

BUSH APPROVAL RATING PLUMMETS,
TIMES MIRROR SURVEY FINDS

WASHINGTON, D. C. -- As the debate about the federal budget rages and the prospect of higher gasoline taxes looms, George Bush's standing with the public has fallen dramatically.

The latest nationwide poll by the Times Mirror Center for The People & The Press finds the President's approval ratings down 13 percentage points in less than one month. In a survey completed this past weekend 55% approved of the way Bush is handling his job as President and 28% disapproved. In September, the President's approval rating stood at 68% and in August it was 76% in Times Mirror opinion surveys.

All demographic and political groups register increased dissatisfaction with the way the President is handling his duties, but Bush approval ratings have declined by 15 percentage points or more among older people (47% approve), blacks (32%) Democrats(40%) and in the East(49%).

The new survey also found that 35 percent of the public favored the deficit reduction plan proposed by President Bush and the bipartisan leadership of Congress, while 41 percent opposed it.

There is a stunning age break in these numbers. Americans over 50 opposed the plan by a margin of 50-29 percent, while those under 30 favored it by 41-33. Middle-aged Americans divided about evenly, with 36 percent favoring and 37 percent opposing the deficit reduction package.

In addition, the survey found that the public now places slightly more confidence in the Democratic congressional leadership's ability to make wise decisions on reducing the federal deficit than in President Bush's judgment on this issue.

The Democrats were cited by 29 percent of the public, the president by 25 percent, and the congressional Republicans by 18 percent. Another 17 percent volunteered "none of the above," and 11 percent said they didn't know.

Part of the President's difficulties with the public are reflected in the views of grass-roots Republicans, who divide almost evenly between the GOP's congressional leadership and the President on the question of who will make wise decisions about reducing the budget deficit. Thirty-nine percent have more confidence in congressional Republicans; 36 percent place more trust in the President.

Forty-five percent of the public knew, on an unprompted basis, that gasoline taxes had been targeted for an increase as part of the bipartisan deficit reduction package, but only 11 percent volunteered "increased Medicare taxes" as part of the package.

Cigarette taxes were cited by 38 percent of respondents, taxes on alcoholic beverages by 40 percent. Five percent cited increased income taxes for wealthy Americans, and another 5 percent said income taxes generally.

One percent mentioned taxes on airplane tickets, 15 percent cited other taxes, and 33 percent said that without assistance they couldn't recall any specific tax provisions at all.

Fifty-eight percent of those surveyed said they had not seen President Bush's televised speech on the budget deficit, while 17 percent said they saw the entire address and 25 percent said they saw part of it.

Only 44 percent of respondents knew that the decision not to reduce the tax on capital gains was a defeat for President Bush. Twenty-seven percent said it was a victory for the president, and 29 percent said they didn't know.

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TIMES MIRROR NATIONWIDE SURVEY
OCTOBER 1990
October 4-7, 1990
n=1,213

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

		<u>9/10-12</u>	<u>8/15-25</u>	<u>7/5-8</u>	<u>4/5-8</u>
55	Approve	68	76	64	74
28	Disapprove	15	17	24	16
<u>17</u> 100	Don't know	<u>17</u> 100	<u>7</u> 100	<u>12</u> 100	<u>10</u> 100

Q.2 Did you happen to see all or part of President Bush's televised speech Tuesday night dealing with the budget deficit or didn't you happen to see it?

17	Saw all
25	Saw part
58	No, did not see it
<u>0</u> 100	Don't know

Q.3 From what you have heard or read, do you favor or oppose the passage of the plan proposed by the President and Congressional leaders to reduce the budget deficit?

35	Favor
41	Oppose
<u>24</u> 100	Don't know

Q.4 Who do you have the most confidence in to make wise decisions about reducing the budget deficit? (**READ CHOICES 1-3**)

- 18 Republican leaders in congress
- 29 Democratic leaders in congress **OR**
- 25 President Bush
- 17 None (**VOL.**)
- 11 Don't know
- 100

Q.5 The budget compromise agreed to by Congressional leaders and the Administration calls for tax increases in a number of areas. Do you happen to recall what types of taxes that will be increased? (**DO NOT READ. ACCEPT MULTIPLE RESPONSES.**)

- 45 Gasoline taxes
- 38 Taxes on cigarettes
- 40 Taxes on alcohol
- 1 Taxes on plane tickets
- 5 Increased income taxes (**NO MENTION OF WEALTHY OR UPPER INCOME**)
- 5 Increased income taxes for wealthy Americans
- 11 Increased Medicare taxes
- 15 Other taxes
- 33 Can't recall

Q.6 As part of the budget deficit reduction negotiations it was decided that there will be no reduction of taxes on capital gains this year. To the best of your knowledge is this considered a victory or a defeat for President Bush?

- 27 Victory
- 44 Defeat
- 29 Can't say
- 100

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The survey results are based on telephone interviews with 1,213 adults, 18 years of age or older, during the period of October 4-7, 1990. 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.