

Early Criticism of Clinton Wins Praise for Lieberman

Joseph Lieberman wins big points from the American public for his early criticism of Bill Clinton in the Monica Lewinsky affair, a sign that selecting Lieberman for vice president could help Al Gore defuse some of the Clinton fatigue that's dogged his campaign.

Seventy-two percent in an ABC News Good Morning America poll think more favorably of Lieberman when they're told he was one of the first Democratic lawmakers to criticize Clinton publicly. It's Lieberman's most positive attribute of four tested in this survey.

Lieberman's Orthodox Jewish faith, meanwhile, is a non-issue for sizable majorities; indeed 53 percent regard it as a positive attribute, compared to 17 percent negative. The largest concern, expressed by 29 percent of the public, is that he might seek to influence policy toward Israel based on his religious beliefs rather than on U.S. interests.

Overall, 60 percent approve of the choice, even though two-thirds don't know enough about Lieberman yet to have formed a favorable or unfavorable opinion of him. These numbers were almost identical for Republican vice presidential nominee Dick Cheney when he was selected a week and a half ago.

	-View of the choice-		-----View of the man-----		
	Approve	Disapprove	Favorable	Unfavorable	No opin.
Lieberman	60%	19	24%	10	65
Cheney	61	15	29	10	60

In the end the selection of a vice president is unlikely to make or break any presidential campaign; it's the top of the ticket that drives the vote. Seventy-three percent in this poll say Gore's choice of Lieberman won't make any difference in their vote; 77 percent said the same of Cheney.

SO, HE'S JEWISH – Eighty-nine percent say they're not concerned that Lieberman's faith would interfere with his duties as vice president. And 83 percent say they would vote for a Jewish candidate for vice president, same as in a poll 17 years ago; 10 percent said they wouldn't. (That's not a precise question, since people don't vote solely for v.p.)

More broadly, just six percent of Americans say that, honestly assessing themselves, they have "some feelings of prejudice against Jews." Self-reporting is not necessarily a weak gauge; in a similar question on black-white relations last year, 34 percent reported "some racist feelings."

Have "some feelings of prejudice against Jews"		Have "some racist feelings" (10/99)	
Yes	No	Yes	No
6%	93	34%	66

ATTRIBUTES – Of the attributes tested in this poll, Lieberman's weakest is his vote to keep late-term or "partial-birth" abortion legal; 51 percent think less favorably of him for it. But just 15 percent feel that way strongly.

By contrast, 72 percent think favorably of his criticism of Clinton, and 40 percent feel that way strongly; 71 percent think favorably of his 12-year tenure as a U.S. senator from Connecticut; and 53 percent respond favorably to his being an Orthodox Jew (including equal numbers of white Protestant and white Catholic respondents.)

Conservatives and Republicans are disproportionately critical of Lieberman's vote on late-term abortion. But these the same groups have the most praise for Lieberman's criticism of Clinton on the Lewinsky scandal: Nearly nine in 10 Republicans and 83 percent of conservatives respond favorably; so do more than seven in 10 independents and moderates. That declines to about six in 10 Democrats and liberals alike.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News poll was conducted by telephone Aug. 7, 2000, among a random national sample of 513 adults. The results have a 4.5-point error margin. Field work 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/politics/PollVault/PollVault.html>

Here are the full results (*= less than 0.5 percent):

1. As you may know, Al Gore has selected Joseph Lieberman as his vice presidential running mate. Do you approve or disapprove of Gore's choice of Lieberman as his vice presidential running mate?

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
8/7/00	60	19	21

Compare to: Bush's choice of Cheney

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
7/29/00	61	15	24

2. Will Gore's choice of Lieberman make you more likely to vote for Gore, less likely, or won't it make any difference in your vote?

	More	Less	No difference	No opinion
8/7/00	15	10	73	2

Compare to: Bush's choice of Cheney

	More	Less	No difference	No opinion

7/29/00 13 7 77 3

3. Do you have a favorable or unfavorable impression of Lieberman, or perhaps you don't know enough to say?

	Favorable	Unfavorable	No opinion
8/7/00	24	10	65

Compare to: Cheney

	Favorable	Unfavorable	No opinion
7/29/00	29	10	60

4. In general, would you vote for a Jewish candidate for vice-president, or not?

	Yes	No	No opinion
8/7/00	83	10	8
4/12/83	83	13	4

5. I'm going to mention a few things about Lieberman. For each one please tell me if it makes you feel more favorable or less favorable toward him. (SCRAMBLE LIST)

8/7/00:

	--More Favorable--			--Less Favorable--			No
	NET	Much	Smwht.	NET	Smwht.	Much	op.
A. He's an Orthodox Jew	53	16	37	17	12	5	30
B. While a U.S. senator he voted to keep late-term or "partial birth" abortions legal	43	22	22	51	15	36	6
C. He was the first Democrat in Congress to publicly criticize Bill Clinton for the Monica Lewinsky scandal	72	40	32	22	12	10	6
D. He's been a member of the Senate for 12 years, representing the state of Connecticut	71	25	46	15	10	5	14

6. Orthodox Jews usually don't work on Saturdays, the Jewish Sabbath. Lieberman says he DOES work on the Sabbath and other Jewish holidays when his duties require it. Are you concerned his religious practices would interfere with his duties as vice-president if he is elected, or not? If concerned: Do you think it would interfere a great deal, or somewhat?

	-----Concerned-----			Not	No
	NET	Great deal	Somewhat	Concerned	opinion
8/7/00	10	5	6	89	1

7. Are you concerned or not concerned that Lieberman might try to influence U.S. policy toward Israel based on his religious beliefs, rather than based on U.S. interests? If concerned: Does that concern you a great deal, or somewhat?

	-----Concerned-----	Not	No
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	NET	Great deal	Somewhat	Concerned	opinion
8/7/00	29	12	17	67	4

8. If you honestly assessed yourself, would you say that you have at least some feelings of prejudice against Jews?

	Yes	No	No opin.
8/7/00	6	93	*

Compare to:

If you honestly assessed yourself, would you say that you have at least some racist feelings?

		Yes	No	No opin.
10/19/99	All	34	66	*
	Whites	32	67	*
	Blacks	40	60	1

END