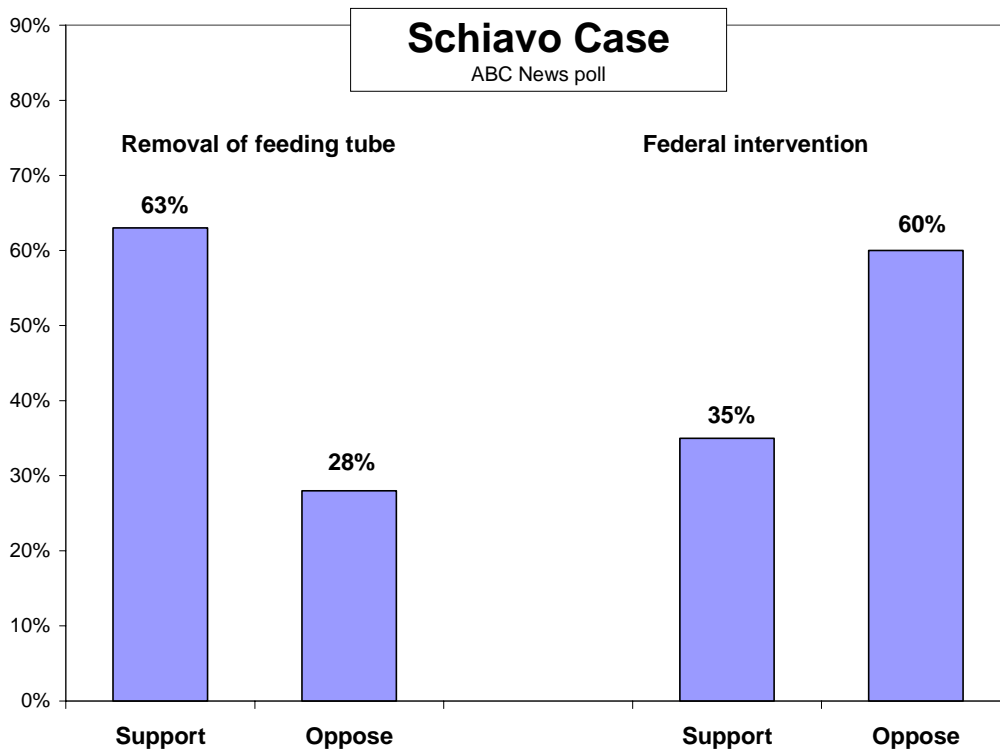


## **Federal Intervention in Schiavo Case Prompts Broad Public Disapproval**

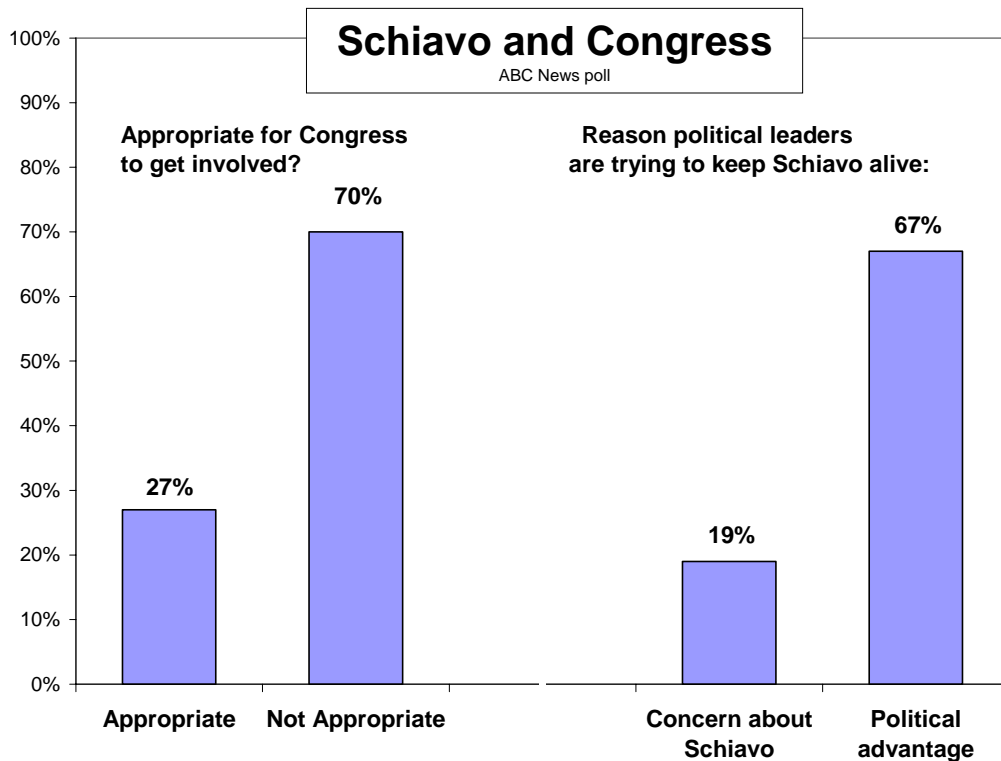
Americans broadly and strongly disapprove of federal intervention in the Terri Schiavo case, with sizable majorities saying Congress is overstepping its bounds for political gain.

The public, by 63-28 percent, supports the removal of Schiavo's feeding tube, and by a 25-point margin opposes a law mandating federal review of her case. Congress passed such legislation and George W. Bush signed it early Monday.

That legislative action is distinctly unpopular: Not only do 60 percent oppose it, more, 70 percent, call it inappropriate for Congress to get involved in this way. And by a lopsided 67-19 percent most think the elected officials trying to keep Schiavo alive are doing so more for political advantage than out of concern for her or for the principles involved.



This ABC News poll also finds that the Schiavo case has prompted an enormous level of personal discussion: Half of Americans say that as a direct result of hearing about this case, they've spoken with friends or family members about what they'd want done if they were in a similar condition. Nearly eight in 10 would not want to be kept alive.



**INTENSITY** – In addition to the majority, the intensity of public sentiment is also on the side of Schiavo’s husband, who’s fought successfully in the Florida courts to remove her feeding tube. And intensity runs especially strongly against congressional involvement.

Included among the 63 percent who support removing the feeding tube are 42 percent who “strongly” support it – twice as many as strongly oppose it. And among the 70 percent who call congressional intervention inappropriate are 58 percent who hold that view strongly – an especially high level of strong opinion.

	-----Support-----			-----Oppose-----		
	NET	<b>Strongly</b>	Somewhat	NET	Strongly	Somewhat
Removal of feeding tube	63%	<b>42</b>	21	28	21	8
	-----Appropriate-----			-----Inappropriate-----		
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	<b>Strongly</b>	Somewhat
Congressional action	27%	14	13	70	<b>58</b>	12

**GOP GROUPS** – Views on this issue are informed more by ideological and religious views than by political partisanship. Republicans overall look much like Democrats and independents in their opinions. But two core Republican groups – conservatives and evangelical Protestants – are more divided: Fifty-four percent of conservatives support removal of Schiavo’s feeding tube, compared with seven in 10 moderates and liberals. And evangelical Protestants divide about evenly – 46 percent are in favor of removing the

tube, 44 percent opposed. Among non-evangelical Protestants, 77 percent are in favor – a huge division between evangelical and mainline Protestants.

Conservatives and evangelicals also are more likely to support federal intervention in the case, although it doesn't reach a majority in either group. Indeed, conservative Republicans oppose involving the federal courts, by 57-41 percent.

Conservatives and evangelicals hold these views even though most people in both groups – 73 and 68 percent, respectively – say that if they personally were in this condition, they would not want to be kept alive.

Regardless of their preference on the Schiavo case, about two-thirds of conservatives and evangelicals alike call congressional intervention inappropriate. And majorities in both groups, as in others, are skeptical of the motivations of the political leaders seeking to extend Schiavo's life.

	Removal of feeding tube		Federal intervention	
	Support	Oppose	Support	Oppose
Protestants:				
Non-evangelical	77%	18	26%	71
Evangelical	46	44	44	50
Catholics	63	26	38	56
Liberals				
Liberals	68	24	34	62
Moderates	69	22	29	67
Conservatives	54	40	48	49
Democrats				
Democrats	65	25	34	63
Independents	63	28	31	61
Republicans	61	34	39	58
Conservative Reps.	55	40	41	57

**PREFERENCE and EXPERIENCE** – Public views on this issue are informed in part by Americans' preferences for their own care if they were in a similar situation: Sixteen percent would want life support; as noted, 78 percent would not. While still a very large majority, that's down from 87 percent in an ABC News/Washington Poll last week.

Among people who favor removing Schiavo's life support, 94 percent say that's also what they would want for themselves. By contrast, people who oppose removing the feeding tube in Schiavo's case divide about evenly on what they'd want for themselves: Forty-five percent would want life support, 41 percent would not.

Some speak from experience: A third of Americans say they've had friends or family members who passed away in a hospital or other care facility after life support was removed; nearly two in 10 say they were personally involved in that decision. People who've been personally involved in such a decision are more apt than others to support removing Schiavo's feeding tube, and to say they personally would not want life support.

AGE and ATTENTION – There are differences among age groups. Senior citizens are more apt than others to strongly support removing Schiavo’s feeding tube, and also more apt to oppose federal intervention. And young adults are less likely to say that, as a result of the Schiavo case, they’ve discussed their own wishes with family or friends.

Just under six in 10 Americans are closely following the Schiavo case, including 16 percent who’ve been following it very closely – a respectable albeit not overwhelming level of public attention. Young adults, age 18 to 29, are less than half as likely as their elders to be following the case closely – just 27 percent are doing so. There’s an irony in that result: Schiavo herself was stricken at age 26.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News poll was conducted by telephone March 20, 2005, among a random national sample of 501 adults. The results have a 4.5-point error margin. Sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS Intersearch of Horsham, Pa.

Analysis by Gary Langer.

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

Media contact: Cathie Levine, (212) 456-4934.

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

1. How closely have you been following the case of Terri Schiavo, the woman at the center of a life-support controversy in Florida? Have you been following this issue very closely, somewhat closely, not so closely or not closely at all?

	-----Closely-----			-----Not closely-----			No opin. *
	NET	Very	Somewhat	NET	Not so	At all	
3/20/05	56	16	40	44	16	28	

2. Schiavo suffered brain damage and has been on life support for 15 years. Doctors say she has no consciousness and her condition is irreversible. Her husband and her parents disagree about whether she would have wanted to be kept alive. Florida courts have sided with the husband and her feeding tube was removed on Friday.

What’s your opinion on this case - do you support or oppose the decision to remove Schiavo’s feeding tube? Do you support/oppose it strongly or somewhat?

	-----Support-----			-----Oppose-----			No opin. 9
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
3/20/05	63	42	21	28	8	21	

3. If you were in this condition, would you want to be kept alive, or not?

	Yes	No	No opinion
3/20/05	16	78	6
3/13/05	8	87	4

4. Florida state courts have heard the Schiavo case. Federal courts have said they don't have jurisdiction because it involves Florida law only. Would you support or oppose a new federal law requiring the federal courts to review the Schiavo case? This probably would mean reinserting the feeding tube until the case goes through the federal courts.

	Support	Oppose	No opin.
3/20/05	35	60	5

5. Regardless of your preferences in the Schiavo case, do you think it is appropriate or inappropriate for Congress to get involved in this way? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

	-----Appropriate-----			-----Inappropriate-----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opin.
3/20/05	27	14	13	70	12	58	3

6. Do you think the political leaders who are trying to keep Schiavo alive are more concerned about (her and the principles involved), or more concerned about (using her case for political advantage)?

	Her/ principles	Using her case for political advantage	Both (vol.)	Other (vol.)	No opin.
3/20/05	19	67	4	3	7

7. As a direct result of your hearing about the Schiavo case, have you yourself had any discussions with friends or family members about what you would want done if you were in this condition, or not?

	Yes	No	No opin.
3/20/05	49	51	*

8. Have you had any friends or family members who passed away in a hospital or other care facility after life support was discontinued, or not? IF YES: Were you personally involved in that decision, or not?

	-----Yes-----			No
	NET	Involved	Not involved	opin.
3/20/05	33	18	15	66

\*\*\*END\*\*\*