ABC NEWS/WASHINGTON POST POLL: BUSH APPROVAL – 7/28/02
EMBARGO: 6:30 P.M. BROADCAST, 8 P.M. PRINT/WEB, Monday, July 29, 2002

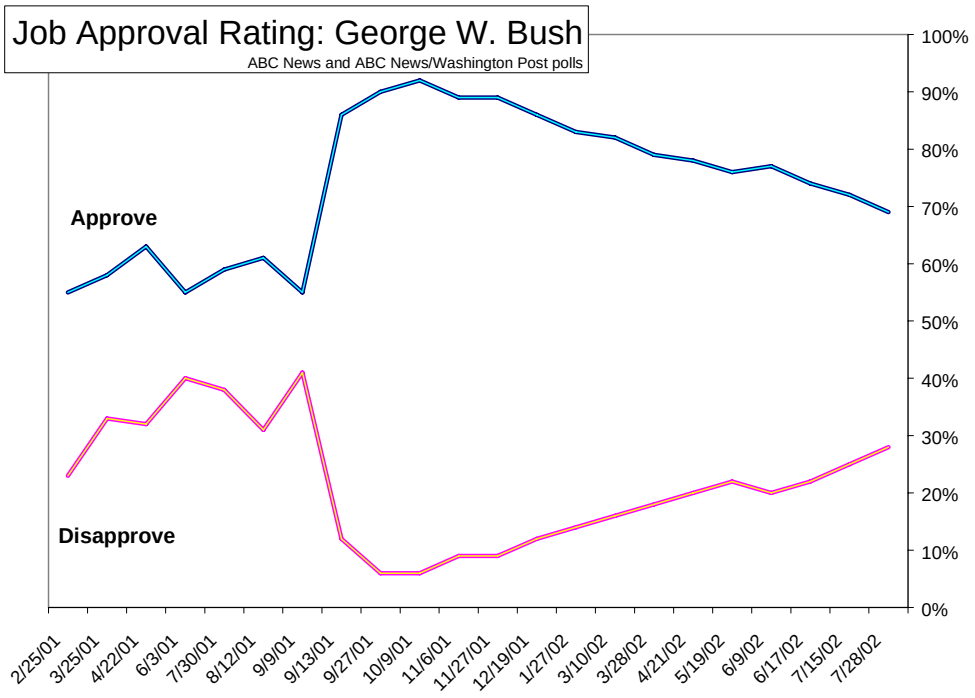
Out of the Stratosphere, Bush is Still Sky-High

George W. Bush's job approval rating has eased ever so gently out of the stratosphere, slipping below 70 percent for the first time since Sept. 11. But it's still extraordinarily high, especially at a time of worsening public views of the economy.

Among other factors, Bush may have helped himself with his jawboning, and the quick passage of legislation, on corporate fraud. His approval rating for handling that particular issue has advanced from 49 percent two weeks ago to 55 percent today.

More broadly, 69 percent of Americans in a new ABC News/Washington Post poll approve of Bush's overall job performance. That peaked at a record 92 percent in an ABC News poll last October and has inched down in 10 out of 12 polls since.

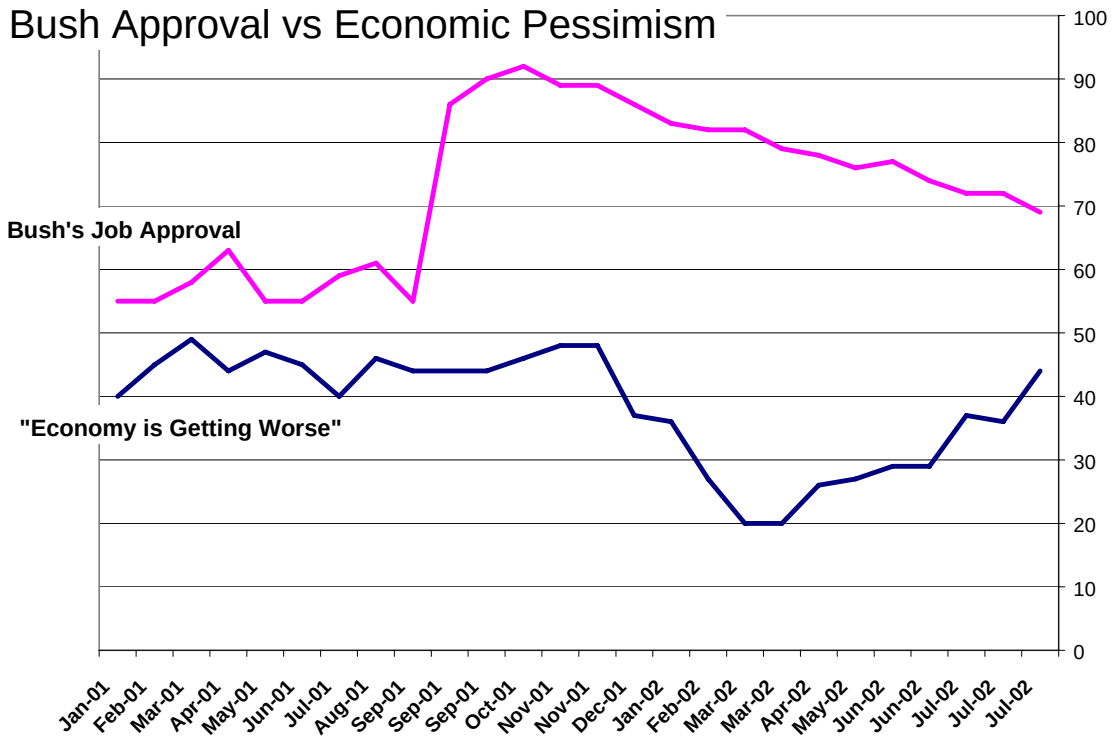
Bush's rating is closer to his pre-Sept. 11 level (14 points higher) than to his post-Sept. 11 high (23 points lower). But 69 percent approval isn't chopped liver: It matches Bill Clinton's career high, and falls just four points short of Ronald Reagan's.



ECONOMY – The war on terrorism is the wellspring of Bush's support; 81 percent approve of his response to Sept. 11, far above his rating on any other individual issue. But with the war no longer dominating page one, the economy is his challenge.

Pessimism about the economy's direction is now its highest in eight months. Forty-four percent say it's getting worse, up from 36 percent in mid-July. This can extract a gradual tally on Bush's popularity, because his job rating falls among economic pessimists.

Economy's direction:		Bush approval Approve	Disapprove
Getting better	(17%)	87%	11
Staying same	(39%)	80	18
Getting worse	(44%)	53	43



The same is true for intensity of approval. Among people who think the economy's improving, 72 percent approve strongly of Bush's performance; but among economic pessimists only 22 percent approve strongly. His overall strong approval is down to 39 percent in this poll, also its lowest since Sept. 11. (It peaked in October at 76 percent.)

Economy's direction:		Bush approval Approve "strongly"	Disapprove "strongly"
Getting better	(17%)	72%	4
Staying same	(39%)	42	7
Getting worse	(44%)	22	24

Worsening consumer expectations are best shown by the decline in the number of Americans who say the economy is improving – down dramatically from 47 percent in March to 17 percent now. Bush has been spared, in part, because his rating is still high among those who now say the economy is holding steady, if no longer getting better.

THE LAST BUSH – Bush is still holding tougher than the last president in office during a recession, his father, whose job rating reached 90 percent just after the Gulf War, then lost 43 points in the next nine months. George W. Bush, by contrast, has lost just 23 points in the nine months since hitting his peak.

The comparison isn't entirely apt because the 1990-91 recession was much worse, with economic sentiment far grimmer. Today 64 percent of Americans say the economy's in bad shape, but in December 1991 it was 93 percent – still a record. And while 44 percent today say the economy's getting worse, in December 1991 it was 66 percent.

Indeed, George W. Bush gets 57 percent approval for handling the economy – a good rating, especially in the face of weakened consumer views, even if it's down from 72 percent amidst the general rally 'round last November. Bush even gets 53 percent approval for handling Wall Street and the stock market – suggesting that he's at least avoiding broad blame for the market's recent rout.

PARTISAN – Partisanship, naturally, is increasing as Sept. 11 grows more distant. At his peak last October, Bush's job approval rating was not only 99 percent among Republicans, but 92 percent among independents and 88 percent among Democrats. Today it's still nearly unanimous among Republicans – 95 percent – but down by 26 points among independents, and down by 37 points among Democrats.

Bush approval among:	Now	Oct. 9
Republicans	95%	99
Independents	66	92
Democrats	51	88

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone July 24-28, 2002, among a random national sample of 1,023 adults. The results have a three-point error margin. Fieldwork by TNS Intersearch of Horsham, PA.

Analysis by Gary Langer.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com on the Internet at:
http://abcnews.go.com/sections/us/PollVault/PollVault.html

Media contact: Todd Polkes, (212) 456-4586

*= less than 0.5 percent

1. Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling his job as president? Do you approve/disapprove strongly or somewhat?

	---------Approve---------			--------Disapprove-------			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	opin.
7/28/02	69	39	31	28	14	14	3
7/15/02	72	42	31	25	13	12	2
6/17/02	74	42	32	22	13	9	4
6/9/02	77	41	36	20	11	9	3
5/19/02	76	48	28	22	13	8	3
4/21/02	78	47	31	20	10	9	2
3/28/02	79	49	30	18	10	8	3
3/10/02	82	52	30	16	7	9	2
1/27/02	83	56	27	14	7	7	3
12/19/01	86	64	22	12	6	6	2
11/27/01	89	69	21	9	5	4	1
11/6/01	89	65	24	9	4	5	2
10/9/01	92	76	16	6	3	3	1
9/27/01	90	70	20	6	3	3	4
9/13/01	86	63	23	12	6	5	2
9/9/01	55	26	29	41	22	20	3
8/12/01	61	28	33	31	17	14	8
7/30/01	59	28	30	38	22	17	3
6/3/01	55	27	28	40	22	18	6
4/22/01	63	33	30	32	16	16	5
3/25/01	58	NA	NA	33	NA	NA	8
2/25/01	55	NA	NA	23	NA	NA	22

2. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Bush is handling:

7/28/02 - Summary Table:

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
a. The economy	57	39	4
b. The U.S. campaign against terrorism	81	17	2
c. Wall Street and the stock market	53	38	9
d. The issue of financial fraud and accounting irregularities by large business corporations	55	38	7

Trend:

a. The economy

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
7/28/02	57	39	4
7/15/02	58	38	3
4/21/02	64	33	3
1/27/02	62	34	4
12/19/01	67	27	6
11/6/01	72	23	5
9/9/01	48	48	4
7/30/01	52	45	3
6/3/01	53	41	6
4/22/01	55	38	7
3/25/01	50	42	8

b. The U.S. campaign against terrorism

	---------Approve---------			--------Disapprove-------			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	opin.
7/28/02	81	NA	NA	17	NA	NA	2
7/15/02	83	NA	NA	15	NA	NA	2
5/19/02	79	51	27	19	10	9	3
4/21/02	81	56	25	18	10	7	2
3/10/02	88	64	24	10	5	5	2
1/27/02	88	NA	NA	10	NA	NA	2
12/19/01	89	67	22	9	5	4	2
10/15/01	92	75	17	5	3	3	3

c. Wall Street and the stock market

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
7/28/02	53	38	9
7/15/02*	50	36	14

*”Regulating” Wall Street and the stock market

d. The issue of financial fraud and accounting irregularities by large business corporations

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
7/28/02	55	38	7
7/15/02	49	43	7

3. Do you think the nation’s economy is getting better, getting worse or staying the same?

	Better	Worse	Same	No opin.
7/28/02	17	44	39	1
7/15/02	20	36	43	2
7/7/02*	22	37	41	0
6/9/02	27	29	43	1
5/12/02	35	27	38	0
4/14/02	34	26	40	0
3/17/02	47	20	32	1
2/17/02	29	27	42	2
1/20/02	25	36	39	1
12/9/01	24	37	38	1
11/11/01	16	48	36	1
10/14/01	15	46	39	0
9/16/01	9	44	46	1
8/12/01	16	46	38	0
7/15/01	13	40	46	0
6/17/01	17	45	38	1
5/20/01	13	47	39	0

*7/7/02 and previous, ABC/Money. Call for full trend.

END