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LIKELY VOTERS' SUPPORT OF CONGRESSIONAL DEMS CLIMBS 13 POINTS IN ONE MONTH

Both Likely Voters and Registered Voters Give Democrats Significant Advantage in the Generic Ballot

NEW YORK, September 28, 2006 – Despite a slight increase in President Bush's approval rating 42% among both registered and likely voters this month, likely voters are showing significantly more support for Democrats in September than they did in August. Last month among likely voters, Democrats and Republicans were tied at 40% in a generic Congressional ballot, while this month, Democrats hold a 13-point advantage over Republicans (46%-33%). Among registered voters, Democrats' advantage in the generic congressional ballot increased three points since August, at 43%-33%, compared to 40%-33% last month.

Democrats also have a ten-point lead over Republicans in the perception that the nation would be "better off" if they controlled Congress (42%-32% among registered voters and 44%-34% among likely voters).

The Diageo/*Hotline* Poll of 800 registered voters, with a sub-sample of 423 likely voters, conducted by Financial Dynamics from September 24-26, shows Iraq and the economy as the two big voting issues in the upcoming Congressional elections, with 14% of registered voters saying their opposition to the war in Iraq will be their number one voting issue, while 13% say it's the economy they'll be thinking of in the voting booth. Among likely voters, 17% place opposition to the war in Iraq as the top issue, followed by 13% for the economy. Immigration ranks third among both registered (7%) and likely voters (8%).

Meanwhile, Congress's approval rating continues to slide as the midterms approach. Approval has declined from 31% in August to 28% currently, while disapproval has increased from August's 61% to 65% this month. Among likely voters, approval has dropped from 27% to 25% while disapproval increased four points from 66% in August to 70% in September. Congressional disapproval is highest among Democrats at 74%, followed by Independents (70%), compared to a 50% disapproval rate among Republicans.

"As we get closer to the 2006 elections, voters' views on Congress are hardening. And for now, this appears to be helping Democrats," said *Hotline* Editor In Chief, Chuck Todd. "The discontent with Iraq is clearly going to remain an election issue for voters, the million dollar question is if Democrats can capitalize on this."

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As Sen. Hillary Clinton's favorable rating jumped three points among registered voters from 47% last month to 50% in September, Sen. John McCain's favorability climbed 5 points to 56%, up from 51% last month. McCain made an impact across the aisle this month with higher favorability among Democrats and Independents, while his favorability actually decreased among Republicans. At the same time, Democratic House Leader Nancy Pelosi is better known among Republicans and Independents than Democrats: only 50% of Republicans either haven't heard of Pelosi or can't rate her, compared to 51% of Independents, and 58% of Democrats.

This month's Diageo/*Hotline* Poll also asked voters about how they think their peers and family members might vote in 2006. Voters report that more of their family and co-workers will vote Democratic in the upcoming election. 37% thought their "co-workers" would vote Democratic in the congressional elections, versus 23% for Republicans. When respondents were asked how their "family members" would vote, 33% believed more would vote Republican as opposed to 46% for Democrats. Thinking about political party identification among their "circle of friends", 36% said their circle is more Democratic and 29% said more Republican.

Taking the neighborhood temperature, voters report seeing similar amounts of campaign signage and bumper stickers in their area for Republicans and Democrats. 26% of voters say they see more Republican signage, compared to 24% for the Democrats; 29% report seeing more Democratic bumper stickers versus 27% for the Republicans.

As we saw last month, there is still a national/local dichotomy of the most important issues facing voters, as well as a divide in the perception of how things are going in the nation versus how things are going in their area. Nationally, 62% of registered voters say things are seriously off on the wrong track, three points down from last month's 65%, as opposed to only 33% who say the same about the way things are going in their area, which is flat from August. Thinking about specific issues that are most important nationally, registered voters remain most concerned about opposition to Iraq (25%) and the economy (10%), whereas locally, crime emerged this month as the top issue (10%), followed by education (9%) and the economy (8%).

To obtain complete poll results 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 September 24-26, 2006, among a random, nationally representative sample of 800 registered voters (margin of error +/- 3.5%), ages 18 and older. The likely voter subsample is among 423 likely voters (margin of error +/- 4.8%).

Complete results available at www.diageohotlinepoll.com

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