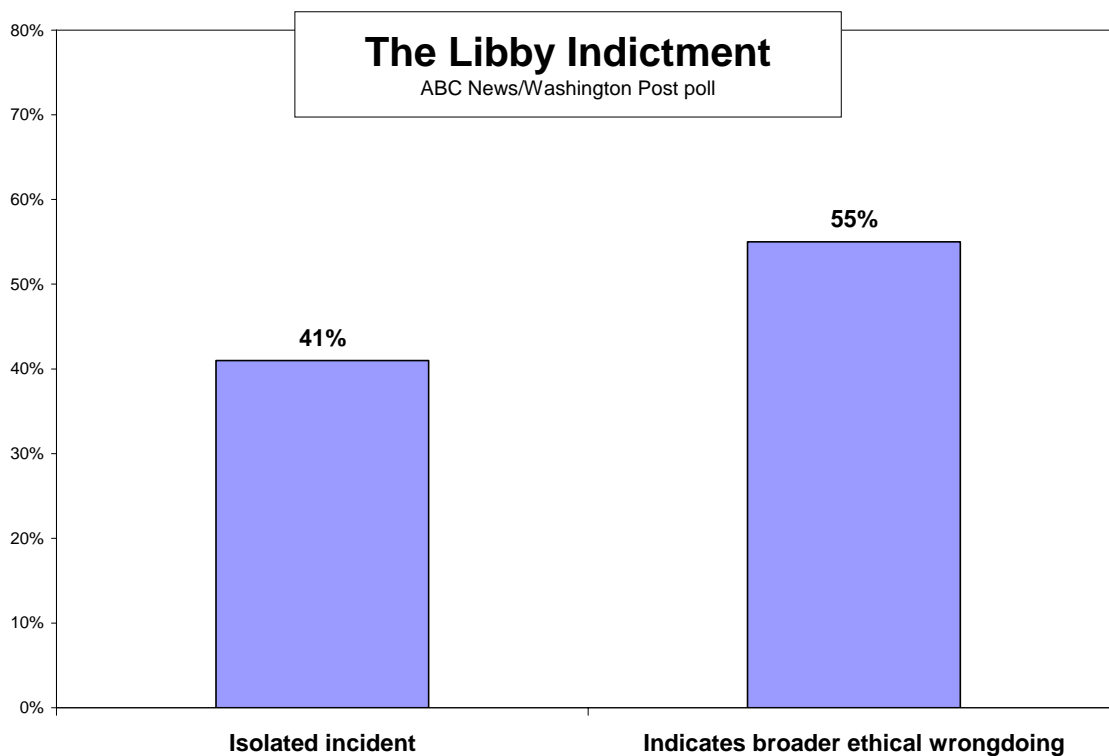


Most Call Libby Indictment a Sign of Broader Ethical Wrongdoing

Most Americans see the indictment of Dick Cheney’s chief of staff as a sign of broader ethical wrongdoing within the Bush administration. And the president’s own job approval rating has slipped under 40 percent for the first time in his career.

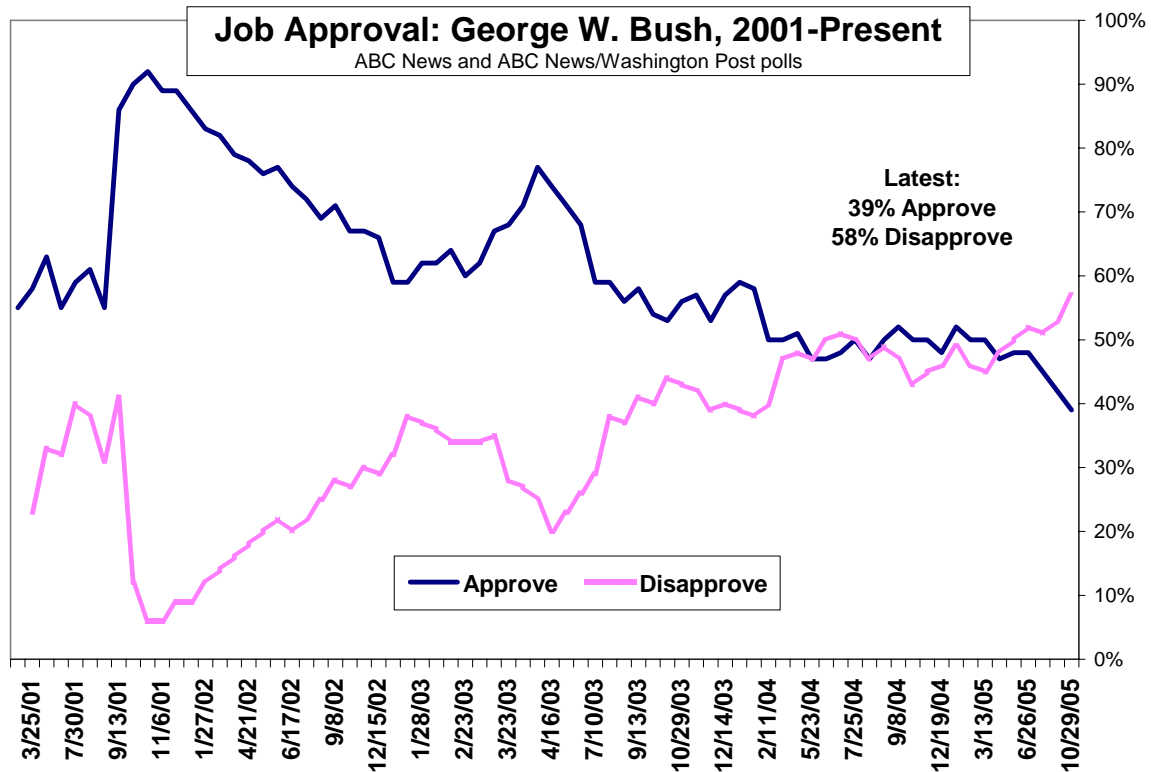
Few think Cheney, Karl Rove or George W. Bush himself did anything illegal in the CIA leak case in which Lewis “Scooter” Libby was indicted. But nearly seven in 10 call the charge against Libby a serious crime, not a minor or technical one. And well under half, 41 percent, see the case as an isolated incident; 55 percent instead think it’s a sign of broader ethical problems within the administration.



After perhaps the worst political week of his career, just 39 percent of Americans in this ABC News/Washington Post poll now approve of Bush’s overall performance in office, fewer than four in 10 for the first time. Fifty-eight percent disapprove, a new high, albeit by a single point.

Those numbers are little changed – not significantly worse – from their immediate post-Hurricane Katrina levels. But the intensity of sentiment is running heavily against the president: In another first, the number of Americans who “strongly” disapprove of his job performance outnumber his strong approvers by more than 2-1, 45 percent to 22 percent.

While intense partisanship remains, Bush has lost support within his own party as well as outside it. At the start of this year just eight percent of Republicans disapproved of his job performance; today that has grown to 25 percent. And disapproval spikes to a whopping 87 percent among Democrats. Both are new highs.



ETHICS – Nearly two-thirds of Americans, 64 percent, give Bush a negative rating (“only fair” or “poor”) for his handling of ethics in government. That’s about the same as Bill Clinton’s ethics rating at the end of his career, and at most only slightly worse than Ronald Reagan’s. But both Clinton and Reagan faced serious ethical crises in their second terms – Clinton, the Monica Lewinsky scandal; Reagan, Iran-Contra.

Nearly a third of Republicans rate Bush negatively for handling ethics; that soars to large majorities of independents (71 percent) and Democrats (85 percent) alike. And in another view that underscores the challenges he faces, 46 percent overall say the overall level of ethics and honesty in the federal government has fallen with Bush as president, while just 15 percent say it’s improved.

Bush’s 39 percent job approval itself is an unenviable milestone. Neither Clinton nor Reagan, the last two two-term presidents, fell below 40 percent approval; Clinton’s worst

was 43 percent early in his first term, Reagan's, 42 percent in the aftermath of the 1982 recession. But others have done worse: Lyndon Johnson's career low hit 35 percent during the tumultuous summer of 1968. Bush's father fell to 33 percent the summer before he lost re-election to a second term. Jimmy Carter saw 28 percent approval; Richard Nixon, a low of 23 percent.

Libby's indictment capped a grim week for Bush in which U.S. military deaths in Iraq reached 2,000 and the chief White House lawyer, Harriet Miers, withdrew as a nominee for the U.S. Supreme Court. Bush has been weakened as well by the troubled government response to Hurricane Katrina, which damaged his leadership ratings; and by the soaring price of gasoline.

ROVE, CHENEY, BUSH – Perhaps the best result for Bush is that while a majority sees broader ethical wrongdoing within his administration, far fewer – 33 percent – think Bush himself did anything wrong (either illegal, or unethical but not illegal) in connection with the CIA leak case. Fewer still – only 12 percent – think Bush broke the law.

The public divides, though, on whether Cheney did anything wrong, 41-44 percent, and more think Rove did something wrong than think not, by 47 percent to 29 percent. But in both cases only about two in 10 think either man did anything illegal, rather than something unethical, but not illegal.

| In CIA leak case: | Bush | Cheney | Rove |
|---------------------|------|--------|------|
| Did something wrong | 33% | 41 | 47 |
| Did nothing wrong | 55 | 44 | 29 |

LIBBY – Responding to the Libby indictment presents a difficulty for the administration. Dismissing the charge as a minor or technical one looks unlikely to gain much credence; just 26 percent see it that way, while 69 percent call it serious (as has the president himself).

Alleging political motivations, as Rep. Tom DeLay has done in his case, also may prove unproductive: While 30 percent think prosecutor Patrick Fitzgerald brought the case out of political motivations, far more, 55 percent, think he relied on the facts alone. Even among Republicans, more say the charges rest on the facts than on political motivations, by 48-36 percent.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone Oct. 28-29, 2005, among a random national sample of 600 adults. The results have a four-point error margin. Sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS Intersearch 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. 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 opin. |
|-------------|---------------------|----------|----------|------------------------|----------|----------|-------------|
| | NET | Strongly | Somewhat | NET | Somewhat | Strongly | |
| 10/29/05 | 39 | 22 | 17 | 58 | 13 | 45 | 3 |
| 9/11/05 | 42 | 27 | 15 | 57 | 12 | 45 | 1 |
| 8/28/05 | 45 | 27 | 18 | 53 | 12 | 41 | 2 |
| 6/26/05 | 48 | 27 | 21 | 51 | 11 | 40 | 1 |
| 6/5/05 | 48 | 27 | 21 | 52 | 14 | 38 | 1 |
| 4/24/05 | 47 | 25 | 22 | 50 | 13 | 38 | 3 |
| 3/13/05 | 50 | 31 | 19 | 48 | 11 | 37 | 3 |
| 1/31/05 | 50 | 34 | 15 | 45 | 11 | 34 | 5 |
| 1/16/05 | 52 | 33 | 19 | 46 | 11 | 35 | 2 |
| 12/19/04 | 48 | 27 | 21 | 49 | 12 | 38 | 2 |
| 10/20/04 | 50 | 30 | 20 | 46 | 11 | 35 | 4 |
| 10/17/04 LV | 54 | 35 | 19 | 45 | 9 | 36 | 2 |
| 10/16/04 LV | 54 | 35 | 19 | 44 | 10 | 34 | 2 |
| 10/15/04 LV | 54 | 35 | 19 | 44 | 10 | 34 | 2 |
| 10/3/04 LV | 53 | 36 | 17 | 46 | 11 | 34 | 1 |
| 9/26/04 | 50 | 33 | 18 | 45 | 13 | 32 | 5 |
| 9/8/04 | 52 | 35 | 17 | 43 | 11 | 32 | 5 |
| 8/29/04 | 50 | 31 | 19 | 47 | 13 | 34 | 3 |
| 8/1/04 | 47 | 28 | 18 | 49 | 13 | 36 | 5 |
| 7/25/04 | 50 | 32 | 19 | 47 | 13 | 34 | 3 |
| 7/11/04 | 48 | 31 | 17 | 50 | 11 | 39 | 2 |
| 6/20/04 | 47 | 30 | 17 | 51 | 13 | 39 | 1 |
| 5/23/04 | 47 | 31 | 17 | 50 | 14 | 36 | 3 |
| 4/18/04 | 51 | 33 | 18 | 47 | 13 | 34 | 1 |
| 3/7/04 | 50 | 32 | 18 | 48 | 12 | 36 | 2 |
| 2/11/04 | 50 | 30 | 21 | 47 | 14 | 34 | 2 |
| 1/18/04 | 58 | 35 | 24 | 40 | 9 | 30 | 2 |
| 12/21/03 | 59 | 39 | 21 | 38 | 15 | 23 | 3 |
| 12/14/03 | 57 | 37 | 20 | 39 | 10 | 29 | 5 |
| 12/7/03 | 53 | 32 | 21 | 40 | 13 | 27 | 7 |
| 11/16/03 | 57 | 34 | 23 | 39 | 11 | 28 | 4 |
| 10/29/03 | 56 | 30 | 26 | 42 | 13 | 29 | 2 |
| 10/13/03 | 53 | 33 | 20 | 43 | 13 | 29 | 4 |
| 9/30/03 | 54 | 34 | 20 | 44 | 15 | 29 | 2 |
| 9/13/03 | 58 | 35 | 23 | 40 | 14 | 27 | 2 |
| 9/7/03 | 56 | 34 | 22 | 41 | 13 | 28 | 4 |
| 8/11/03 | 59 | 37 | 22 | 37 | 14 | 23 | 4 |
| 7/10/03 | 59 | 35 | 24 | 38 | 13 | 25 | 3 |
| 6/22/03 | 68 | 45 | 23 | 29 | 11 | 18 | 4 |
| 4/30/03 | 71 | 50 | 22 | 26 | 17 | 9 | 3 |
| 4/16/03 | 74 | 52 | 22 | 23 | 9 | 14 | 3 |
| 4/9/03 | 77 | 58 | 19 | 20 | 6 | 14 | 4 |
| 4/3/03 | 71 | 54 | 16 | 25 | 7 | 19 | 4 |
| 3/23/03 | 68 | NA | NA | 27 | NA | NA | 4 |
| 3/20/03 | 67 | NA | NA | 28 | NA | NA | 5 |
| 3/2/03 | 62 | 38 | 23 | 35 | 13 | 22 | 4 |
| 2/23/03 | 60 | NA | NA | 34 | NA | NA | 6 |
| 2/9/03 | 64 | 42 | 21 | 34 | 14 | 20 | 3 |
| 2/1/03 | 62 | 41 | 21 | 34 | 13 | 22 | 4 |
| 1/28/03 | 62 | 43 | 19 | 36 | 13 | 23 | 2 |
| 1/27/03 | 59 | 39 | 21 | 37 | 15 | 22 | 4 |
| 1/20/03 | 59 | 36 | 23 | 38 | 16 | 22 | 2 |
| 12/15/02 | 66 | 37 | 28 | 32 | 12 | 20 | 2 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 11/4/02 | LV | 67 | 45 | 23 | 31 | 12 | 20 | 1 |
| 11/3/02 | LV | 67 | 45 | 22 | 32 | 12 | 20 | 1 |
| 11/2/02 | LV | 67 | 47 | 20 | 32 | 9 | 23 | 1 |
| 10/27/02 | | 67 | 39 | 28 | 29 | 13 | 16 | 4 |
| 9/26/02 | | 67 | 42 | 25 | 30 | 12 | 18 | 3 |
| 9/8/02 | | 71 | 42 | 28 | 27 | 12 | 15 | 3 |
| 7/28/02 | | 69 | 39 | 31 | 28 | 14 | 14 | 3 |
| 7/15/02 | | 72 | 42 | 31 | 25 | 12 | 13 | 2 |
| 6/17/02 | | 74 | 42 | 32 | 22 | 9 | 13 | 4 |
| 6/9/02 | | 77 | 41 | 36 | 20 | 9 | 11 | 3 |
| 5/19/02 | | 76 | 48 | 28 | 22 | 8 | 13 | 3 |
| 4/21/02 | | 78 | 47 | 31 | 20 | 9 | 10 | 2 |
| 3/28/02 | | 79 | 49 | 30 | 18 | 8 | 10 | 3 |
| 3/10/02 | | 82 | 52 | 30 | 16 | 9 | 7 | 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 | 4 | 5 | 1 |
| 11/6/01 | | 89 | 65 | 24 | 9 | 5 | 4 | 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 | 5 | 6 | 2 |
| 9/9/01 | | 55 | 26 | 29 | 41 | 20 | 22 | 3 |
| 8/12/01 | | 61 | 28 | 33 | 31 | 14 | 17 | 8 |
| 7/30/01 | | 59 | 28 | 30 | 38 | 17 | 22 | 3 |
| 6/3/01 | | 55 | 27 | 28 | 40 | 18 | 22 | 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. How would you rate Bush's handling of ethics in government - excellent, good, only fair or poor?

| | ----Excellent/Good---- | | | ----Fair/Poor---- | | | No op. |
|------------------|------------------------|-----------|------|-------------------|------|------|--------|
| | NET | Excellent | Good | NET | Fair | Poor | |
| 10/29/05 | 34 | 11 | 23 | 64 | 29 | 35 | 2 |
| Clinton, 1/26/00 | 37 | 8 | 29 | 62 | 22 | 40 | 1 |
| Reagan, 11/20/88 | 37 | 5 | 32 | 59 | 34 | 25 | 4 |

3. 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. |
|----------|-------|--------|------|----------|
| 10/29/05 | 15 | 46 | 37 | 2 |

4. As you may know, a federal grand jury has indicted Lewis "Scooter" Libby, chief of staff for Vice President Dick Cheney, on charges of obstruction of justice and perjury in connection with the case in which the identity of an undercover CIA agent was disclosed to news reporters. Libby has resigned his White House position.

In your opinion, do you think the charge against Libby represents (a serious crime, or (a minor or technical) one?

| | Serious crime | Minor or technical crime | No opin. |
|----------|---------------|--------------------------|----------|
| 10/29/05 | 69 | 26 | 5 |

5. Do you think the prosecutor has brought this case against Libby (on the basis of the facts of the case), or (out of political motivations)?

| | Facts of the case | Political motivations | Both (vol.) | No opin. |
|----------|----------------------|--------------------------|----------------|-------------|
| 10/29/05 | 55 | 30 | 6 | 8 |

6. It's been reported that another subject of the investigation has been Karl Rove, a close adviser to Bush. Given what you've heard or read, do you think Rove did anything wrong in connection with this case, or not? IF YES: Do you think he did something (unethical but not illegal), or do you think he did something (illegal)?

| | -----Yes----- | | | No |
|----------|---------------|---------|-----------|-------|
| | NET | Illegal | Unethical | opin. |
| 10/29/05 | 47 | 18 | 28 | 24 |

7. Given what you've heard or read, do you think Vice President Cheney did anything wrong in connection with this case, or not? IF YES: Do you think he did something (unethical but not illegal), or do you think he did something (illegal)?

| | -----Yes----- | | | No |
|----------|---------------|---------|-----------|-------|
| | NET | Illegal | Unethical | opin. |
| 10/29/05 | 41 | 20 | 21 | 15 |

8. Given what you've heard or read, do you think Bush did anything wrong in connection with this case, or not? IF YES: Do you think he did something (unethical but not illegal), or do you think he did something (illegal)?

| | -----Yes----- | | | No |
|----------|---------------|---------|-----------|-------|
| | NET | Illegal | Unethical | opin. |
| 10/29/05 | 33 | 12 | 21 | 12 |

9. Do you think this case (is an isolated incident) or do you think it (indicates broader problems with ethical wrongdoing in the Bush administration)?

| | Isolated incident | Broader problems | No opin. |
|----------|----------------------|---------------------|-------------|
| 10/29/05 | 41 | 55 | 4 |

END