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**The People, The Press & Politics**

**Campaign '92:**

**The Bounce Begins**

**Survey IX**

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Perot's Ratings Sag  
CLINTON'S BOUNCE BEGINS

On the eve of the Democratic Convention, Governor Bill Clinton has taken a giant step toward improving his personal image. A *Times Mirror* poll conducted on Wednesday and Thursday evening of this week finds 59% of the voting age public having a favorable impression of the Democratic candidate VS. 34% unfavorable. This is a much improved evaluation over the 46% favorable, 47% unfavorable rating recorded for Clinton in Times Mirror's June survey. This is the first time since February that Clinton's negative rating has been below the forty percent level.

Clearly, Clinton's choice of Gore has helped. Forty percent of the public thinks that Al Gore was an *excellent or good* choice for running mate, while 22% judged him as only fair and 5% poor. As a consequence, opinions of Clinton were more favorable after the Gore announcement than they were before it. On Wednesday evening Clinton's ratings were 57% favorable, 37% unfavorable. Interviewing Thursday evening reflected an overnight increase to 63% favorable, and a drop in the putative nominee's unfavorability ratings to 30%.

These numbers reflect genuine progress for Clinton. But it should be kept in mind that trends in opinion during the political convention period are often ephemeral. Nonetheless, the poll shows that Clinton has made significant strides in repairing the public image problem which has nagged at the unofficial Democratic nominee since the early stages of his campaign.

The poll also underscores how difficult it has been for Clinton to move out of the shadow of the Ross Perot candidacy. The public apparently paid more attention to Perot than Clinton or President Bush this week despite pre-Convention coverage, the Gore announcement and Bush's overseas meetings with world leaders.

In a period in which the President attended G7 and summit conferences, and Bill Clinton announced his running mate, a 47% plurality of the public said they have heard most in the media about Ross Perot. Thirty percent said they had heard more about Clinton and only 11% named Bush in this regard. Again, the Gore announcement made a difference. On Wednesday evening Perot led Clinton 50% to 25% on this measure, while the saliency (visibility) gap closed to 43% to 37% on Thursday evening.

### ***Perot Slips***

Perot's personal image has sustained significant damage as a result of intense media scrutiny and attacks by the Bush campaign. The Texas billionaire's unfavorable ratings have grown from 26% to 35% over the past month. As a result his favorable to unfavorable rating stands at 48% to 35% - well below Clinton's, as he heads to New York.

While Clinton has gone up and Perot down in public esteem over the past month, evaluations of the President have stayed negative. Bush's approval rating remains at 32% and his favorable to unfavorable ratio is an unhealthy 45% favorable to 52% unfavorable. The Vice President's ratings have also remained overwhelmingly negative (29% favorable to 64% unfavorable). In contrast the Democratic Vice Presidential nominee earns a 47% favorable to 19% unfavorable rating. Southerners judge Gore even more positively than people outside the South. In the South his scores were 59% favorable and 15% unfavorable; outside the South they were 42% to 20% respectively.

Although Bill Clinton has improved his public image in all parts of the country and among all demographic groups his ratings have shown the greatest increases among whites and among people under 50 years of age.

### ***Democrats Seen As Party of Change***

On the eve of the Democratic convention, economic issues continue to dominate public concerns and the American people give the nod to the Democratic party over the GOP as being better able to solve the nation's top problems by a 35% to 24% margin. By an even larger 47% to 24% margin the public sees the Democratic party and its leadership as better able than the Republicans to bring about needed change. The Democratic party has made gains on these measures since 1990, but has no greater advantage over the GOP than it had in May of 1988.

The Republican party is still seen as better organized than the Democrats (by a 47% to 24% margin), while the public divides evenly on which party comes up with better candidates (34% each). A slight (36% to 30%) plurality think the Democrats are better able than the Republicans to manage the federal government. ***This is the first time in five years that the Democratic party has been better regarded than the GOP on this important performance dimension.***

Image improvements notwithstanding, the public continues to see the Democrats as a fractious bunch. A 44% to 36% plurality of Times Mirror's respondents thought that differences within the party will keep many Democrats from supporting the ticket rather than uniting solidly behind the ticket. But the choice of Sen. Albert Gore Jr. as the vice presidential nominee seems to have helped. On Wednesday evening the margin on this question was 46% to 33% against likely party unity. By Thursday it evened out to 41% to 40%.

### ***Attentiveness to Campaign News Slips***

Public interest in the campaign is well off what it was two months ago as enthusiasm for Ross Perot's candidacy was exploding. In the current survey only 20% said they were

very closely following news about the campaign compared to 32% who said they were very attentive to election news in the first week of May.

Nevertheless, half the public said they were interested in following what happens in next week's Democratic Convention. Twenty-six percent of the entire sample described itself as *very interested* in the Convention, while as many as 40% of Democrats registered a *high* level of interest.

Although party platforms are not thought to mean much in modern presidential campaigns, it is the element of the campaign that attracts the most public interest about the Democratic Convention. More Americans said they were *very interested* in learning about the party's platform (38%) than said they were very interested in seeing how Clinton and Jesse Jackson got along with each other (26%), or watching Clinton's acceptance speech (25%) or watching the roll call of the states (22%).

***Trend in Clinton Favorability Ratings  
by Demographic Characteristics***

	<u>Total Favorable</u>		<u>Total Unfavorable</u>		
	<u>June</u> <u>1992</u>	<u>July</u> <u>1992</u>	<u>June</u> <u>1992</u>	<u>July</u> <u>1992</u>	<u>Change</u> <u>in %</u>
Total	46	59	47	34	(-13)
<b><i>Sex</i></b>					
Male	46	58	49	36	(-13)
Female	47	60	45	33	(-12)
<b><i>Race</i></b>					
White	43	56	51	38	(-13)
Black	75	84	18	10	(-8)
<b><i>Age</i></b>					
18 - 29	49	62	46	36	(-10)
30 - 49	44	61	50	35	(-15)
50 and older	47	56	44	32	(-12)
<b><i>Education</i></b>					
College grad.	41	53	56	41	(-15)
Some college	42	60	53	37	(-16)
H.S. grad.	46	63	46	32	(-14)
Less than H.S. grad.	57	59	31	27	(-4)
<b><i>Region</i></b>					
East	44	60	50	36	(-14)
Midwest	48	54	45	38	(-7)
South	49	61	43	31	(-12)
West	43	61	52	31	(-21)
<b><i>Party Affiliation</i></b>					
Republican	28	38	66	56	(-10)
Democrat	70	82	24	13	(-11)
Independent	41	55	52	38	(-14)

## **Survey Methodology**

The survey results are based on telephone interviews conducted among a nationally representative sample of 1,053 adults, 18 years of age or older, during the period of July 8-9, 1992. 461 of the total number of respondents were interviewed Thursday evening (July 9) following Governor Clinton's announcement of Senator Gore as his vice presidential running mate.

For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects is plus or minus 3 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.

## **THE QUESTIONNAIRE**

TIMES MIRROR CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE AND THE PRESS  
 NATIONAL POLITICAL SURVEY #8  
 PRE-DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION  
 July 8-9, 1992  
 N=1,053

SEX: 1[ ]Male 2[ ]Female INTERVIEWER'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
 TIME STARTED: \_\_\_\_\_ INTERVIEWER'S I. D. : \_\_\_\_\_  
 TIME FINISHED: \_\_\_\_\_ PAGE NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_  
 LENGTH: \_\_\_\_\_ REPLICATE NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

REGION: 1 East STRATUM: 1 Stratum One  
 2 Midwest 2 Stratum Two  
 3 South 3 Remainder  
 4 West

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

INTRODUCTION: Hello, we are conducting a telephone opinion survey for leading newspapers and tv stations around the country. I'd like to ask a few questions of the youngest male, 18 years of age or older, who is now at home (IF NO MALE, ASK: May I please speak with the oldest female, 18 years of age or older, who is now at home?)

**MY FIRST QUESTION IS...**

Q.1 Do you approve or disapprove of the way George Bush is handling his job as President?

		<u>July</u> <u>1992</u>	<u>June</u> <u>1992</u>	<u>May</u> <u>1992</u>	<u>March</u> <u>1992</u>	<u>Feb</u> <u>1992</u>	<u>Jan</u> <u>1992</u>	<u>Nov</u> <u>1991</u>	<u>Oct</u> <u>1991</u>	<u>July</u> <u>1991</u>
32	Approve		32	37	38	39	46	55	61	67
56	Disapprove		57	51	52	53	43	33	28	23
<u>12</u> 100	Don't know		<u>11</u> 100	<u>12</u> 100	<u>10</u> 100	<u>8</u> 100	<u>11</u> 100	<u>12</u> 100	<u>11</u> 100	<u>7</u> 100

Q.2 What do you think is the most important problem facing the nation today?

	<u>July 1992</u>	<u>Jan 1992</u>	<u>May 1990</u>	<u>May 1989</u>	<u>May 1987</u>
Economy	27	43	5	4	10
Unemployment/ Lack of jobs	25	22	7	9	13
Deficit/Balanced budget	7	4	11	19	11
Homelessness	7	6	8	10	*
Drugs/Alcohol	4	4	11	22	37
Poverty	4	1			
Education	4	2			
Crime/Gangs/ Justice system	4	3	8	8	3
Health care (cost, accessibility)	3	2	2	*	*
Too much on foreign aid	3	1			
Morality/Ethics/ Family values	3	3	5	2	5
Dissatisfaction with government/politicians	2	2			
Environment	2	1			
Racism	2	1			
Taxes	2	*			
Women's issues	2	1			
Hunger	2	2	1	*	*
Net economic	63	76			
Don't know/No answer	3	2			

Surveys in 1990 and earlier where no percentages appear were equal to 2% or less.

Q. 3 Which political party do you think can do a better job of handling the problem you just mentioned -- the Republican Party or the Democratic party?

<u>July</u> <u>1992</u>		<u>May</u> <u>1990</u>	<u>May</u> <u>1988</u>	<u>Jan</u> <u>1988</u>	<u>May</u> <u>1987</u>
24	Republican	29	26	30	28
35	Democratic	30	38	35	38
19	No difference (VOL)	31	22	24	24
<u>22</u> 100	Don't know	<u>10</u> 100	<u>14</u> 100	<u>11</u> 100	<u>10</u> 100

Q. 4 This past month, how closely have you been following news about the Presidential campaign? (READ CATEGORIES 1-4)

<u>July</u> <u>1992</u>		<u>May</u> <u>1992</u>
20	Very closely?	32
45	Fairly closely?	44
26	Not too closely?	16
9	Not at all closely?	8
<u>*</u> 100	Don't know	<u>*</u> 100

Q. 5 Apart from whom you support, which presidential candidate have you heard the most about in the last week or so in newspapers, on television or on radio George Bush, Bill Clinton or Ross Perot?

<u>July</u> <u>1992</u>	
11	George Bush
30	Bill Clinton
47	Ross Perot
9	All about equal (VOL)
<u>3</u> 100	None/Don't know

**IF VICE PRESIDENT IS ANNOUNCED ASK:**

Q.5a As you may have heard Bill Clinton has named Al Gore as his running mate. How would you rate Al Gore? Do you think he is an excellent, good only fair or poor choice?

July

1992

15 Excellent

25 Good

22 Only fair

5 Poor

33 Don't know

100

(N=461. Asked Thursday night only)

Q.6 Are you interested in following what happens at next week's Democratic National Convention in New York or aren't you that interested in the convention?

**IF RESPONDENT ANSWERED '1' INTERESTED IN Q.6 ASK:**

Q.6a Would you say you are very interested or fairly interested in what happens at next week's Democratic National Convention?

July

1992

53 Total Interested

26 Very Interested

27 Fairly Interested/DK

45 Not interested

2 Don't know

100

**ASK ALL:**

Q.7 Do you think the television networks should be required to cover all or almost all of the proceedings of the political conventions or not?

July

1992

49 Yes, required

46 No, should not

5 Don't know

100

Q.8 As I read some things that will happen at next week's Democratic Convention, tell me how interested you are in this. How interested are you in (ITEM...)? Are you very interested in this, fairly interested, not too interested or not at all interested in this?

	<u>Very Interested</u>	<u>Fairly Interested</u>	<u>Not too Interested</u>	<u>Not at Interested</u>	<u>DK</u>
a. Watching Bill Clinton's acceptance speech	25	32	20	22	1
b. Watching the roll call of the states as they cast their ballots	22	29	25	23	1
c. Seeing how Bill Clinton and Jesse Jackson get along with each other	26	24	20	27	3
d. Learning about the Democratic Party's platform	38	34	16	11	1

Q.9 Do you think the Democratic party will unite solidly behind Bill Clinton or do you think that differences and disagreements within the party will keep many Democrats from supporting the ticket?

July

1992

36 Solidly united

44 Keep many from supporting

20 Don't know

100

Q. 10 Now I am going to read a few phrases. For each tell me whether you think the phrase better describes the Republican party or the Democratic party. **(READ THE FIRST PHRASE...)** Does that more accurately describe the Republican party and its leaders or does it more accurately describe the Democratic party and its leaders? **(ROTATE)**

	<u>Republi cans</u>	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>(VOL)</u> <u>Both</u>	<u>(VOL)</u> <u>Nei ther</u>	<u>DK</u>
a. Well organized					
<b>July, 1992</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>9=100</b>
May, 1990	40	16	22	13	9=100
May, 1988	39	23	15	14	9=100
January, 1988	38	20	19	14	9=100
May, 1987	34	19	25	13	9=100
b. Selects good candi dates for office					
<b>July, 1992</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>13=100</b>
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
c. Able to manage the federal government well					
<b>July, 1992</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>10=100</b>
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
d. Can bring about the kind of changes the country needs					
<b>July, 1992</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>11=100</b>
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

Note: The surveys conducted prior to 1992 were personal interviews, where respondents were more likely to volunteer the "both" response, and less likely to name **ei ther** party. Trends on these measures should be judged with that in mind.

Q.11 I'd like your opinion of some people and organizations? As I read from a list, please tell me which category best describes your overall opinion of who I name. First, would you describe your opinion of **(ITEM)** as very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly unfavorable, or very unfavorable? **(ROTATE)**

	Very Favorable	Mostly Favorable	Mostly Unfavorable	Very Unfavorable	(VOL) Never Heard Of	(VOL) Can't Rate
<b>a. George Bush</b>						
July, 1992	12	33	30	22	0	3=100
June, 1992	13	38	29	18	0	2=100
May, 1992	13	42	25	17	0	3=100
March, 1992	18	45	23	13	0	1=100
February, 1992	26	38	20	14	0	2=100
January, 1992	20	43	22	13	0	2=100
November, 1991	25	46	17	9	0	3=100
May, 1990	24	52	15	7	0	2=100
January, 1989	24	54	9	4		9=100
*October, 1988	23	35	20	17		5=100
*September, 1988	19	40	20	17		4=100
*August, 1988	25	40	18	12		5=100
May, 1988	11	40	25	17		7=100
January, 1988	11	41	26	13		9=100
September, 1987	18	51	19	8		4=100
May, 1987	11	56	19	7		7=100
<b>b. Bill Clinton</b>						
July, 1992	17	42	25	9	0	7=100
June, 1992	10	36	33	14	1	6=100
May, 1992	11	42	32	10	*	5=100
March, 1992	10	43	29	11	1	6=100
February, 1992	15	44	24	7	2	8=100
January, 1992	9	28	11	4	27	21=100
November, 1991	5	25	8	2	39	21=100
<b>c. Ross Perot</b>						
July, 1992	18	30	21	14	1	16=100
June, 1992	18	35	18	8	5	16=100
May, 1992	11	39	20	7	2	21=100
March, 1992	11	18	15	6	29	21=100

	<u>Very Favorable</u>	<u>Mostly Favorable</u>	<u>Mostly Unfavorable</u>	<u>Very Unfavorable</u>	<u>(VOL) Never Heard Of</u>	<u>(VOL) Can't Rate</u>
d. Dan Quayle						
July, 1992	6	23	33	31	*	7=100
June, 1992	7	26	34	27	1	5=100
November, 1991	9	40	28	15	1	7=100
May, 1990	6	41	24	15	4	10=100
*October, 1988	10	33	21	24	*	12=100
*September, 1988	9	32	17	15	2	25=100
*August, 1988	12	38	19	9	2	20=100
e. Al Gore						
July, 1992**	15	32	14	5	6	28=100
f. The Republican party						
July, 1992	9	37	31	17	0	6=100
g. The Democratic party						
July, 1992	17	44	24	9	0	6=100

\*\* 461 respondents asked Thursday night only about Al Gore