

Slight Shift in Impeachment Views, Though Most Still Favor the Outcome

With Bill Clinton's job no longer on the line, public opposition to his impeachment has ebbed slightly in the last year and a half. But six in 10 Americans still say the Senate did the right thing by allowing him to remain in office.

Slightly more people approve of the House vote to impeach – 45 percent now, compared to 40 percent at the time. Just over four in 10 also disapprove of the Senate vote to acquit; it was 39 percent at the time.

Disapproval of the impeachment vote is eight points lower than it when it occurred, and approval of the Senate vote is 10 points lower. Slightly more people have no opinion.

However, these results don't mean more people think Clinton should have been removed. Sixty percent say the Senate did the right thing by allowing him to remain in office, while 34 percent say he should have been thrown out. That roughly matches views at the time.

House vote to impeach Clinton:				Senate vote to acquit:			
	Approve	Disapprove	No opin.		Approve	Disapprove	No opin.
7/00	45%	51	5	7/00	50%	43	6
12/98	40	59	1	2/99	60	39	1

	Right for Clinton to remain in office	Senate should have removed him	No opin.
7/00	60%	34	7
2/99	65	33	2

The changes in views of the House and Senate votes may have occurred simply because Clinton's job no longer is at stake. The majority view during the controversy was that he had done wrong – but that it didn't warrant removing him from office.

While Clinton's job approval ratings remain creditable (57 percent in May), he's never regained his personal popularity. Just 44 percent in an ABC News/Washington Post poll this week expressed a generally favorable opinion of him, 50 percent unfavorable. A backlash against his impeachment in the November 2000 elections seemed unlikely at the time, and seems equally unlikely now.

PARTISANS - Opinions on Clinton's brush with political death are as partisan as ever. Six in 10 Republicans say he should have been removed from office; 78 percent of Democrats, and 59 percent of independents, say the Senate did right by letting him stay

METHODOLOGY - This ABCNews.com poll was conducted by telephone in two samples of just over 1,000 interviews each, the first July 12-16 and the second July 19-23. The results have a three-point error margin. Fieldwork by ICR- International Communications Research of Media, Pa.

Analysis by Gary Langer.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com on the Internet at:

<http://www.abcnews.com/sections/us/PollVault/PollVault.html>

62. As you may know, the House of Representatives voted to impeach Bill Clinton in 1998. Then the Senate held a trial on the charges to decide whether or not Clinton should be removed from office. Looking back, do you approve or disapprove of the House vote to impeach Clinton?

	Approve	Disapprove	No opin.
7/16/00	45	51	5
12/20/98	40	59	1

63. The Senate found Clinton not guilty of the impeachment charges, allowing him to remain in office. Looking back, do you approve or disapprove of the Senate vote finding Clinton not guilty of the impeachment charges?

	Approve	Disapprove	No opin.
7/16/00	50	43	6
2/12/99	60	39	1

64. Thinking back to Bill Clinton's impeachment, do you think the U.S. Senate did the right thing by allowing Clinton to remain in office, or do you think the Senate should have removed Clinton from office?

	Right to let him remain	Should have removed him	No opin.
7/16/00	60	34	7
2/7/99*	65	33	2

*"Do you think the Senate should or should not remove Clinton from office?"