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# *Rocky Mountain Poll*

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## BUSH JOB RATINGS EDGE UPWARD BUT DEEP CONCERNS FOUND ON DEFICIT AND HEALTH CARE POLICIES

Phoenix, Arizona, January 21, 2005. In the post election environment, Arizonans' evaluation of the job President George W. Bush is doing in the White House has improved modestly, but deep concerns appear to exist regarding the growth in the federal deficit and health care costs for Americans.

Fifty-three percent now rate Mr. Bush's performance favorably, compared to 50 percent in October. Those with a negative view of his performance total 28 percent today, compared to 31 percent in October.

Curiously, it is among Democrats and Independents that his ratings are most improved, while among Republicans, the numbers have softened somewhat notwithstanding the fact that Republicans are clearly pleased with their President. This may trace to growing Republican concerns about the federal deficit.

The current readings may reflect a temporary blush following the electoral victory Mr. Bush registered in November. When we look at the public's view of his performance in each of ten public policy areas, it is clear that there is a soft underbelly to their assessments and some voter skepticism regarding the growth in the federal deficit (22% favorable/50% unfavorable) and the President's policies as they affect health care costs for Americans (25% favorable/44% unfavorable).

Arizonans also tip toward a negative assessment of the President's policies as they may affect the future financial stability of the Social Security system (30% favorable/38% unfavorable) and as well, the degree to which they have confidence that Mr. Bush has developed a good "exit strategy" for Iraq (33% favorable/40% unfavorable).

Furthermore, on the policy area that has helped sustain the President's overall popularity the most, "managing the situation in Iraq," we find only 43 percent giving favorable ratings, while 36 percent are unfavorable.

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Public assessments in several other policy areas are similarly closely divided:

- improving the nation's economy;
- protecting the environment;
- improving world opinion of the United States; and
- improving the U.S. balance of trade.

At the present time, the only policy category on which Arizonans give President Bush fairly strong favorable assessments over negative ones is on the issue of "reducing your taxes" (favorable ratings are 42 percent while negatives are only 29 percent). Of interest is the finding that favorable ratings jump to 63 percent among Republicans, decline to 44 percent among Independents and then again to 27 percent among Democrats. Favorable assessments also fall off among families earning under \$45,000 per year. Nonetheless, it is impressive that four in ten Arizonans believe the new tax policies have benefitted them directly, which is, of course, not to say that they believe the remaining tax bite is something that makes them happy.

-30-

EDITOR'S NOTE: This Rocky Mountain Poll Arizona (2005-I-02) is based on 703 telephone interviews with adults, conducted from January 4<sup>th</sup> through January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2005, throughout Arizona. In the overall sample, one may say with 95 percent certainty that the results have a statistical precision of plus or minus 3.7 percent of what they would have been had the entire adult population been surveyed. The Rocky Mountain Poll is conducted by the Behavior Research Center of Arizona and is an independent and non-partisan research program.

This statement conforms to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

**ENCLOSED:** Statistical data for reference.

**STATISTICAL DATA**

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RMP 2005-I-02

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*"Next, I'd like to read you the names of some public officials. As I read each one, please just tell me if you think the job they are doing in office is excellent, good, fair, poor or very poor."* (READ EACH; ROTATE LIST)

| <b>President George W. Bush</b> |             | EXCELLENT/<br>GOOD | FAIR       | POOR/VERY<br>POOR | (NET POS<br>TO NEG) |
|---------------------------------|-------------|--------------------|------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Jan.</b>                     | <b>2005</b> | <b>53%</b>         | <b>16%</b> | <b>28%</b>        | <b>(+ 25)</b>       |
| Oct.                            | 2004        | 50                 | 15         | 31                | (+ 19)              |
| July                            | 2004        | 52                 | 15         | 30                | (+ 22)              |
| April                           | 2004        | 45                 | 16         | 36                | (+ 9)               |
| January                         | 2004        | 50                 | 16         | 29                | (+ 21)              |
| October                         | 2003        | 51                 | 19         | 27                | (+ 24)              |
| July                            | 2003        | 56                 | 20         | 21                | (+ 35)              |
| April                           | 2003        | 69                 | 13         | 14                | (+ 55)              |
| January                         | 2003        | 57                 | 21         | 18                | (+ 39)              |
| October                         | 2002        | 58                 | 19         | 20                | (+ 38)              |
| July                            | 2002        | 63                 | 21         | 15                | (+ 48)              |
| April                           | 2002        | 73                 | 15         | 10                | (+ 63)              |
| January                         | 2002        | 77                 | 15         | 7                 | (+ 70)              |
| October                         | 2001        | 79                 | 14         | 5                 | (+ 74)              |
| July                            | 2001        | 44                 | 27         | 21                | (+ 23)              |
| April                           | 2001        | 49                 | 24         | 19                | (+ 30)              |

DETAIL

**January 2005: President Bush**

*"More specifically, would you say President George W. Bush is doing an excellent, good, only fair, poor or a very poor job in each of the following areas?"*

|   | Excellent/<br>Good | Only<br>Fair | Poor/Very<br>Poor | (Net)  |
|---|--------------------|--------------|-------------------|--------|
| Managing the situation in Iraq                                | 43%                | 18%          | 36                | (+ 7)  |
| Reducing your taxes   | 42                 | 25           | 29                | (+ 13) |
| Improving the nation's economy                                | 38                 | 27           | 32                | (+ 6)  |
| Protecting the environment                                    | 34                 | 27           | 32                | (+ 2)  |
| Improving world opinion of the U.S.                           | 38                 | 20           | 36                | (+ 2)  |
| Improving the U.S. balance of trade                           | 32                 | 24           | 33                | (- 1)  |
| Developing a good exit strategy for Iraq                      | 33                 | 17           | 40                | (- 7)  |
| Assuring the financial security of the social security system | 30                 | 24           | 38                | (- 8)  |
| Reducing health care costs for Americans                      | 25                 | 27           | 44                | (- 19) |
| Reducing deficit spending by the Federal government           | 22                 | 22           | 50                | (- 28) |

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**NET POSITIVE TO NEGATIVE POINTS**

|  | All<br>Arizon-<br>ans | Repub-<br>licans | Inde-<br>pendents | Demo-<br>crats | Voters over<br>54 years |
|--|-----------------------|------------------|-------------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| Managing the situation in Iraq                               | + 7                   | +49              | -21               | -39            | - 2                     |
| Reducing your taxes  | +13                   | +46              | +15               | -14            | + 8                     |
| Improving the nation's economy                               | + 6                   | +49              | -0-               | -30            | + 5                     |
| Protecting the environment                                   | + 2                   | +30              | -20               | -25            | - 5                     |
| Improving world opinion of the U.S.                          | + 2                   | +36              | -18               | -33            | - 2                     |
| Improving the U.S. balance of trade                          | - 1                   | +36              | -31               | -17            | - 7                     |
| Developing a good exit strategy for<br>Iraq                  | - 7                   | +25              | -51               | -44            | -15                     |
| Assuring financial security of the social<br>security system | - 8                   | +20              | -16               | -43            | -14                     |
| Reducing health care costs for<br>Americans                  | -19                   | + 8              | -33               | -44            | -30                     |
| Reducing deficit spending by the<br>Federal government       | -28                   | + 2              | -44               | -59            | -37                     |

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