

**FOR RELEASE:  
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**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:  
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**Continued Public Inattention to Trial  
SUPPORT FOR CLINTON, BUT NOT FOR SOCIAL SECURITY FUNDS IN MARKET**

The American people had a mixed reaction to events in Washington last week. They continue to support Bill Clinton and all but ignore his Senate impeachment trial, which 88% describe as providing little that is new or interesting. But by a 52%-34% margin they also reject Clinton's surprise proposal to put some Social Security funds into the stock market.

If Social Security funds do go into the stock market, the public would prefer the Republican approach of allowing workers to invest their own contributions. A 52% majority thinks this would work better than having Social Security funds invested in the stock market by an independent government board. But this is about the only good news for the GOP in the Pew Research Center's latest public opinion survey, conducted daily January 19-25, 1999 to gauge reaction to the State of the Union address and Senate impeachment trial.

Political support for the president has remained strong, the Senate trial notwithstanding. Clinton's approval rating rose to 66% following his State of the Union Address, which was graded an *A* or *B* by 70% of those who saw the speech, despite reservations about elements of Clinton's Social Security proposal. Fully 63% of the public thinks Clinton should not be removed from office. And most (67%) say that they don't expect the Senate to vote him out. Even among Republicans, only 18% believe the Senate will oust Clinton.

A majority of Americans (53%) do not think the Senate should call witnesses to testify in the impeachment trial. Not surprisingly, rank and file Republicans are much more supportive than are Democrats (63% vs. 21%). Independents are more closely split on the issue (41% favor and 51% oppose).

<b>Witnesses in Senate Trial?</b>				
	<u>All</u>	<u>Rep</u>	<u>Dem</u>	<u>Ind</u>
	%	%	%	%
<i>Should the Senate call witnesses?</i>				
Yes	39	63	21	41
No	53	31	73	51
Don't know/Refused	<u>8</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>8</u>
	100	100	100	100
<i>Number of Interviews:</i>	(1500)	(379)	(516)	(499)

**History, But Ho Hum**

Perceptions of too much partisanship along with firm public convictions about Clinton himself have led most Americans to tune out the trial. On average about 17% of Americans said they watched or listened to the live coverage on each day during the study period. The exception was Tuesday, January 19, the first day of the White House lawyers’ presentation, when fully 31% followed the live proceedings.

Most Americans found little of interest in the news about the proceedings each day, but as many as one in five said that they were annoyed or angered by something they had heard in the news about the trial. Relatively few (24%) said they had discussed the impeachment with family or friends.

When asked why they are not following the trial more closely, almost half (47%) say that they haven’t paid more attention because the trial will have no impact on their assessment of Clinton.

A substantial minority (41%) also say the partisan nature of the trial is a reason for tuning it out. Almost as many (36%) cite the improbability of Clinton’s actual conviction. Inattention to politics in general and the insignificance of removal for conditions in the country were less often given as reasons for neglecting news of the trial.

**Fix Social Security**

While most Americans are skittish about investing Social Security funds in the stock market, support for using the federal budget surplus to help stabilize Social Security and Medicare has risen substantially in the past year. Half (50%) now favor using the surplus to reform the entitlement programs, rather than for a tax cut, other domestic programs, or to help pay off the national debt. Last January, just 32% said Social Security and Medicare should get the surplus funds first, while as many (33%) favored spending the money on other domestic programs.

But the public rejects Clinton’s State of the Union proposal to invest some Social Security funds in the stock market by a 52%-34% margin. What’s more, the resistance to the proposal is bipartisan: while Republicans oppose the idea 59%-29%, Democrats also reject it, 51%-33%. Opposition is also high among senior citizens and Americans who are nearing retirement age.

<b>The Trial: Few Tune In</b>						
	<i>Clinton defense</i>			<i>Q&amp;A/Debate</i>		
	<u>Tues</u>	<u>Wed</u>	<u>Thurs</u>	<u>Fri</u>	<u>Sat</u>	<u>Mon</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%
<i>Watched/Heard Coverage Today</i>						
Yes	31	12	15	15	15	15
No	69	88	85	85	85	85
Don't Know	<u>*</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>*</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>*</u>
	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>Saw/Read/Heard Something New or Interesting</i>						
Yes	7	6	15	16	11	8
No	90	93	85	84	89	90
Don't Know	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>*</u>	<u>*</u>	<u>2</u>
	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>Saw/Read/Heard Something Made You Angry/Annoyed</i>						
Yes	24	20	20	19	18	20
No	72	78	80	79	81	80
Don't Know	<u>4</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>
	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>Talked to Family/Friends about Trial Today</i>						
Yes	26	26	28	24	19	19
No	74	74	72	76	81	81
Don't Know	<u>0</u>	<u>*</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>Number of Interviews:</i>	(250)	(245)	(255)	(248)	(250)	(252)

## ABOUT THIS SURVEY

Results for the survey are based on telephone interviews conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates among a nationwide sample of 1,500 adults, 18 years of age or older, during the period January 19-25, 1999. Approximately 250 interviews were conducted on each day of the tracking poll; no interviews were conducted Sunday, January 24, 1999. 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.

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**PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS**  
**SENATE IMPEACHMENT TRIAL NEWS INTEREST TRACKING POLL**  
**— TOPLINE RESULTS —**  
**January 19 - 25, 1999**  
**N=1,500**

Hello, I am \_\_\_\_\_ calling for Princeton Survey Research Associates in Princeton, New Jersey. 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?]**

Q.1 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Bill Clinton is handling his job as President? **[IF DK ENTER AS DK. IF DEPENDS PROBE ONCE WITH: Overall do you approve or disapprove of the way Bill Clinton is handling his job as President? IF STILL DEPENDS ENTER AS DK]**

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
Mid-January, 1999	66	29	5=100
Mon., January 25	67	25	8=100
Sat., January 23	66	30	4=100
Fri., January 22	68	28	4=100
Thurs., January 21	64	35	1=100
Wed., January 20	65	28	7=100
Tues., January 19	64	31	5=100
January, 1999	63	30	7=100
Late December, 1998	71	27	2=100
Early December, 1998	61	32	7=100
November, 1998	65	29	6=100
September 21-22, 1998	62	33	5=100
September 19-20, 1998	55	36	9=100
Early September, 1998	61	33	6=100

Q.2 Do you approve or disapprove of the job the Republican 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 Republican leaders in Congress are doing? IF STILL DEPENDS ENTER AS DK]**

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
Mid-January, 1999	36	51	13=100
Mon., January 25	33	54	13=100
Sat., January 23	35	53	12=100
Fri., January 22	37	53	10=100
Thurs., January 21	36	51	13=100
Wed., January 20	39	45	16=100
Tues., January 19	36	51	13=100
January, 1999	38	50	12=100
Late December, 1998	39	56	5=100
Early December, 1998	38	49	13=100
November, 1998	41	48	11=100
September 21-22, 1998	44	44	12=100
September 19-20, 1998	46	41	13=100
Early September, 1998	44	37	19=100

Q.3 Now I will read a list of some stories covered by news organizations this past month. As I read each item, tell me if you happened to follow this news story very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely? **[READ AND ROTATE LIST]**

	<u>Very Closely</u>	<u>Fairly Closely</u>	<u>Not too Closely</u>	<u>Not at all Closely</u>	<b>(VOL)</b> <u>DK</u>
a.. The impeachment trial of President Clinton in the Senate					
Mid-January, 1999	22	37	26	14	1=100
Mon., January 25	20	40	26	13	1=100
Sat., January 23	19	45	26	9	1=100
Fri., January 22	21	33	27	18	1=100
Thurs., January 21	29	31	27	13	0=100
Wed., January 20	23	35	26	15	*=100
Tues., January 19	23	36	24	15	2=100
January, 1999	27	37	21	14	1=100
Late December, 1998 <sup>1</sup>	34	37	22	7	*=100

**Jan. 19 - 20 ONLY (N=495)**

b. The massacre of 45 people in Kosovo, Serbia					
Mid-January, 1999	9	21	24	44	2=100
Wed., January 20	11	19	27	42	1=100
Tues., January 19	8	23	21	45	3=100
March, 1998 <sup>2</sup>	5	12	26	55	2=100

<sup>1</sup> In Late December the story was listed as "The debate and vote in the House of Representatives to impeach Bill Clinton."

<sup>2</sup> In March 1998 the story was listed as "Ethnic conflict in Kosovo, Serbia."

**Q.3 CONTINUED ...**

	<u>Very Closely</u>	<u>Fairly Closely</u>	<u>Not too Closely</u>	<u>Not at all Closely</u>	<b>(VOL)</b> <u>DK</u>
<b>Jan. 21 - 25 ONLY (N=999)</b>					
c. President Clinton's proposal to use the budget surplus to pay for Social Security in the future					
Mid-January, 1999	21	33	27	18	1=100
Mon., January 25	22	32	28	17	1=100
Sat., January 23	15	38	30	15	2=100
Fri., January 22	19	37	25	19	0=100
Thurs., January 21	29	25	28	18	0=100
Early February, 1998 <sup>3</sup>	24	38	26	12	*=100
January, 1998 <sup>4</sup>	18	27	29	25	1=100
February, 1997	23	26	22	28	1=100
January, 1997 <sup>5</sup>	29	35	22	13	1=100

**QUESTIONS S.1 AND S.2 ASKED WEDNESDAY, JAN. 20 THRU THURSDAY JAN. 21 (N=500)**

On another subject...

S.1 Did you happen to watch all or part of President Clinton's State of the Union speech [Tuesday night]?

	<u>Yes, all</u>	<u>Yes, part</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>DK</u>
Mid-January, 1999	24	35	39	2=100
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January, 1994	23	33	44	0=100

**QUESTION S.2 ONLY ASKED OF RESPONDENTS WHO ANSWERED YES IN S.1: [N=302]**

S.2 What grade would you give to President Clinton for his speech — A, B, C, D, or Fail?

	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>Fail</u>	<u>DK</u>
Mid-January, 1999	34	36	15	7	5	3=100
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January, 1994	24	45	21	5	3	2=100

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3 In early February 1998 the story was listed as "Clinton's proposal to deal with the problem with Social Security."  
4 This month and February 1997 the story was listed as "The debate about how to reform the Social Security System."  
5 This month the story was listed as "Proposals to reform the Social Security System."

On another subject...

Q.4 Based on what you know at this point, do you think that Bill Clinton should or should not be removed from office?

	<u>Should be removed</u>	<u>Should not be removed</u>	<u>DK/ Refused</u>
Mid-January, 1999	33	63	4=100
Mon., January 25	27	67	6=100
Sat., January 23	34	63	3=100
Fri., January 22	30	64	6=100
Thurs., January 21	38	59	3=100
Wed., January 20	36	59	5=100
Tues., January 19	36	63	1=100
January, 1999	32	64	4=100
Late December, 1998	31	65	4=100
Early December, 1998 <sup>6</sup>	29	67	4=100
November, 1998	23	70	7=100
Late October, 1998 (RV)	28	66	6=100
Early October, 1998 (RV)	32	62	6=100

Q.5 Apart from your OWN opinion, what do you think WILL happen in the Senate trial — do you think the Senate will or will not vote to remove Clinton from office?

	<u>Will vote to remove</u>	<u>Will not vote to remove</u>	<u>DK/ Refused</u>
Mid-January, 1999	21	67	12=100
Mon., January 25	21	67	12=100
Sat., January 23	21	69	10=100
Fri., January 22	20	72	8=100
Thurs., January 21	23	68	9=100
Wed., January 20	20	64	16=100
Tues., January 19	23	60	17=100

Q.6 After both sides have presented their case, do you think the Senate should or should not call witnesses to testify in the impeachment trial?

	<u>Should call witnesses</u>	<u>Should not call witnesses</u>	<u>DK/ Refused</u>
Mid-January, 1999	39	53	8=100
Mon., January 25	36	58	6=100
Sat., January 23	42	53	5=100
Fri., January 22	38	54	8=100
Thurs., January 21	41	52	7=100
Wed., January 20	42	46	12=100
Tues., January 19	37	53	10=100

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For early December 1998, November 1998 and October 1998 trend figures based on slightly different question, "Based on what you know at this point, do you think that Bill Clinton should or should not be impeached and removed from office?"

Q.7 So far, how much of the live coverage of the Senate impeachment trial have you watched (**READ LIST**)...

	Almost all <u>of it</u>	A lot <u>of it</u>	Some <u>of it</u>	Hardly <u>any of it</u>	None <u>of it</u>	DK/ <u>Refused</u>
Mid-January, 1999	7	14	36	25	17	1=100
Mon., January 25	4	10	44	28	14	0=100
Sat., January 23	5	17	36	28	14	0=100
Fri., January 22	9	11	36	25	19	0=100
Thurs., January 21	10	14	33	26	17	0=100
Wed., January 20	9	14	30	23	24	*=100
Tues., January 19	8	16	37	24	15	0=100
January, 1999	5	10	34	28	22	1=100

Q.8 Did you happen to watch or hear any of the live coverage of the trial TODAY?

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>DK/Refused</u>
Mid-January, 1999	17	83	*=100
Mon., January 25	15	85	*=100
Sat., January 23	15	85	0=100
Fri., January 22	15	85	*=100
Thurs., January 21	15	85	0=100
Wed., January 20	12	88	0=100
Tues., January 19	31	69	*=100

Q.9 Did you talk to any friends, family, or coworkers about the impeachment trial TODAY?

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>DK/Refused</u>
Mid-January, 1999	24	76	*=100
Mon., January 25	19	81	0=100
Sat., January 23	19	81	0=100
Fri., January 22	24	76	0=100
Thurs., January 21	28	72	0=100
Wed., January 20	26	74	*=100
Tues., January 19	26	74	0=100

**ROTATE Q. 10 AND Q.11**

Q.10 Did you see, read, or hear anything in the news about the impeachment trial today that you found new or interesting?

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	(VOL) <u>Don't follow trial</u>	<u>DK/Refused</u>
Mid-January, 1999	11	88	*	1=100
Mon., January 25	8	90	1	1=100
Sat., January 23	11	89	0	*=100
Fri., January 22	16	84	*	0=100
Thurs., January 21	15	85	0	0=100
Wed., January 20	6	93	*	1=100
Tues., January 19	7	90	1	2=100

Q.11 Did you see, read, or hear anything in the news about the impeachment trial today that made you annoyed or angry?

	(VOL)			
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Don't follow trial</u>	<u>DK/Refused</u>
Mid-January, 1999	20	78	1	1=100
Mon., January 25	20	80	0	0=100
Sat., January 23	18	81	0	1=100
Fri., January 22	19	79	1	1=100
Thurs., January 21	20	80	0	0=100
Wed., January 20	20	78	*	2=100
Tues., January 19	24	72	2	2=100

**ASKED TUESDAY, JAN. 19 THRU THURSDAY, JAN.21, ONLY (N=554)**

**IF NOT FOLLOWING IMPEACHMENT TRIAL VERY CLOSELY (ANSWERED 2, 3, 4, OR 9 IN Q.3a), ASK:**

Q.12 We are interested in finding out why many people have not paid much attention to the impeachment trial of President Clinton. As I read a list, tell me if this reason applies to you, or not. First, (INSERT ITEM; ROTATE) , is this a reason why you haven't paid more attention to the trial, or not? (How about...(INSERT NEXT ITEM) , is this a reason why you haven't paid more attention, or not?

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No, not</u>	<u>Don't know/</u>
	<u>A Reason</u>	<u>A Reason</u>	<u>Refused</u>
a. There's little chance Clinton will actually be removed from office Mid-January, 1999	36	60	4=100
b. It's not important to conditions in the country whether or not Clinton is removed from office Mid-January, 1999	26	69	5=100
c. The trial is too partisan Mid-January, 1999	41	52	7=100
d. The trial will not change your mind about Clinton Mid-January, 1999	47	51	2=100
e. You never pay attention to politics Mid-January, 1999	24	74	2=100

**QUESTIONS 13 THRU 15 ASKED JAN. 22 - JAN 25 ONLY: ( N=749)**

Q.13 If it turns out that the federal government has a budget SURPLUS this year, in your opinion, which ONE of the following should be done with the available money? Should the money be used (**ROTATE**)... For a tax cut; to pay off the national debt more quickly; for increased spending on domestic programs such as health, education, and the environment; or to help make the Social Security and Medicare programs financially sound?

	<u>Tax Cut</u>	<u>National Debt</u>	<u>Domestic Programs</u>	<u>Social Security/ Medicare</u>	<b>(VOL)</b> <u>DK/ Refused</u>
Mid-January, 1999	14	12	21	50	3=100
Early August, 1998	10	19	29	39	3=100
June, 1998	9	17	28	44	2=100
January, 1998	11	22	33	32	2=100

Q.14 Do you favor or oppose changing Social Security from a system where all the money in the fund is invested in government bonds to a system where some of the money is invested in the stock market?

	<u>Favor</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>DK/Refused</u>
Mid-January, 1999	34	52	14=100

Q.15 Which system would work best — to have some of the Social Security funds invested in the stock market by an independent government board, OR to have some of the Social Security funds invested by individual workers on their own?

	<u>Independent board invest money</u>	<u>Workers invest own contributions</u>	<b>(VOL)</b> <u>Neither</u>	<b>(VOL)</b> <u>Both</u>	<u>DK/ Refused</u>
Mid-January, 1999	26	52	10	1	11=100