

# THE FIELD POLL

THE INDEPENDENT AND NON-PARTISAN SURVEY  
OF PUBLIC OPINION ESTABLISHED IN 1947 AS  
THE CALIFORNIA POLL BY MERVIN FIELD

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Release #2241

Release Date: **Friday, August 24, 2007**

### **VIEW OF CONGRESS IS AT A TEN-YEAR LOW. APPROVAL OF PELOSI DECLINES. JOB RATINGS FOR FEINSTEIN AND BOXER HOLDING UP FAIRLY WELL.**

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By Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

As a result of the 2006 mid-term elections, control of the U.S. Congress passed from the Republicans to the Democrats in January of this year. Last March, two months after the Democrats took charge, a *Field Poll* survey showed a substantial uptick in California voters' regard of the Congress' job performance overall. However, a survey completed this month registers a decline in job appraisals to levels formerly held prior to the Democratic takeover.

While the appraisal that voters have of the GOP members remains lower than appraisals of their Democratic counterparts, impressions of the job congressional Democrats are doing has declined over the past five months. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi is also viewed less favorably now than she was earlier this year.

The positive perceptions that voters have of Democratic Senators Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer are marginally lower than they were in March, but are holding up fairly well.

### **Congress job rating declines to ten-year low**

California voters' view of the Congress' overall job performance is as poor now as it has been at any time during the last ten years. Currently, 20% approve, 66% disapprove and 14% have no opinion. The 20% approval level is a few points lower than what it was in 2006 before last November's mid-term election, when leadership changed hands from Republicans to Democrats. There was a small uptick in approval last March after Democrats had taken control (35% approval and 50% disapproval).

Republican and non-partisan voters have the most dismal perception of the job the Congress is doing overall (approval rates of just 14% and 17%, respectively). The view that Democrats have is only a bit better (27% approval).

**Table 1**  
**Overall job performance of the U.S. Congress**  
**(among California registered voters)**

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
<b>August 2007</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>14</b>
March 2007	35%	50	15
May 2006	23%	64	13
April 2006	24%	66	10
August 2004	33%	52	15
April 2003	50%	39	11
April 2002	48%	39	13
January 2002	54%	33	13
December 2001	57%	32	11
May 2001	51%	38	11
January 2001	53%	35	12
August 2000	54%	34	12
June 2000	40%	48	12
February 2000	42%	42	16
October 1999	30%	60	10
March 1999	37%	54	9
August 1998	57%	33	10
August 1997	38%	51	11
February 1997	36%	46	18
February 1996	25%	68	7
<u>Party (August 2007)</u>			
Democrats	27%	55	18
Republicans	14%	79	7
Non-partisans/others	17%	65	18

*Note: Measures conducted prior to 1998 were completed among a cross-section of all California adults, not just registered voters.*

### **Congressional Democrats vs. Republicans**

Voters in this survey were also asked to offer separate ratings of the job performance of congressional Democrats and congressional Republicans. Results show that overall, Democratic members are seen in a more favorable light than their GOP counterparts. Thirty-three percent of voters approve of the job that Democrats are doing, while 19% have a favorable view of the Republicans.

However, voter perceptions of the performance of congressional Democrats has declined significantly since last March. Then, 47% approved of what the Democrats were doing in Congress. But that has dropped to 33% approval today. Last March, 19% approved of the GOP congressional members' performance, which is unchanged in today's survey.

**Table 2**  
**Job performance of the Democrats in Congress**  
**(among California registered voters)**

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
<b>August 2007</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>13</b>
March 2007	47%	40	13
August 2004	32%	50	18
April 2003	40%	46	14
April 2002	46%	39	15
May 2001	51%	37	12
January 2001	57%	31	12
June 2000	46%	39	15
<u>Party (August 2007)</u>			
Democrats	53	34	13
Republicans	13	80	7
Others/non-partisans	26	54	20

**Table 3**  
**Job performance of the Republicans in Congress**  
**(among California registered voters)**

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
<b>August 2007</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>12</b>
March 2007	19%	70	11
August 2004	32%	52	16
April 2003	46%	42	12
April 2002	42%	45	13
May 2001	42%	47	11
January 2001	49%	39	12
June 2000	32%	55	13
<u>Party (August 2007)</u>			
Democrats	8%	81	11
Republicans	33%	56	11
Others/non-partisans	16%	66	18

### **Pelosi's ratings also decline**

San Francisco Democrat Nancy Pelosi became Speaker of the House earlier this year. Last March, 48% of the state's registered voters approved of her performance and just 27% disapproved. Now, her rating has dropped to where about as many California voters approve (39%) as disapprove (37%).

	<b><u>Approve</u></b>	<b><u>Disapprove</u></b>	<b><u>No opinion</u></b>
<b>August 2007</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>24</b>
March 2007	48%	27	25
August 2004*	37%	29	34
April 2003*	34%	25	41
<b><u>Party (August 2007)</u></b>			
Democrats	56%	21	23
Republicans	19%	64	17
Non-partisans/others	36%	29	35
<b><u>Region (August 2007)</u></b>			
Los Angeles County	41%	31	28
Other Southern California	29%	45	26
San Francisco Bay Area	58%	28	14
Other Northern California	32%	42	26

\* Previous measures were asked with regard to Pelosi's role as House Minority Leader.

### **Feinstein job rating**

Last March, Democratic Senator Dianne Feinstein received her best job rating ever during her fifteen years in office – 61% approval and 27% disapproval. In today's report, there has been only a slight drop in the favorable impression that Californians have of her performance – 56% approve and 28% disapprove.

Ever since she has been in office, Feinstein has always received positive ratings, frequently on the order of two to one.

**Table 5**  
**Trend of Dianne Feinstein's job performance ratings as U.S. Senator**  
**(among California registered voters)**

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
<b>August 2007</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>16</b>
March 2007	61%	27	12
July 2006	51%	32	17
February 2005	51%	29	20
June 2005	54%	26	20
February 2005	50%	29	21
August 2004	55%	29	16
May 2004	53%	23	24
July 2003	55%	31	14
April 2003	49%	34	17
2002 (Average)	49%	26	25
2001 (Average)	57%	27	16
2000 (Average)	57%	27	16
1999 (Average)	51%	28	21
1998 (Average)	56%	27	17
1997 (Average)	47%	35	18
1996 (Average)	46%	36	18
1995 (Average)	50%	40	10
1994 (Average)	47%	39	14
1993 (Average)	47%	32	21
<u>Party (August 2007)</u>			
Democrats	74%	13	13
Republicans	39%	48	13
Non-partisans/others	49%	28	23

*Note: For measures conducted prior to 1997, original surveys used a five-point response scale, which has been converted to a two-point approve/disapprove scale for comparative purposes. Surveys prior to 1997 also were conducted among all California adults.*

### **Boxer job rating**

Last March, California voters also provided Democratic Senator Barbara Boxer with her best job approval rating (54% approval and 31% disapproval) during her fifteen-year tenure in office. The current poll finds that high water mark has receded somewhat but remains quite positive (48% approval and 33% disapproval). Today's appraisal is on par with the ratings that Boxer has received during most of her long period of service in the Senate.

**Table 6**  
**Trend of Barbara Boxer's job performance ratings as U.S. Senator**  
**(among California registered voters)**

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
<b>August 2007</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>19</b>
March 2007	54%	31	15
July 2006	45%	34	21
February 2005	41%	34	25
June 2005	47%	30	23
February 2005	49%	36	15
August 2004	49%	36	15
May 2004	44%	33	23
July 2003	49%	35	16
April 2003	43%	35	22
2002 (Average)	45%	29	26
2001 (Average)	49%	31	20
2000 (Average)	50%	30	20
1999 (Average)	45%	35	20
1998 (Average)	45%	29	26
1997 (Average)	41%	35	24
1996 (Average)	42%	36	22
1995 (Average)	45%	39	16
1994 (Average)	43%	37	20
1993 (Average)	41%	35	24
<u>Party (August 2007)</u>			
Democrats	69%	16	15
Republicans	23%	60	17
Non-partisans/others	49%	24	27

*Note: For measures conducted prior to 1997, original surveys used a five-point response scale, which has been converted to a two-point approve/disapprove scale for comparative purposes. Surveys prior to 1997 also were conducted among all California adults.*

## **Information About The Survey**

### **Sample Details**

The findings in this report are based on a random sample survey of 536 registered voters statewide. Interviewing was conducted by telephone in English and Spanish August 3-12, 2007. Up to eight attempts were made to reach and interview each randomly selected voter on different days and times of day during the interviewing period.

The sample was developed from telephone listings of individual voters selected at random from a statewide list of registered voters in California. When drawing samples from registration-based lists, *The Field Poll* stratifies the sample by region and age to insure that the poll includes adequate representations of voters across each major region of the state and across different age categories. Once a voter's name and telephone number has been selected, interviews are attempted only with the specified voter. Interviews can be conducted on either the voter's landline or cell phone, depending on the source of the telephone listing from the voter file. After the completion of interviewing, the results are weighted slightly to *Field Poll* estimates of the demographic and regional characteristics of the state's registered voter population.

Sampling error estimates applicable to any probability-based survey depend on sample size. According to statistical theory, 95% of the time results from findings based on the overall sample of registered voters are subject to a sampling error of +/- 4.5 percentage points. There are other possible sources of error in any survey other than sampling variability. Different results could occur because of differences in question wording, the sequencing of questions, the rigor with which sampling procedures are implemented, as well as other factors.

### **Questions Asked**

Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way Congress is doing its job?

What about the Democrats in Congress? Do you approve or disapprove of the way Congressional Democrats are doing their job?

What about the Republicans in Congress? Do you approve or disapprove of the way Congressional Republicans are doing their job?

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Nancy Pelosi is handling her job as Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives?

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barbara Boxer is handling her job as U.S. Senator?

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Dianne Feinstein is handling her job as U.S. Senator?