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MAJORITY SEES CORRUPTION AS “EQUAL IN BOTH PARTIES”

YET INDEPENDENTS VIEW REPUBLICANS AS MORE “CORRUPT,” “IMMORAL” AND “CONNECTED” TO ABRAMOFF

***Diageo/Hotline Poll Conducted by Financial Dynamics Finds
Jack Abramoff’s Name Recognition Doubles;
More Americans Say “The State Of The Union Is Weaker”
Than Last Year As Bush Prepares For Annual Address***

NEW YORK, January 19, 2005 – In the wake of Republican lobbyist Jack Abramoff’s indictment and growing corruption concerns on Capitol Hill, a majority of American voters believe corruption is an equal problem among both political parties (72%). Most voters think politicians become corrupted by Washington (55%), rather than starting out corrupt (27%), and partisan voters tend to view their own party favorably; only 5% of Republicans and only 1% of Democrats say their respective party is more “corrupt.”

“Voters definitely believe Washington is corrupt – but most think it’s bipartisan. The key in the coming months may be how Independents view the scandals,” said Chuck Todd, Editor-in-Chief of *The Hotline*.

The Diageo/Hotline Poll of 806 registered voters, conducted by Financial Dynamics from January 12 to 15, with analysis by Ed Reilly (D) and Ed Rollins (R), found that while clear majorities see corruption as a bipartisan issue, most of the voters who do associate corruption with one party choose the Republican Party (17% say corruption is more of a problem among Republicans, 6% say Democrats). When asked which party is more “immoral,” a plurality of voters say both parties equally (34%) and voters split exactly between the parties (22% each). But over twice as many Independents say Republicans are immoral (20%) as Democrats (8%), while a majority of Independents says both parties are equally immoral (52%). Yet when asked which party is more “ethical,” voters are split: 29% say both parties equally, 24% say the Republican Party and 23% say the Democratic Party.

Meanwhile, after major media coverage, Jack Abramoff’s name recognition spiked since last month, when only 15% of Americans had an opinion of him. Now 33% of Americans view Abramoff unfavorably and 4% view him favorably. Despite his close ties to Republicans, a plurality of voters say they don’t associate Abramoff with either political party (37%). For voters who do associate him with a party, 30% say he is connected most to Republicans and 2% say he is connected most to Democrats. Only 17% of Republicans associate Abramoff with the GOP, while 47% of Republicans say they don’t associate him with either party.

“Abramoff is the new face of Beltway corruption – but his mug shot is still blurry to most people,” said Republican strategist Ed Rollins.

After a spike in approval during a string of December speeches, President Bush’s job approval dropped four points from last month to 46% approval (and 53% disapproval). Much of the slide was among Independents, whose support dropped seven points from last month. The Diageo/Hotline Poll asked voters who

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disapproved of Bush's performance to choose from a list of explanations why; among Independents and Democrats, the most common reasons were his handling of Iraq and his economic policies, while Republicans cited gas prices and his handling of Iraq.

Looking towards the annual State of the Union Address on January 31, President Bush may face a tough crowd. A plurality of Americans say the state of the union is weaker than a year ago (39%), while only one out of four Americans say the state of the union is stronger.

Most voters also disapprove Congress' job performance (31% approve and 59% disapprove), and despite controlling both houses, Republicans disapprove of Congress by 55% to 39%. Looking towards 2006, more Americans support Democrats in the next congressional elections by 40% to 33%, a three-point change from last month (43% to 33%).

The Diageo/*Hotline* Poll also tested the favorability of several prominent elected officials. Rep. Tom DeLay's unfavorable ratings rose 11 points since December to 15% favorable and 47% unfavorable (from 17% favorable and 36% unfavorable). Sen. Hillary Clinton's favorability ranking improved slightly to 48% favorable and 44% unfavorable since last month (46%-45%). Most of the gain appeared to come from Independents, whose favorable views rose by 11 points (from 38% to 49%). Yet as Independents warmed to Clinton, unfavorable views from fellow Democrats rose by five points (from 14% to 19%), marking her highest unfavorable ratings among Democrats in the past year. Sen. John McCain had a 59% favorable rating and an 18% unfavorable rating, a slight change from last month (56% to 14%).

To obtain complete poll results and PowerPoint presentation please see www.diageohotlinepoll.com
To schedule an interview with Ed Rollins, Ed Reilly or Chuck Todd, contact Megha Narayan at (212) 850-5600 or Megha.Narayan@fd.com

Methodology

The Diageo/*Hotline* Poll was conducted by telephone from January 12 to 15 among a random, nationally representative sample of 806 registered voters (margin of error +/-3.4%), ages 18 and older.

Complete results available at www.diageohotlinepoll.com

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