flurry of new polls confirm that Americans are increasingly concerned about immigration. In the past half century, Congress has enacted two major immigration bills, the first in 1965 and the second in 1986. As Gallup surveys conducted at the time show, Americans were not enthusiastic about increasing immigration then. In 1965, slightly more wanted to keep immigration at its present level than wanted to decrease it. But fewer than one in ten want to increase it. In 1986 and today, a strong plurality want to decrease it.

Still, it is not clear how much intensity the issue will have next Election Day. The Pew Research Center and the Pew Hispanic Center recently conducted a national poll and separate surveys in the Chicago, Las Vegas, Raleigh-Durham, Phoenix, and Washington, D.C., metropolitan areas. Only in Phoenix did a majority describe immigration as a “very big” problem in their community.

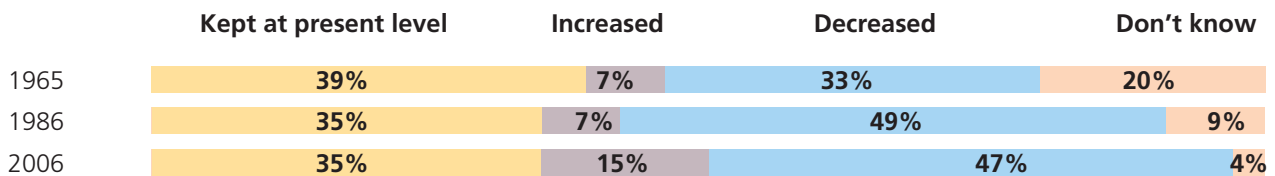
Americans have long been ambivalent about immigration, believing that immigrants take jobs citizens won’t take *and* that they are putting a strain on the nation’s resources. Partisan divisions on the issue are small. Intra-party differences are large.

Q: How big a problem is immigration in your local community?



Source: Pew Research Center and Pew Hispanic Center, February–March 2006.

Q: In your view, should immigration be . . . ?



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

Mothers’ Days

A January-February poll of mothers with children in the home from ABC’s *Good Morning America* and *Good Housekeeping* finds that 72 percent of mothers say being a mother is harder today than it was when they were young. Still, four in ten say they are doing a better job than their mothers did in raising their own children, while 57 percent say they are doing about the same kind of job, and 2 percent a worse job.

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Primary Schedule for 2006

- ✓ Two states (Texas and Illinois) have already had primaries.
- ✓ Ten states have May primaries: Arkansas, Idaho, Indiana, Kentucky, Nebraska, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia.
- ✓ Thirty-seven states and the District of Columbia have later primaries.
- ✓ Louisiana does not have primaries, but has an open general election in which a candidate must receive more than 50 percent of the vote to avoid a runoff election.



The Midwest in 2006

The key swing region in American politics is the Midwest, and how the Midwest goes will determine the outcome of the 2006 midterm elections.

Of the nine states in the Midwest, six were decided by less than 5 percent of the popular vote in the 2004 presidential election. There were only five other states in the entire country that were as close. Five of these Midwestern states went for John Kerry, four for George W. Bush. Five have Democratic governors and four Republican ones. These states are represented by nine Democratic and nine Republican senators.

In these states, Republicans hold an advantage in Congressional representation, sixty-six to forty-four. In the state legislatures, Republicans also hold an advantage. They lead eight to one in control of state house legislative chambers, and six to two with one tie in state senates.

These states are growing slowly. All but Minnesota lost at least one seat in the 2000 reapportionment. All have below average population growth. Most of these states

have unemployment rates around the national average of 4.7 percent, but Michigan has a significantly higher rate, 6.6 percent. The economic insecurity in the region helps explain why seven of the nine governors in this region have job approval ratings below 50 percent, led by Bob Taft (R-Ohio), who has been below 20 percent in almost every recent survey. Only Tom Vilsack (D-Iowa) and Tim Pawlenty (R-Minn.) are above 50 percent.

This region will be the epicenter of competitive races this fall. Four of the six Senate races most likely to switch parties are in this region: Rick Santorum (R-Pa.), Mike DeWine (R-Ohio), Jim Talent (R-Mo.) and the open Minnesota seat. Seven of the region's nine governors are up for election, with several real chances for party change.

The battle for the House of Representatives will also be fought in the Midwest. When *National Journal* rated the top twenty-five most competitive House seats, eleven were in the Midwest.

	2004 Presidential Vote	Senate		House		State Legislatures			
						House		Senate	
		Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.
Ohio	Bush (close)	2		12	6	61	38	22	11
Indiana	Bush	1	1	7	2	52	48	33	17
Illinois	Kerry		2	9	10	53	65	26	32
Michigan	Kerry (close)		2	9	6	58	52	22	16
Wisconsin	Kerry (close)		2	4	4	60	39	19	14
Minnesota	Kerry (close)	1	1	4	4	68	66	29	37
Pennsylvania	Kerry (close)	2		12	7	110	93	30	20
Iowa	Bush (close)	1	1	4	1	51	49	25	25
Missouri	Bush	2		5	4	97	66	23	11
Midwest Total		9	9	66	44				

Current Commentary

“House Members Have Allergic Reaction to Ethics Process”

AEI resident scholar Norman J. Ornstein discusses the House's lack of commitment to ethics reform.

<http://www.aei.org/publication24238>

“Open to Greatness: We Need Immigrants”

AEI resident fellow Ben J. Wattenberg warns of the folly of failing to reform immigration.

<http://www.aei.org/publication24242>