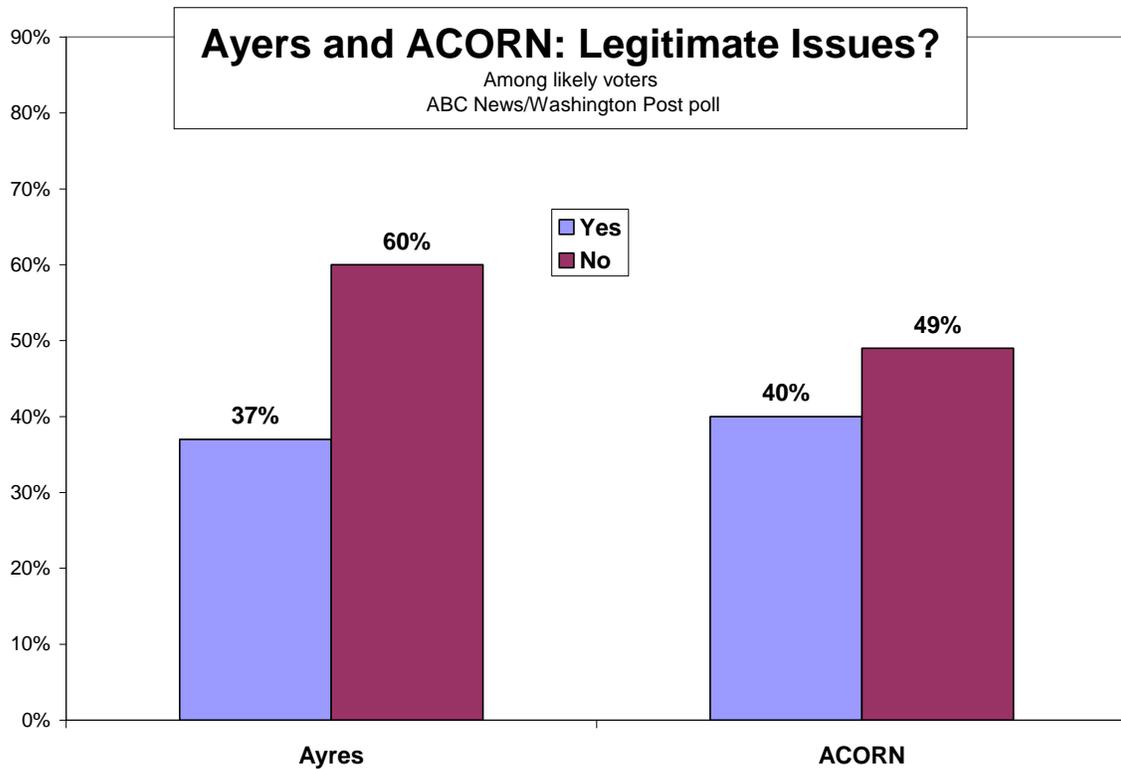


More Challenges for McCain From Ayers to the Palin Pick

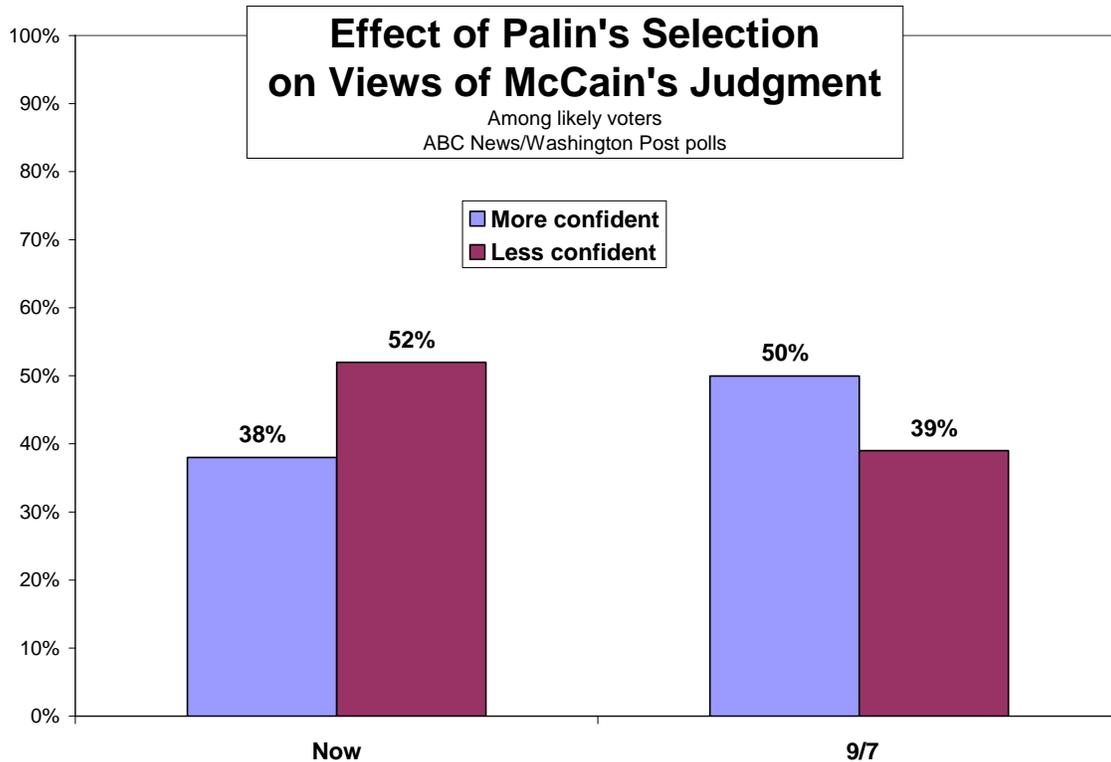
More challenges for John McCain: Likely voters overwhelmingly reject his effort to make an issue of Barack Obama's association with 1960's radical William Ayers. Fallout continues from McCain's pick of Sarah Palin for vice president, with 52 percent saying it weakens their confidence in his judgment. And on optimism, it's Obama by 2-1.

Skepticism about the Ayers issue was one of the factors cited by Colin Powell in his endorsement of Obama yesterday, and in the latest ABC News/Washington Post poll likely voters broadly agree: Sixty percent say Obama's relationship with Ayers is not a legitimate issue in the presidential campaign; 37 percent say it is.

There's less of a split, though, on the Obama campaign's association with the community group ACORN; 49 percent say it's not a legitimate issue, 40 percent say it is, with more, 11 percent, unready to express an opinion on the subject. McCain's accused ACORN of voter registration fraud; the group blames some of its canvassers for filling out faked forms, and says it itself has notified the authorities of such cases.



On the vice presidential candidates, 52 percent of likely voters say McCain's pick of Palin has made them less confident in the kind of decisions he'd make as president; that's up 13 points since just after the selection, as doubts about Palin's qualifications (also voiced by Powell on Sunday) have grown. Just 38 percent say it makes them more confident in McCain's judgment, down 12 points.



Those numbers are more than reversed on Obama's pick of Joe Biden: Fifty-six percent of likely voters say it makes them more confident in Obama's decision-making, 31 percent less so.

Optimism, meanwhile, is a strong point of differentiation between the two candidates. Likely voters by 62 percent to 30 percent see Obama as more optimistic than McCain – all else equal, an attractive quality in a candidate, as Ronald Reagan demonstrated. And in a similar attribute, voters by a 17-point margin, 54-37 percent, see Obama as having the better personality and temperament for office.

INDIES – On all these, the views of swing-voting independents are critical. They see Obama as more optimistic by 57-31 percent and as better-suited temperamentally by 52-36 percent. The Palin pick makes them less rather than more confident in McCain's judgment by 51-39 percent, while the Biden selection makes them more rather than less confident in Obama by 50-33 percent.

Independents by 60-37 percent say Ayers is not a legitimate issue; on ACORN they divide more narrowly, 47-42 percent.

OTHERS – There are other differences among groups. Views of the Palin selection, naturally, are highly partisan. But majorities of moderates (62 percent), young adults (59 percent) and women (56 percent) all say it makes them less confident in McCain’s judgment. (More women than men say so.) So do near majorities, 48 percent, of white women and married women alike.

The pick plays better in the GOP base: Seventy percent of Republicans, 68 percent of evangelical white Protestants and 67 percent of conservatives say the selection of Palin makes them more confident in McCain’s decision-making.

On Ayers, similarly, 62 percent of conservatives and 67 percent of Republicans say it’s a legitimate issue. Just 29 percent of moderates, 12 percent of liberals and 10 percent of Democrats agree.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone Oct. 16-18, 2008, among a random national sample of 995 likely voters, including landline and cell-phone-only respondents. Results have a 3-point error margin for the full sample. Sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS of Horsham, PA.

Analysis by Gary Langer.

For details on ABC News polls including full questionnaires, methodology and sampling error information, see <http://abcnews.com/pollingunit>.

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

1-6 held for release.

7. (ASKED OF LIKELY VOTERS) Regardless of who you may support, who do you think [ITEM] - (Obama) or (McCain)?

d. is more optimistic

		Obama	McCain	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
10/18/08	LV	62	30	4	2	2
8/22/08	LV	65	27	4	1	2

h. has a better personality and temperament to be president

		Obama	McCain	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
10/18/08	LV	54	37	6	2	1
9/29/08	LV	57	37	2	2	1
9/7/08	RV	57	35	3	2	3
5/11/08	RV	55	34	4	3	4
3/2/08	RV	59	29	2	4	7

8-10 held for release.

11 previously released.

12. (ASKED OF LIKELY VOTERS) Regardless of your vote preference, does Obama's choice of Biden as his running mate make you more confident or less confident in the kind of decisions Obama would make as president?

		More confident	Less confident	No effect (vol.)	No opinion
10/18/08	LV	56	31	11	3
9/7/08	LV	55	29	12	5

13. (ASKED OF LIKELY VOTERS) Regardless of your vote preference, does McCain's choice of Palin as his running mate make you more confident or less confident in the kind of decisions McCain would make as president?

		More confident	Less confident	No effect (vol.)	No opinion
10/18/08	LV	38	52	8	2
9/7/08	LV	50	39	6	4
9/4/08	RV	43	39	14	4

14. (ASKED OF LIKELY VOTERS) Do you think [ITEM] is or is not a legitimate issue in this year's presidential election?

a. Obama's past relationship with 1960s radical William Ayres

		Legitimate issue	Not a legitimate issue	No opinion
10/18/08	LV	37	60	3

b. The Obama campaign's association with the community group ACORN

10/18/08	LV	40	49	11
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15-17 held for release.

END