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From: Karl Agne

Report on Public Polling The Post-Labor Day Countdown

With little more than six weeks to go until Election Day, Democrats remain in a very strong position to register significant gains in November. Recent press coverage of new polling has trumpeted a Republican resurgence, but Democrats still maintain a significant 8-point advantage in the generic congressional race (down just 2 points from their average margin over the last four months). Overwhelmingly negative ratings of the Congress have not improved (29 percent approve, 63 percent disapprove), and Americans continue to disapprove of the country's direction by a margin of almost 2-to-1 (32 percent right direction, 61 percent wrong track). President Bush's approval has risen 3 points this month (41 percent approve, 54 percent disapprove) but remains lower than any President has faced heading into a mid-term election in the post-Watergate era.

We underscore these basic facts about the current political environment because there is such a strong temptation to get carried away with the results of outlying polls. Labor Day marks the beginning of the silly season in political polling, when key measures begin to fluctuate, sometimes by huge amounts, between the many polls being released and political operatives from both sides of the aisle selectively choose data that best fits their talking points. Even casual observers will probably remember the debates surrounding CBS' supposed Democratic bias and Gallup's highly volatile likely voter model during the 2004 elections.

This year is no exception. FOX News was the last outlet to release a poll before Labor Day, showing Democrats with a commanding 16-point advantage in the generic congressional race in a poll that came out of the field on August 30th. Exactly two weeks later, they now show a 3-point Democratic margin. Similarly, Gallup shows the generic congressional race shifting from a 12-point Democratic advantage (among registered voters) on September 10th to a dead-even race (this time among likely voters) just one week later. The next day, the

CBS News/New York Times poll found Democrats up by 15 points. It's a mistake to put too much credence in outlying polls, regardless of which direction they're pointing. The key to interpreting public polls during this period is to take them as a whole, analyzing the rolling averages across all outlets rather than relying on any single poll.

An objective analysis of averages derived from all of the polling conducted and released since Labor Day, as well as trends on a number of key measures, indicate there is undeniable truth to the notion of Republican gains:

- President Bush's job approval has inched above 40 percent for the first time since February (41 percent approve, 54 percent disapprove) – a gain of 3 points in the last month.
- Assessments of the country's direction are also at their most optimistic point since February (32 percent right direction, 61 percent wrong track), with 'right direction' up 4 points since August.
- Three different polls show that Republicans have regained their advantage over Democrats on fighting terrorism.
- The Democratic advantage in the generic congressional race has narrowed. Democrats maintained a double-digit advantage in the generic race from March through August but now lead by 8 points, down from 11 points in August.

However, these bullets only tell half of the story. We must view each of these points in the proper context:

- A clear majority of voters in every survey still disapprove of Bush's overall job performance. At 41 percent, Bush's job approval is more than 25 points lower than it was at the same stage heading into the 2002 mid-term elections – and 25 points lower than Bill Clinton's approval in 1998.
- Less than 1-in-3 voters (32 percent) feel the country is headed in the right direction, while nearly twice as many (61 percent) still feel things are off on the wrong track. Declining gas prices have contributed to a small boost in consumer confidence over the last two weeks, but assessments of the major issues driving this election – Iraq, the economy, health care – all remain decidedly negative.
- The 5-year anniversary of 9/11, as well as the full-scale Republican political offensive surrounding it, were bound to have an impact on public attitudes on the war on terrorism. The small Republican advantages found in the ABC News and Gallup polls (7 points and 2 points, respectively) after these events pale in comparison to the margins Democrats continue to enjoy on virtually every other issue, and only time will tell if these gains are real or just a temporary bump as a result of the 9/11 anniversary. Looking at the two newest polls available, CBS/Times (9/15-9/19) finds no post-9/11 bump for Bush and the Republicans on security issues, while the L.A. Times/Bloomberg poll (9/16-9/19) finds some gains for Republicans, but not for the President.

- With an 8-point advantage, Democrats remain in a commanding position in the generic congressional race. In both 2002 and 2004, Democrats led by approximately 2 points in the generic race at this stage. Seven of the nine polls released this month still show Democrats at the critical threshold of 50 percent or higher, and polls continue to show Democratic supporters much more motivated to vote than their Republican counterparts.

On all of these measures, there is no consistent data indicating that the shifts toward Republicans have come among Independents or swing voters. Bush and the Republicans in Congress reached their low points this spring and summer because of deterioration within their Republican base. As the campaign gathers steam, we would fully expect these voters to return to the Republican fold or to alternately simply drop out of the electorate (and thus not be measured in likely voter surveys). Either way, until Bush and the Republicans make significant inroads among Independent voters, they will not be able to make up the significant deficits they still face before Election Day.

The bottom line is that the underlying dynamics of this election have not shifted. Voters are disgusted with the status quo in Washington and demanding change. Iraq is the number one issue driving the broad pessimism in the electorate, but the economic squeeze felt by middle class and working families who face skyrocketing prices and stagnant incomes is also critical.

President Bush, long given the benefit of the doubt by swing voters, is now being held accountable for his failed policies in Iraq and here at home. In addition to disapproval of his job performance, his personal ratings also remain low, as he faces growing doubts about his basic competence and leadership qualities.

Attitudes toward the Congress remain overwhelmingly negative (29 percent approve, 63 percent disapprove in the Gallup survey). Voters continue to express their frustration with Republicans in Congress on a number of fronts, most noticeably blindly following the President's plan in Iraq while ignoring our needs here at home; running up record deficits while giving tax breaks to special interests and doling out record amounts of pork barrel spending; and enriching themselves and their corporate backers at the expense of American taxpayers.

Democrats are in an ascendant position in this election because of Republican failures. The pervasive desire for change is leading many voters to take a fresh look at Democrats and how they would seek to change the direction of our country. But Democrats have not yet separated themselves from the mess in Washington. They must use their current advantage to challenge Republicans, holding them accountable for the failed status quo and advancing a new vision for protecting our country, creating quality jobs, establishing energy independence, and providing affordable health care for all Americans.

With barely six weeks to go until Election Day, the playing field remains tilted in the Democrats' favor. Republicans have failed to win back voters' confidence, and events on the ground, both in Iraq and here at home, are not improving. But Democrats can't afford to just run out the clock. They must continue to hold Republicans accountable and advance a clear vision for how they will lead America after a victory on November 7th.

BUSH JOB APPROVAL – POST 9/11/01

		Approve	Disapprove	App – Disapp
Monthly Average – September	Sep-06	41.1	53.8	-12.7
LA Times/Bloomberg	9/19/2006	45	52	-7.0
Democracy Corps	9/19/2006	44	52	-8.0
CBS/NY Times	9/19/2006	37	56	-19.0
USA Today/Gallup	9/17/2006	44	51	-7.0
Fox News/Opinion Dynamics*	9/13/2006	40	49	-9.0
AP-Ipsos	9/13/2006	39	60	-21.0
NBC News/Wall Street Journal^	9/11/2006	42	53	-11.0
Democracy Corps	9/10/2006	43	53	-10.0
Gallup	9/10/2006	39	56	-17.0
Pew	9/10/2006	37	53	-16.0
ABC	9/7/2006	42	55	-13.0
CNN	9/2/2006	41	55	-14.0
Monthly Average – August	Aug-06	37.9	56.7	-18.8
Monthly Average – July	Jul-06	38.1	56.2	-18.1
Monthly Average – June	Jun-06	37.8	56.6	-18.8
Monthly Average – May	May-06	34.4	59.7	-25.3
Monthly Average – April	Apr-06	35.9	58.0	-22.1
Monthly Average – March	Mar-06	37.5	57.4	-19.9
Monthly Average – February	Feb-06	40.6	54.5	-13.8
Monthly Average – January	Jan-06	42.2	53.2	-10.9
Monthly Average – December	Dec-05	42.1	53.5	-11.3
Monthly Average – November	Nov-05	38.4	56.3	-17.9
Monthly Average – October	Oct-05	40.1	55.1	-15.1
Monthly Average – September	Sep-05	42.4	52.4	-10.0
Monthly Average – August	Aug-05	43.0	52.0	-9.0
Monthly Average – July	Jul-05	46.1	50.2	-4.1
Monthly Average – June	Jun-05	45.6	51.1	-5.4
Monthly Average – May	May-05	46.4	49.0	-2.6
Monthly Average – April	Apr-05	46.9	49.1	-2.2
Monthly Average – March	Mar-05	48.3	46.5	1.8
Monthly Average – February	Feb-05	50.5	45.5	5.0
Monthly Average – January	Jan-05	50.9	44.1	6.8
Monthly Average – December	Dec-04	49.8	45.5	4.3
Monthly Average – November	Nov-04	52.8	43.3	9.5
Monthly Average – October	Oct-04	48.5	47.7	0.8
Monthly Average – September	Sep-04	50.6	45.8	4.8
Monthly Average – August	Aug-04	48.4	47.4	1
Monthly Average – July	Jul-04	47.8	48.2	-0.4
Monthly Average – June	Jun-04	48.5	48	0.5
Monthly Average – May	May-04	46	49.2	-3.2
Monthly Average – April	Apr-04	49.1	46	3.1
Monthly Average – March	Mar-04	49.8	45.5	4.3
Monthly Average – February	Feb-04	49.9	45.3	4.6
Monthly Average – January	Jan-04	54.3	40.5	13.8
Monthly Average – December	Dec-03	55.9	38.7	17.2
Monthly Average – November	Nov-03	52.2	43.3	8.9

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Monthly Average – October	Oct-03	52.3	41.7	10.6
Monthly Average – September	Sep-03	53	42.3	10.7
Monthly Average – August	Aug-03	56.3	37.8	18.5
Monthly Average – July	Jul-03	57.2	36.8	20.4
Monthly Average – June	Jun-03	61.7	33.1	28.6
Monthly Average – May	May-03	64.8	29.5	35.3
Monthly Average – April	Apr-03	69.1	25.4	43.7
Monthly Average – March	Mar-03	62	31.9	30.1
Monthly Average – February	Feb-03	58.2	35.8	22.4
Monthly Average – January	Jan-03	58.5	35.6	22.9
Monthly Average – December	Dec-02	62.5	31.6	30.9
Monthly Average – November	Nov-02	64.3	29.6	34.7
Monthly Average – October	Oct-02	63.2	31.1	32.1
Monthly Average – September	Sep-02	66.5	28.1	38.4
Monthly Average – August	Aug-02	64.9	29.1	35.8
Monthly Average – July	Jul-02	68.3	25.6	42.7
Monthly Average – June	Jun-02	71.5	21.3	50.2
Monthly Average – May	May-02	73.7	20.2	53.5
Monthly Average – April	Apr-02	75.4	18.7	56.7
Monthly Average – March	Mar-02	76.6	18	58.6
Monthly Average – February	Feb-02	77.9	15.5	62.4
Monthly Average – January	Jan-02	81.1	14	67.1
Monthly Average – Dec.	Dec-01	83.3	11.5	71.8
Monthly Average – Nov.	Nov-01	85.5	9.2	76.3
Monthly Average – Oct.	Oct-01	87.7	8.3	79.4
Monthly Average – Sept.	Sep-01	84.7	9.2	75.5
Monthly Average – Sept.	Sep-01	53.3	40	13.3
Monthly Average – August	Aug-01	54.8	34.7	20.1
Monthly Average – July	Jul-01	54.8	34.8	20
Monthly Average – June	Jun-01	53.3	35.8	17.5
Monthly Average – May	May-01	54.8	32.9	21.9
Monthly Average – April	Apr-01	57.9	31.3	26.6
Monthly Average – March	Mar-01	57.1	25.9	31.2
Monthly Average – Feb.	Feb-01	55.2	22.9	32.3

COUNTRY DIRECTION

Poll	Direction/Satisfied	Date	Right	Wrong	Right-Wrong
Monthly Average - September 2006		Sep-06	32.0	60.8	-28.8
LA Times/Bloomberg	D	9/19/2006	31	61	-30
Democracy Corps#	D	9/19/2006	32	59	-27
AP/Ipsos#	D	9/13/2006	33	63	-30
NBC News/Wall Street Journal#	D	9/11/2006	31	54	-23
Democracy Corps#	D	9/10/2006	33	61	-28
Gallup/USA Today#	S	9/10/2006	32	67	-35
Monthly Average - August 2006		Aug-06	28.3	65.9	-37.6
Cook/RT Strategies	D	8/27/2006	28	64	-36
Democracy Corps#	D	8/27/2006	31	62	-31
Newsweek	S	8/25/2006	28	65	-37
Newsweek	S	8/11/2006	26	67	-41
Gallup/USA Today#	S	8/10/2006	28	69	-41
AP/Ipsos#	D	8/9/2006	26	71	-45
LA Times/Bloomberg	D	8/1/2006	31	63	-32
Monthly Average - July 2006		Jul-06	29.5	63.5	-34.0
Monthly Average - June 2006		Jun-06	28.1	64.0	-35.9
Monthly Average - May 2006		May-06	25.0	69.8	-44.8
Monthly Average - April 2006		Apr-06	26.0	67.8	-41.8
Monthly Average - March 2006		Mar-06	29.9	64.0	-34.1
Monthly Average - February 2006		Feb-06	35.5	59.8	-24.3
Monthly Average - January 2006		Jan-06	35.0	57.9	-22.9
Monthly Average - December 2005		Dec-05	33.2	60.7	-27.5
Monthly Average - November 2005		Nov-05	30.9	63.9	-33.0
Monthly Average - October 2005		Oct-05	32.8	61.3	-28.5
Monthly Average - September 2005		Sep-05	33.5	61.5	-28.0
Monthly Average - August 2005		Aug-05	36.7	57.7	-21.0
Monthly Average - July 2005		Jul-05	37.8	56.4	-18.6
Monthly Average - June 2005		Jun-05	35.0	55.5	-20.5
Monthly Average - June 2005		Jun-05	37.1	55.9	-18.8
Monthly Average - May 2005		May-05	36.1	55.4	-19.3
Monthly Average - April 2005		Apr-05	36.9	54.6	-17.7
Monthly Average - March 2005		Mar-05	40.3	55.5	-15.3
Monthly Average - February 2005		Feb-05	41.2	51.8	-10.7
Monthly Average - January 2005		Jan-05	42.0	51.0	-9
Monthly Average - December 2004		Dec-04	42.5	49.5	-7
Monthly Average - November 2004		Nov-04	44.5	50.5	-6
Monthly Average - October 2004		Oct-04	40.9	53.6	-12.7
Monthly Average - September 2004		Sep-04	42.4	51.7	-9.3
Monthly Average - September 2004		Sep-04	42.4	51.7	-9.3
Monthly Average - August 2004		Aug-04	40.0	53.4	-13.4
Monthly Average - July 2004		Jul-04	39.1	54.3	-15.2
Monthly Average - June 2004		Jun-04	38.6	54.4	-15.8

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Monthly Average - May 2004	May-04	34.6	58.6	-24
Monthly Average - April 2004	Apr-04	38.8	56.8	-18
Monthly Average - March 2004	Mar-04	39.0	54.8	-15.8
Monthly Average - February 2004	Feb-04	42.0	53.5	-11.5
Monthly Average - January 2004	Jan-04	46.9	47.2	-0.3
Monthly Average - December 2003	Dec-03	46.0	45.9	0.1
Monthly Average - November 2003	Nov-03	40.7	52.0	-11.3
Monthly Average - October 2003	Oct-03	40.3	53.4	-13.1
Monthly Average - September 2003	Sep-03	38.2	54.8	-16.6
Monthly Average - August 2003	Aug-03	40.8	52.8	-12
Monthly Average - July 2003	Jul-03	43.5	49.3	-5.8
Monthly Average - June 2003	Jun-03	47.2	46.0	1.2
Monthly Average - May 2003	May-03	51.0	42.2	8.8
Monthly Average - April 2003	Apr-03	56.5	35.0	21.5
Monthly Average - March 2003	Mar-03	46.6	46.6	0
Monthly Average - February 2003	Feb-03	40.0	52.8	-12.8
Monthly Average - January 2003	Jan-03	38.6	52.0	-13.4
Monthly Average - December 2002	Dec-02	43.4	48.2	-4.8
Monthly Average - November 2002	Nov-02	46.8	46.5	0.3
Monthly Average - October 2002	Oct-02	42.8	48.3	-5.5
Monthly Average - September 2002	Sep-02	46.2	45.3	0.8
Monthly Average - August 2002	Aug-02	46.0	47.0	-1
Monthly Average - July 2002	Jul-02	46.2	48.3	-2.2
Monthly Average - June 2002	Jun-02	49.6	39.0	10.6
Monthly Average - May 2002	May-02	52.0	40.2	11.8
Monthly Average - April 2002	Apr-02	55.5	34.3	21.3
Monthly Average - March 2002	Mar-02	56.0	36.3	19.8
Monthly Average - February 2002	Feb-02	63.0	31.5	31.5
Monthly Average - January 2002	Jan-02	63.5	28.0	35.5
Monthly Average - December 2001	Dec-01	67.7	22.7	45
Monthly Average - November 2001	Nov-01	63.7	27.3	36.3
Monthly Average - October 2001	Oct-01	67.0	29.0	38
<i>Average - September 11-30, 2001</i>	<i>9/11-30/2001</i>	<i>59.3</i>	<i>32.7</i>	<i>26.7</i>
<i>Average - January 1-September 10, 2001</i>	<i>1/1-9/11/2001</i>	<i>48.1</i>	<i>43.2</i>	<i>5</i>
Yearly Average - 2000	2000	53	37	16.5
Yearly Average - 1999	1999	52	39	12.5
Yearly Average - 1998	1998	54	38	15.4
Yearly Average - 1997	1997	46	46	0.2

GENERIC CONGRESSIONAL BALLOT

	Date	Republicans	Democrats	D-R
Monthly Average - September	Sep-06	41.2	49.6	8.3
CBS/New York Times RV	9/19/2006	35	50	15
Democracy Corps LV	9/19/2006	41	51	10
USA Today/Gallup RV	9/17/2006	48	48	0
Fox News/Opinion Dynamics LV	9/13/2006	38	41	3
Gallup RV	9/10/2006	41	53	12
Democracy Corps LV	9/10/2006	44	50	6
PEW RV	9/10/2006	39	50	11
ABC RV	9/7/2006	42	50	8
CNN LV	9/2/2006	43	53	10
Monthly Average - August	Aug-06	38.3	49.5	11.3
Monthly Average - July	Jul-06	37.9	48.3	10.4
Monthly Average - June	Jun-06	38.2	48.9	10.7
Monthly Average - May	May-06	37.6	47.5	9.9
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Monthly Average - October	Oct-05	39.0	46.2	7.2
Monthly Average - September	Sep-05	39.8	49.3	9.5