

Alito Retains Majority Support; Six in 10 Plan to Follow Hearings

Six in 10 Americans plan to follow the Senate confirmation hearings that start today for Supreme Court nominee Samuel Alito, and his supporters continue to outnumber his opponents by about a 2-1 margin. But Alito's support falls sharply among people who think he'd overturn the court's landmark Roe v. Wade abortion decision.

Overall, 53 percent of Americans support Alito's confirmation while 27 percent oppose it, with 20 percent undecided. Views haven't changed substantially since George W. Bush nominated Alito in late October. In terms of public sentiment he's in about the same position as John Roberts was at the opening of his hearings to become chief justice.

Sixty percent in this ABC News/Washington Post poll say they plan to follow the Senate proceedings at least somewhat closely, although far fewer, just under one in five, say they'll be following them "very closely."

ABORTION – Alito's views on abortion may play a central role in the hearings. Without a clear indication of how he'd rule on abortion cases, expectations are fractured. Thirty-eight percent think he'd leave current abortion law as it is, but a total of 44 percent think he'd either vote for greater restrictions on abortion (26 percent) or vote to overturn Roe (18 percent).

People who think Alito would overturn Roe oppose his confirmation, by 54-33 percent. But he wins broad support both from those who think he'd leave current abortion law as it is, and those who think he'd keep abortion legal, but with greater restrictions.

	Alito's nomination:	
	Support	Oppose
Think Alito would:		
Keep abortion law as is	68%	21
Impose greater restrictions	64	26
Overturn Roe entirely	33	54

Those views are in line with previous polling on abortion and the court. In earlier ABC/Post polls, six in 10 or more have said the court should retain Roe. At the same time, about as many have expressed support for imposing greater restrictions on abortion (42 percent) as for keeping current law as is (45 percent).

Many seem to be projecting their own attitudes onto Alito: Fifty-eight percent say the way they'd expect him to vote on Roe is the way they'd want him to vote. But again

distaste for overturning Roe comes through: Among people who think Alito would vote to overturn Roe, nearly six in 10 say that's not what they'd want.

	Is this what you'd want?	
	Yes	No
Think Alito would:		
Keep abortion law as is	67%	28
Impose greater restrictions	58	41
Overturn Roe entirely	41	58

GROUPS – Support for Alito varies widely by partisanship: Seventy-six percent of Republicans back him, compared with 47 percent of independents and 40 percent of Democrats. Still, though, Democrats divide on the nomination, rather than mainly opposing it.

There's also a modest gender gap: Men and women alike are more likely to support than oppose Alito's confirmation, but he's supported by 58 percent of men, compared with 49 percent of women. Women are more apt to be Democrats, and also to be undecided.

Beyond those who think he'd overturn Roe, opposition to Alito is highest – though well short of a majority – among liberals (44 percent oppose his nomination), people with postgraduate educations (39 percent) and young adults (38 percent of those under age 30).

	Alito's nomination:	
	Support	Oppose
All	53%	27
Republicans	76	11
Independents	47	30
Democrats	40	39
Men	58	26
Women	49	28
Conservatives	69	12
Moderates	50	32
Liberals	38	44
High school	53	23
College	55	28
Postgrad	48	38

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone Jan. 5-8, 2006, among a random national sample of 1,001 adults. The results have a three-point error margin. Sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS of Horsham, Pa.

Analysis by Jon Cohen and Gary Langer.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com at <http://abcnews.com/pollvault.html>.

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Full results follow (*= less than 0.5 percent).

1-15 Held for release.

16. On another subject, as you may know, Bush has nominated federal judge Samuel A. Alito to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court. Do you think the U.S. Senate should or should not confirm Alito's nomination to the Supreme Court?

	Should	Should not	No opinion
Alito, 1/8/06	53	27	20
Alito, 12/18/05	54	28	19
Alito, 11/2/05	49	29	22
Roberts, 9/11/05*	55	26	19
Roberts, 8/28/05	57	22	20
Roberts, 7/21/05	59	23	17
Breyer, 5/15/94	52	10	37
Thomas, 10/14/91**	59	28	14
Thomas, 10/13/91	56	29	15
Thomas, 10/12/91	50	29	20
Thomas, 10/9/91	47	23	30
Thomas, 10/8/91	50	25	24
Thomas, 9/15/91	63	24	14

*as chief justice

**No opin. for Thomas includes "wait and see" (vol.)

17. How closely will you be following the Senate confirmation hearings for Alito, which start (next/this) week - very closely, somewhat closely, not too closely or not closely at all?

	-----Closely-----			-----Not Closely-----			No opinion
	NET	Very	Somewhat	NET	Not too	Not at all	
1/8/06	60	18	43	39	24	15	*

20. The Supreme Court legalized abortion 33 years ago in the ruling known as Roe versus Wade. Do you think that if Alito is confirmed to the court, he would vote to (overturn Roe versus Wade entirely); vote to (keep abortion legal but with greater restrictions); or vote to leave current abortion law as it is?

	Overturn	Greater restrictions	Leave as is	No opinion
1/8/06	18	26	38	18

20a. (IF GAVE ANSWER AT Q20) Is that what you would want him to do, or not?

	Yes	No	No opinion
1/8/06	58	39	3

END