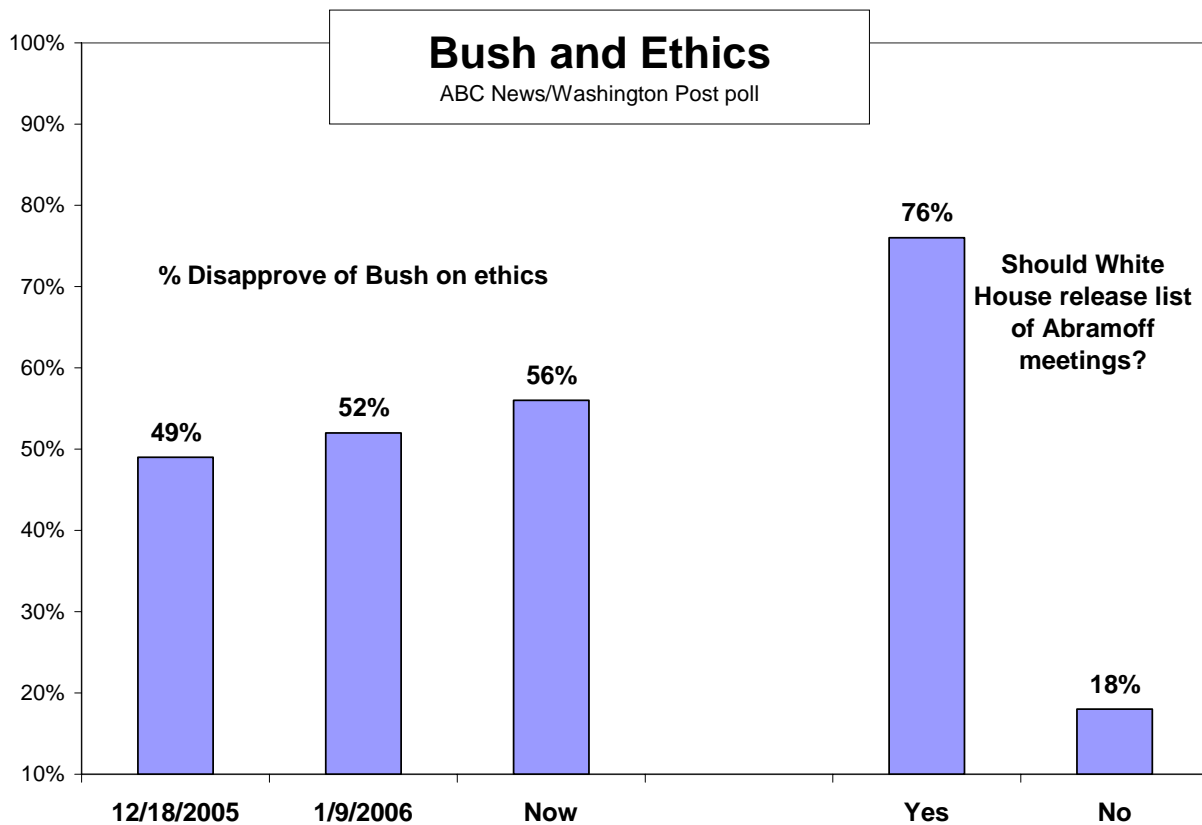


## **Majorities Disapprove of Bush on Ethics, Favor Release of Abramoff Meeting Records**

A clear majority of Americans now disapprove of George W. Bush's handling of ethics in government, and three-quarters say the administration should disclose all contacts between White House officials and disgraced Washington lobbyist Jack Abramoff.

The administration has declined to release records of Abramoff meetings, saying it wouldn't "engage in a fishing expedition." But in the latest ABC News/Washington Post poll, 76 percent say the White House should produce such a list. Even 65 percent of Republicans say so.

As things stand, the ethics situation in Washington is not working to Bush's advantage. In advance of his 2006 State of the Union address, 56 percent now disapprove of the way the president is handling ethics in government, up from 49 percent in mid-December.



Beyond disapproval of Bush on ethics, there's been some weakening for the Republicans more broadly. Asked which party they trust more to stand up to lobbyists and special interest groups,

just 27 percent of Americans pick the Republicans, down from 34 percent last month. More, 46 percent, prefer the Democrats.

Independents – quintessential swing voters – pick the Democrats over the Republicans in trust to handle ethics by 46 percent to 20 percent. But skepticism is considerable; a quarter of all Americans, and about a third of independents, volunteer that they don't trust either party on lobbying, or draw no distinction between them.

There is some belief that Congress in the next year will enact tough new regulations on lobbying, but it's muted: Nearly half, 46 percent, call this likely, while 51 percent think it's unlikely. Just 11 percent see it as "very likely" that such legislation will come to pass; 24 percent, on the other hand, call it very unlikely.

CONCERN – Other measures show the extent of public doubts about honesty in Washington today. Fifty-five percent (essentially the same as last month) think the Abramoff case is evidence of "widespread corruption" in the capital, rather than being limited to a few individuals. (Republicans are much less apt than Democrats or independents to see it that way.)

Moreover, 43 percent say the overall level of ethics and honesty in the federal government has fallen during Bush's presidency – about 20 points more than said the same of Bill Clinton during the Whitewater controversy more than a decade ago.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone Jan. 23-26, 2006, among a random national sample of 1,002 adults. The results have a three-point error margin. Sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS of Horsham, PA.

Analysis by Gary Langer.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com at <http://abcnews.com/pollvault.html>.

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

1 Held for release.

2. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Bush is handling (ITEM)?

a-c Held for release.

d. Ethics in government

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
1/26/06	42	56	2
1/8/06	45	52	3
12/18/05	48	49	3

3-10 Held for release.

11. Which political party, the (Democrats) or the (Republicans), do you trust to do a better job (ITEM)?

a Held for release.

b. standing up to lobbyists and special interest groups

	Democrats	Republicans	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No op.
1/26/06	46	27	1	20	5
12/18/05	42	34	2	17	5

12-14 Held for release.

15. Just your best guess, how likely do you think it is that Congress will pass tough new regulations on political lobbying in the next year - very likely, somewhat likely, somewhat unlikely or very unlikely?

	-----Likely-----			-----Unlikely-----			No
	NET	Very	Smwt.	NET	Smwt.	Very	opin.
1/26/06	46	11	35	51	27	24	3

16-19 Held for release.

20. Do you think the overall level of ethics and honesty in the federal government has risen, fallen or stayed the same with Bush as president?

	Risen	Fallen	Same	No opin.
Bush, 1/26/06	18	43	38	1
Bush, 11/2/05	17	43	39	1
Bush, 10/29/05	15	46	37	2
Clinton, 3/27/94	17	24	58	1
Clinton, 1/23/94	14	23	58	6
Clinton, 1/17/93*	35	13	50	2

\*"Will rise, fall or stay the same"

21 Held for release.

22. As you may know, a prominent lobbyist in Washington named Jack Abramoff has pleaded guilty to corruption charges allegedly involving a U.S. congressman. Do you think this case (is limited to a few corrupt individuals); or do you think it (is evidence of widespread corruption in Washington)?

	Limited to a few individuals	Widespread	Neither/None (vol.)	No opinion
1/26/06	38	55	2	5
1/8/06	34	58	2	6

23. Do you think the Bush administration should or should not provide a list of all meetings any White House officials may have had with Abramoff?

	Should	Should not	No opin.
1/26/06	76	18	5

\*\*\*END\*\*\*