

Bush Keeps the Edge In Public Opinion

George W. Bush has maintained the upper hand in public opinion since Florida's vote count was certified last week. But support for Al Gore's departure hasn't grown - and most Americans support Gore's demand for a completed hand recount in two counties.

Bush's position seems stronger: people divide evenly on whether they approve or disapprove of how his campaign is handling the disputed election, while they disapprove of the Gore campaign's handling of the situation by a 35-point margin. That's worsened sharply for Gore since mid-November, before the Florida vote was certified.

	Handling of the election situation:	
	Approve	Disapprove
Bush campaign:		
12/3	48%	47
11/16	46	48
Gore campaign:		
12/3	30	65
11/16	45	51

Fifty-seven percent say Gore should concede the election, about the same as the 60 percent on Nov. 26, the night of the certification. And 73 percent say they'd accept Bush as the legitimate winner, compared to 59 percent for Gore.

Strong partisan differences continue to underlie these views. Among Republicans, 88 percent think Gore should concede. Among Democrats it falls to 31 percent. Independents side more with Bush, with 57 percent saying Gore should give up.

Gore loses more of his base when it comes to assessments of his handling of the situation. Eighty-one percent of Republicans approve of how the Bush campaign is handling the situation, dropping to 26 percent of Democrats. Only 51 percent of Democrats approve of the Gore campaign's handling of the situation, dropping to eight percent of Republicans.

VOTE COUNT – At the same time, 57 percent in this ABC News/Washington Post poll say the two counties that didn't complete the hand counts that Gore requested - Dade and Palm Beach - should do so, and should have those tallies counted in the final total. That's the central issue in Gore's contest of the Florida results, being heard in Tallahassee.

This isn't a change in opinion; back on Nov. 16 about the same number, 56 percent, favored including hand counts in the final tally.

Most of the people who want those votes hand counted, naturally, are not the same ones who want Gore to concede. Two-thirds of those who want them counted don't think Gore should concede, and 93 percent of those who don't want them counted think he should concede. A total of 17 percent of Americans are conflicted. That's the group that says Gore should concede but that also wants these votes to count.

But the preference for hand counts in these two counties doesn't extend to the entire state, possibly because of concerns that such a large task would lengthen the process. Fifty-two percent don't think there should be a statewide hand count of all votes. That rises to 73 percent of those who want this over quickly, within the next week.

THE END - Although most Americans would like this situation cleared up sooner rather than later, it's not causing undue alarm. Sixty-one percent are not worried about the situation, which actually is up from 52 percent about three weeks ago. And relatively few, 18 percent, say they're "very" worried about it.

Most are still more likely to think the situation is the result of a very close election, rather than reflecting a serious problem with the political system, but concern on this point has risen. Forty-three percent see a serious problem in the system, up from 32 percent on Nov. 12.

Most would appreciate a resolution. Fifty-five percent say it's more important for this to end quickly than it is for each campaign to make its full case in court, about the same as it was a week ago. There are sharp partisan differences here too. Eighty-three percent of Republicans want it to "end quickly," compared to 30 percent of Democrats. Independents fall in the middle at 56 percent.

CONFIDENCE - Confidence in the Florida vote count has slipped a little since the certification last week. Fifty-one percent of Americans have at least some confidence that the votes have been counted accurately, down from 56 percent a week ago. And only 26 percent are "very confident" in the accuracy of the Florida count. Thirty-one percent express no confidence in it at all, up from 21 percent last week.

SUPREME COURT - Sixty percent of Americans approve of the U.S. Supreme Court becoming involved in this matter, right about where it was before the court heard arguments in this case.

About three-fourths, moreover, have at least some confidence that the Supreme Court's ruling will be fair to both sides. But this confidence has its limits. Just 32 percent say they're "very" confident in the court, while 44 percent are "somewhat" confident.

These views are less affected by partisanship than most other questions on this matter. Large majorities of Democrats, Republicans and independents alike express at least some confidence in the Court's fairness. What happens after the court rules is an open question.

Involvement by the Florida legislature and the U.S. Congress are viewed much less favorably. Fifty-six percent of Americans oppose the Florida legislature getting involved. A similar number, 57 percent, don't want the U.S. Congress involved in trying to select the winner.

CANDIDATE PREFERENCE – As ever, the public remains about evenly split on which candidate they'd like to see in the White House. Forty-six percent say they'd like to see Bush become the next president, 43 percent pick Gore.

METHODOLOGY - This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone Dec. 3, 2000, among a random national sample of 757 adults. The results have a 3.5point error margin. Field work by TNS Intersearch of Horsham, Pa.

Analysis by Daniel Merkle.

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 (* is less than 0.5 percent):

The latest ABC News and Washington Post poll is based on random telephone interviews, conducted December 3, 2000. The national survey was completed with 757 adults; the margin of error is plus or minus 3.5 percentage points.

*= less than 0.5 percent

1. Please tell me whether you approve or disapprove of the way (ITEM) is handling the election situation.

12/3/00

	Approve	Disapprove	No opin.
A. The Bush campaign	48	47	6
B. The Gore campaign	30	65	5

Trend:

A. The Bush campaign

	Approve	Disapprove	No opin.
12/3/00	48	47	6
11/16/00	46	48	5
11/12/00	46	45	9

B. The Gore campaign

	Approve	Disapprove	No opin.
12/3/00	30	65	5
11/16/00	45	51	5
11/12/00	44	47	9

2. As you may know, the Secretary of State in Florida has declared George W. Bush as the winner of the election there. Al Gore says the votes were not counted fairly. Do you think Gore should concede the election and let Bush become president, or should Gore continue to ask the courts to decide whether the vote count in Florida was fair?

	-----Should concede-----			---Should not concede----			No
	NET	Strgly.	Smewht.	NET	Strgly.	Smwhat.	opin.
12/3/00	57	52	5	40	36	4	3
11/26/00*	60	53	6	35	31	3	6

*Tonight the Secretary of State in Florida declared George W. Bush as the winner of the election there. Al Gore says the votes were not counted fairly. Do you think Gore should concede the election and let Bush become president, or ask the courts to decide whether the vote count in Florida was fair?

3. How confident are you that the votes in Florida have been counted accurately - very confident, somewhat confident, not too confident or not confident at all?

	-----Confident-----			-----Not Confident-----			No
	NET	Very	Somewhat	NET	Not too	Not at all	opin.
12/3/00	51	26	25	47	16	31	2
11/26/00	56	27	30	39	18	21	5
11/16/00*	50	19	31	46	18	28	4
11/12/00*	59	21	38	38	20	18	3

* "will be"

4. How do you feel about the election situation overall - are you personally worried about it, or not worried? If worried: Are you very worried about it, or somewhat worried?

	-----Worried-----			Not	No
	NET	Very	Somewhat	Worried	opin.
12/3/00	38	18	20	61	1
11/12/00	47	19	28	52	1

5. Do you think this situation reveals serious problems in this country's system of electing the president, or do you think it's just the kind of thing that can happen in a very close election?

	Problem in system	Happens in close election	No opinion
12/3/00	43	54	3
11/12/00	32	65	3

6. As you may know, Al Gore asked some counties in Florida to hand-count their ballots to recheck the vote totals there. Two counties did not complete their hand-counts. Do you think the hand-counts in these counties should or should not be completed and counted in the final vote total? Do you feel that way strongly or only somewhat?

	-----Should include-----			---Should not include----			No
	NET	Strgly.	Smewht.	NET	Strgly.	Smwhat.	op.
12/3/00	57	50	7	41	35	6	2

Compare to:

As you may know, some counties in Florida are hand-counting ballots to recheck the vote totals there. Secretary of State Harris has said she will not include these hand-counts in her final tally of Florida votes because they missed the deadline. Do you think these hand-counts should or should not be included in the final vote total to determine the winner in Florida?

	-----Should include-----			---Should not include----			No
	NET	Strgly.	Smewht.	NET	Strgly.	Smwhat.	op.
11/16/00	56	49	7	43	36	7	2

7. Do you think there should or should not be hand-counts of all the votes in Florida?

	Yes	No	No opinion
12/3/00	46	52	2

8. The United States Supreme Court is reviewing the Florida vote count as requested by the Bush campaign. Do you approve or disapprove of the United States Supreme Court being involved in this case?

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
12/3/00	60	35	5
11/26/00*	58	36	7

*The United States Supreme Court has agreed to a request from the Bush campaign that it review the Florida vote count. Do you approve or disapprove of the United States Supreme Court getting involved in this case?

9. How confident are you that the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in this case will be fair to both sides - very confident, somewhat confident, not too confident, or not confident at all?

	-----Confident-----			-----Not Confident-----			No opin.
	NET	Very	Somewhat	NET	Not too	Not at all	
12/3/00	76	32	44	21	14	8	3

10. The state legislature in Florida may get involved in attempting to determine the winner of the election there. Would you approve or disapprove of the Florida state legislature getting involved in this matter?

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
12/3/00	38	56	6
11/26/00*	33	59	8

*Leaders of the state legislature in Florida have said they may get involved in determining the winner of the election there.

11. Would you approve or disapprove of the United States Congress attempting to determine the winner of the election in Florida?

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
12/3/00	38	57	5

12. What do you think is more important - for this to end quickly, say within a week; or for both campaigns to have a chance to make their full case in court, even if it takes longer than that? (IF "CHANCE TO MAKE CASE IN COURT": How long are you willing to wait for this to end - a couple of weeks, up to a month or longer than that?)

	-Make case in court, willing to wait-					
	End this quickly	NET	A few weeks	Up to a month	Longer than a month	No opin.
12/3/00	55	43	8	8	27	3
11/26/00	57	40	12	7	20	4
11/16/00	57	40	na	na	na	3

13. If this ends with (Gore/Bush) winning the presidency, will you consider him to have been legitimately elected as president, or not?

	-----Gore-----			-----Bush-----		
	Yes	No	No opin.	Yes	No	No opin.
12/3/00	59	38	3	73	23	4
11/26/00	60	36	5	76	19	5

14. Who do you personally want to become the next president - (Al Gore) or (George W. Bush)?

	Gore	Bush	Neither (vol.)	Other (vol.)	No opin.
12/3/00	43	46	10	*	1
11/26/00	42	43	10	2	3
11/16/00	44	43	10	2	2
11/12/00	44	45	6	1	4

END