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## **VOTERS WORRIED ABOUT IMPACT OF MIDDLE EAST VIOLENCE ON U.S. ECONOMY, DOMESTIC SECURITY, TROOPS IN IRAQ**

## **REPUBLICANS, DEMOCRATS DIFFER ON WHICH COUNTRY IS GREATEST THREAT TO U.S. SECURITY**

***Diageo/Hotline Poll Conducted by Financial Dynamics Finds  
Split in Priority Domestic, Local Issues Among Republican, Democrat Voters***

***Bill Clinton, Al Gore Seen More Favorably than President Bush***

NEW YORK, July 27, 2006 – Voters see an overwhelmingly negative impact of the recent conflict between Israel and Hezbollah in the Middle East on the United States, from gas prices to domestic security, according to this month's Diageo/Hotline Poll, conducted by Financial Dynamics.

When asked if the recent violence in the Middle East would have a positive or negative impact on gas prices in the United States, 65% of respondents said a somewhat negative or very negative impact, while only 13% saw a somewhat positive or very positive impact. Similarly, voters see a negative impact on the safety and security of American troops in Iraq (58% - 19%), the U.S. economy (57% - 17%), and the domestic security of the U.S. (52% - 21%).

The Diageo/Hotline Poll of 800 registered voters, conducted by Financial Dynamics from July 20 to 23, with analysis by Ed Reilly (D) and Ed Rollins (R), also found that Republicans and Democrats are split on whether Iran or North Korea poses a greater threat to U.S. security. Although voters generally feel that both pose an equal threat (41% Iran, 39% North Korea), Republicans feel Iran is a greater threat by a 50% - 34% margin while 46% of Democrats identified North Korea as a greater threat to U.S. security over Iran (34%).

The party split over foreign threats to U.S. security also extends to domestic issues. When asked about the most important issue facing the U.S. today, Democrats said opposition to the war in Iraq (25%) and the economy (18%) should be considered the top issues. Republicans, however, identified the economy (16%), terrorism (13%) and support for the war in Iraq (12%) as the top national issues. Independent voters shared opposition to the war in Iraq with Democrats, with 27% saying it is the most important issue facing the U.S. today.

Voters are also divided among priority issues at the local and national level. At the local level, voters identified the economy (13%), taxes (9%) and jobs/unemployment (8%) as the most important issues in their area. On a national level, however, 29% of voters believe Iraq is the priority issue (19% oppose the Iraq war and 10% support the Iraq war), with the economy (16%) also topping the list of top national concerns.

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The local/national dichotomy extends to voters' general perceptions of whether their community and the nation are on the right track or wrong track. In a split sampled question, voters were asked if things were on the right track nationally and locally. Nationally, voters said things are seriously off track by a 60% - 25% margin. On the local level, however, voters said things were on the right track by a 52% - 36% margin.

"Going into August, President Bush is basically at the same low approval level he was six months ago," said Chuck Todd, Editor-in-Chief of *The Hotline*. "With the President on vacation for most of August, it's doubtful we will see any improvement in his numbers before Labor Day. Republicans face the prospect of entering the post-Labor Day season with a very weak President."

Tracking the 2006 elections, the Diageo/*Hotline* Poll shows Democrats opened up a sixteen point advantage in the generic congressional ballot (48% - 32%), up 11 points from last month's 41% - 36% margin. Independents remain skeptical of both parties, however. When asked if the country would be better off if Democrats or Republicans controlled Congress, Independents sided with Democrats by a 25 - 11% margin, but 46% said neither party.

With the 2006 elections less than four months away, job approval for Congress and President Bush remains low. Disapproval for the way Congress is handling its job is 58% -- a four point improvement from June -- while approval for Congress improved one point to 31%. Job disapproval for President Bush is at an equally low level, with 59% disapproving and 38% approving. The greatest voter disapproval for Bush's job performance is in his handling of the war in Iraq; 61% of voters disapprove, including 74% of Independents and 86% of Democrats.

Former President Bill Clinton is seen more favorably than President Bush by a wide margin. Bill Clinton has a favorable/unfavorable rating of 53% - 41%, compared to Bush's 42% - 54% favorable/unfavorable rating. By comparison, former Vice President Gore has a 43%-48% favorable/unfavorable opinion among voters.

"President Bush's policies continue to divide the electorate strongly among party lines," said Republican strategist Ed Rollins. "With voters becoming increasingly negative about a range of issues, especially Iraq and the economy, the 2006 elections could become a referendum on President Bush."

To obtain complete poll results please see [www.diageohotlinepoll.com](http://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](mailto:Megha.Narayan@fd.com)

## **Methodology**

The Diageo/*Hotline* Poll was conducted by telephone from July 20 to 23, 2006, among a random, nationally representative sample of 800 registered voters (margin of error +/- 3.5%), ages 18 and older.

Complete results available at [www.diageohotlinepoll.com](http://www.diageohotlinepoll.com)

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