



The Elway Poll

An independent
nonpartisan
analysis of
public opinion
trends in
Washington and
the Northwest

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2007

Negative Partisan Passions Dominate Outlook

As they survey the political landscape, both Democrats and Republicans see more with which to be disappointed and angry than to be satisfied. And forget about enthusiastic.

This month's *Elway Poll* interviewed a stratified sample: 150 each of Independents, Democrats and Republicans. This approach allows for a stronger comparison of partisans and a more in-depth analysis of Independents—the controlling “party” in Washington state.

Not surprisingly, partisans of each stripe direct most of their frustration at the government controlled by the opposite party:

73% of Democrats said they were “disappointed” or “angry” when they thought about “the direction *national* politics is heading today.”

60% of Republicans felt the same about *state* politics.

Republicans were equally negative—“disappointed” or “angry” about the direction of both state and national politics. Democrats and Independents were significantly less negative about state politics.

The 61% majority of Republicans who said they were “disappointed” (52%) or “angry” (9%) about the direction of national politics indicate a lack of unity and focus among Republicans that has not been apparent in recent years.

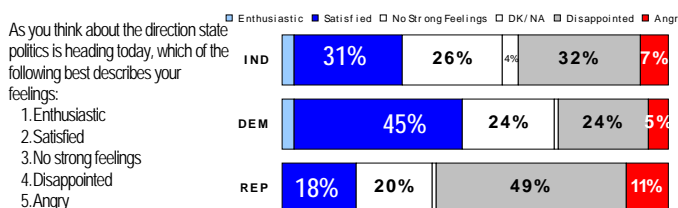
Independents, predictably, were in between the Democrats and Republicans.

Across all three categories of partisans, looking at two levels of government, Independents assessing state government were the most balanced:

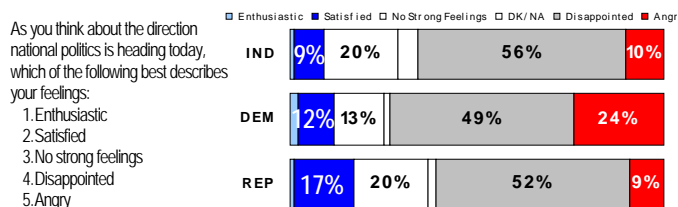
39% were “angry” (7%) or “disappointed” (32%) with state government;

31% were “satisfied” (28%) or “enthusiastic” (3%); and 30% had no strong feelings one way or the other.

PARTISAN ATTITUDES ABOUT STATE POLITICS

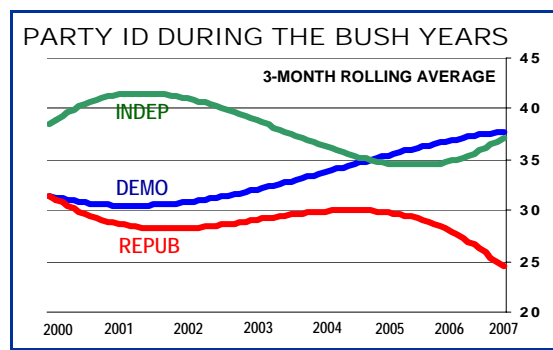


PARTISAN ATTITUDES ABOUT NAT'L POLITICS



Bush Has Been Boon to Washington Democrats

The Bush years have been good for the Washington state Democratic party. At the beginning of 2000, Democrat and Republican party identification was at par. Since G.W. Bush took office, the proportion of Democrats has steadily increased while the number of Republicans has declined. Independent numbers have fluctuated and appear to be on the rise again recently.

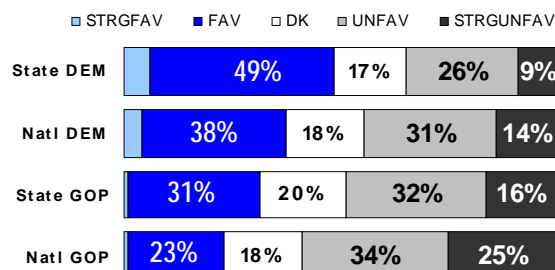


Since 1992, *The Elway Poll* has asked respondents: “If you had to register by party in order to vote, would you register as a [Democrat, Republican, or Independent]?” The reading order of the parties is rotated. The chart above shows the trends since 2000. The Democrat-Republican gap has widened most dramatically in Bush’s second term.

This trend was reflected when Independents were asked whether they had a “favorable” or “unfavorable” impression of the national and state parties. As might be expected among Independents, none of the parties did well. Three of the 4 had a net negative rating. The state Democratic party was the only one with more favorable than unfavorable ratings.

The biggest loser was the national GOP: 6 in 10 had an unfavorable impression—the only majority on either side of the question for any of the 4 party organizations.

Independents' Impression of Party Organizations



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STRETCH

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- Measure message penetration, voter response

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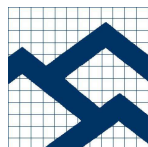
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- Assistance with question design
 - Topline results Faxed/mailed to you the morning after the calling
 - Demographic crosstabs of your results (By including your questions in The Elway Poll, you get the demographics free.)
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-

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Proprietary Questions are just \$500 apiece.

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The Elway Poll

CALL: 206/ 264-1500 FAX 264-0301
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Sample Profile

Telephone interviews were conducted with 450 registered voters in Washington state between Nov 30- Dec 2, 2007. A stratified sample was used to interview 150 each of voters who said they would register as Republicans, Independents and Democrats. The figures in the columns are percentages based on the 150 voters in the category at the top of the column.(±8%).

REGION	REP	DEM	IND
Seattle	6	20	8
King County	17	23	13
Pierce + Kitsap	18	11	14
North Sound (Snohomish-Whatcom)	16	15	18
Western Washington (Clallam-Clark)	18	17	23
Eastern Washington.....	24	14	25
GENDER			
Male	52	44	51
Female	48	56	49
AGE			
18-35	9	5	7
36-50	18	20	19
51-64	32	34	32
65+	38	41	41
VOTE HISTORY (Last 4 Elections)			
0-1 Ballots cast	12	8	20
2 of 4	13	16	14
3 of 4	26	20	22
4 of 4 ("Perfect voter")	49	56	45
EDUCATION LEVEL			
High School.....	26	23	28
Vocational/Technical.....	4	6	4
Some College	25	24	26
College Degree	28	27	28
Graduate / Professional School	15	20	14
EMPLOYMENT			
Self-employed	12	4	5
Private Sector	28	29	30
Public Sector.....	11	12	13
Not Working / Students	5	8	4
Retired	44	47	47
INCOME			
\$25,000 or less	15	17	12
\$25 to \$50,000	22	21	24
\$50 to \$75,000	16	24	20
Over \$75,000	26	24	26
No Answer	21	14	18

The Elway Poll

The Elway Poll is an independent, non-partisan analysis of public opinion in Washington and the Northwest available exclusively to subscribers.

SUBSCRIPTION: An annual subscription is \$525 (plus sales tax). Two years for \$900, a savings of \$150.

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IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT THIS SAMPLE:

The purpose of the this month's *Elway Poll* was to examine similarities and differences among partisans and Independents. To that end, the sample used was stratified to produce equal numbers of self-identified Independents, Democrats and Republicans (150 each). Therefore it is not a representative sample of the state as a whole. Results are reported as percentages of each of those 3 categories.

In the last few months, Democratic party ID has out-poll Republican by about 12 points. The implication this that, in this current sample, Republicans are over-represented

Washington Independents: Endangered Species?

To be a student of Washington politics is to be a student of Independents. Washington party identification has long been described (in these pages) as 1/3, 1/3, 1/3—with Independents being the biggest third. Neither major party has enough adherents to elect anyone by themselves. The unaffiliated Independents hold the balance of political power.

One of the stories Washingtonians tell themselves around the political campfires is that they are fiercely independent, voting for the candidates and issues rather than political parties.

The evidence was strong. Up until the early 60s Washington voters voted for different parties for President and Congress more often than not. In the fabled 1964 election, we voted for Lyndon Johnson and Dan Evans. We voted for Ronald Reagan in one election and Michael Dukakis in the next. We took part in the 1994 "Republican Revolution" just two years after an election that had swept most Republicans out of office.

But is what was true for the elders still true today?

It has been a generation since Washington elected a Republican governor or carried for a Republican presidential candidate. The Legislature has swung back and forth, but is currently solidly Democratic.

This month's *Elway Poll* sought to examine Independent voters in some depth, and compare them to their partisan counterparts.

What we found was party identification mirroring recent voting patterns, trending up for Democrats and down for Republicans. There are still a significant number of Independents, but they are finding more to like in the Democratic party ideas than in the Republicans'.

It is difficult to see where the Republicans get traction with this swing group when Independents say their views are more represented by the Democrats than by the Republicans for every issue named—including the campaign against terrorism, and taxes and spending. (p.3).

About half of Independents say that it does not matter which party wins the White House next year—stunning to political junkies, but not surprising, given that they are Independents after all. Among the other half, Independents who do think it does matter, twice as many are likely to vote for the Democrat as the Republican candidate.

Republicans are swimming upstream into 2008. What that means for the races here—particularly the rematch of the closest gubernatorial election in US history—remains to be seen.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: This survey was patterned after a survey conducted by the *Washington Post*, Harvard University and the Kaiser Family Foundation. *The Elway Poll* wishes to thank MollyAnn Brodie and Liz Hamel at Kaiser, and Jon Cohen at the *Washington Post* for their generosity and assistance with this survey.

Independents Closer to Democrats on Big Issues

Washington state Independents are seeing their views more represented in the Democratic party than in the Republican party as the 2008 election season warms up.

Over a range of issues likely to be hot campaign topics, more Independents interviewed in this month's *Elway Poll* said their views were represented by the Democrats than by the Republicans for each one. This included the two pillars of Republican strength, "the US campaign against terrorism" (barely) and "taxes and government spending," (by 2:1).

When asked about health care and the environment, issues generally considered to be Democrat strong suits, the margins were up to 3:1.

Overall, 69% agreed with the Democrats on at least one issue and 20% agreed with them on 5 or more. On average, these Independents felt better represented by the Democrats on 2.3 of the 6 issues.

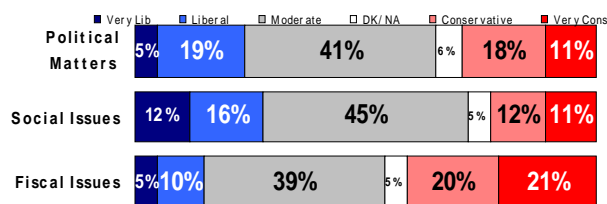
A 55% majority of these Independents felt represented by the Republicans on *none* of the 6 issues, while only 7% agreed with them on at least 5 of the 6. They agreed with the Republicans on an average of 1.1 issues.

On the surface, it appears that the Republicans should have a better chance of appealing to Washington Independents. For example, 4 in 10 Independents considered themselves to be fiscally conservative—almost 3 times as many as think of themselves as liberal on fiscal matters. Even on "political matters, more Independents considered themselves conservative (29%) than liberal (24%).

They tended to be more liberal on "social issues," however. And "social issues" were more strongly correlated than "fiscal issues" to Independents' self-classification on "political matters."

Predictably, the bulk of these unaffiliated voters classified themselves as "moderates" in the middle of all three orientation scales.

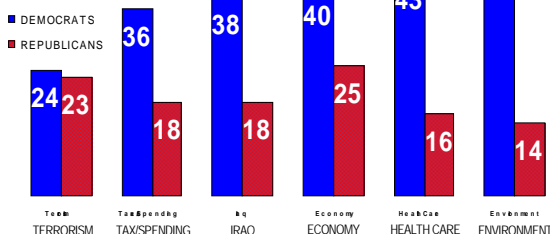
INDEPENDENTS' POLITICAL ORIENTATION



Would you say your views on [*] are: Very Liberal, Liberal, Moderate, Conservative or Very Conservative?

DEMOCRATS BEST REPRESENTS VIEWS

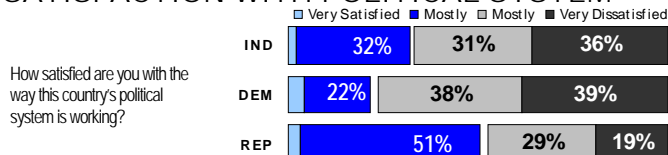
Overall, which party does a better job of representing your views on...



Independents Between R's & D's in Satisfaction with System

When it comes to paying attention to government and politics, Independents are no different than their partisan counterparts: half (49%) said they pay "a lot of attention" and another 40% paid "some attention." Democrats were most attentive (56% "a lot" + 37% "some") and Republicans least (50% "a lot" + 37% "some"). The differences between the groups were not significant.

SATISFACTION WITH POLITICAL SYSTEM



On the questions of how well the political system is working, Independents were in between Republicans and Democrats.

A majority of Independents (67%) were "mostly" or "very dissatisfied" with "the way this country's political system is working."

Democrats were most likely to be unhappy with the political system: 3 in 4 said they were "mostly" or "very" dissatisfied.

Republicans were divided: just under half were dissatisfied and just over half were satisfied.

Nobody trusted the Federal government very much. The Federal government could be trusted at least "most of the time" said:

28% of Republicans (16% said "almost never");

23% of Independents (24% said "almost never");

20% of Democrats (30% said "almost never").

State government fared somewhat better and showed some improvement in the last 2 years, at least among Democrats and even Republicans, but not among Independents.

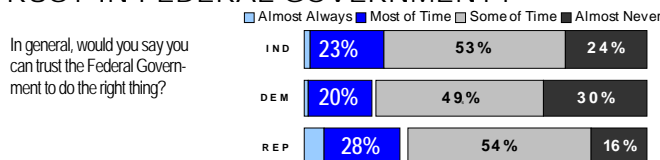
Not surprisingly, given that their party controls the legislature and the governor's office, most Democrats (57%) thought the state government could be trusted to do the right thing most or all of the time. This is up from 46% two years ago.

Republicans were mostly distrustful of state government, but slightly more polarized compared to 2005: the number who said state government could be trusted was up 3 points while "almost never" was up 4 points.

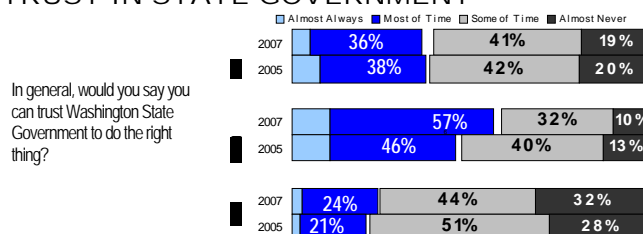
Independents were between Republicans and Democrats on this question, and virtually unchanged in the last 2 years.

19% said that state government could "almost never" be trusted to do the right thing (down from 20% in 2005), while 36% said it could be trusted (down from 38%).

TRUST IN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT



TRUST IN STATE GOVERNMENT



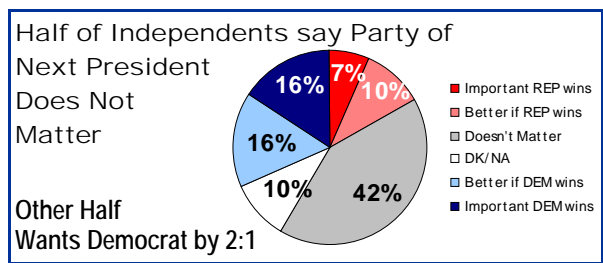
WA Independents Tilting Toward Democrats for President

Washington Independents are taking their time settling on a candidate for president, but they are more likely to be looking at the Democratic than the Republican candidates.

One-third of these unaffiliated voters said that it was "important that a Democrat win the Presidency" (16%) or it "would be better" if a Democrat won (16%). This was twice the number who said it was "important" (7%) or "better" (10%) that a Republican won the White House.

One half of these Independents said "it does not really matter which party wins the Presidency" (42%) or had no opinion (10%).

When asked "which candidates for President—if any—are you



considering at this time?" 40% of the Independents interviewed said "no one."

The leading candidates under consideration were Clinton and Obama. Also on the Independents' short list were Edwards, Giuliani and Huckabee.

The fact that these Independents are taking their time does not make them much different than the Republicans in this survey, 36% of whom said "no one" when asked who they were considering.

Giuliani and Romney were at the top of the Republicans' list, getting a look from 21% and 20% respectively. Huckabee (14%) and McCain (10%) were next, followed by Democrat Barack Obama at 9%.

Mirroring national trends, the Democrats seemed more settled on their list, but are still deciding between their top candidates. Only 18% of Democrats said they were not considering anyone—half as many as the Republicans. Senators Clinton and Obama topped the list at 40% and 36% respectively, with Edwards in at 16%, and Kucinich at 7%. A trio of Republicans—Giuliani, Huckabee and Paul were getting a look from 4% each of these Democrats. Multiple choices were allowed.

Which candidates for President—if any—are you considering at this time?					
INDEP		DEMO		REPUB	
No One	40%	Clinton	46%	No One	36%
Clinton	22%	Obama	30%	Giuliani	21%
Obama	18%	Edwards	16%	Romney	20%
Edwards	8%	No One	18%	Huckabee	14%
Giuliani	6%	Kucinich	7%	McCain	10%
Huckabee	5%	Paul, Giuliani, Huckabee	4%	Obama	9%

Shifting Party Allegiances Relatively Balanced

The ranks of Independents in Washington are fed by both major parties. Only about half of the Independents in this survey had always been Independents: 18% had once considered themselves Democrats and 13% used to be Republicans. The other 14% would not say.

There has been movement in the opposite direction as well—Independents who became partisans. But the net migration favors the Independents. There were more Partisans who became Independents than Independents who became partisans (31% vs. 21%).

The parties, meanwhile, have been trading members: 13% of the Republicans used to be Democrats and 11% of the Democrats used to be Republicans.

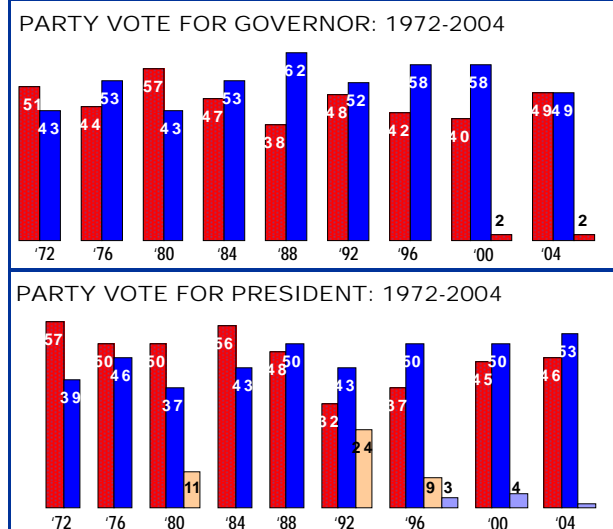
CHANGED PARTY ID		IND	REP	DEM
Have you always considered yourself to be this party (Dem, Ind, Rep), or did you consider yourself to be something else? IF ELSE: What were you before?	Always Same	52%	72%	73%
	Former Demo	18%	13%	
	Former Repub	13%		11%
	Former Indep		9%	12%

Just under 4 in 10 Independents (37%) of these Independents said that the two-party system "does a pretty good job of addressing the issues that are most important to people like you." Half (51%) said the two party system did a bad job of that and 12% had no opinion.

There was no significant difference in this question between Independents who had always been Independents and those who had left one of the major parties.

WA, the EverBlue State?

It has been a generation since Washington elected a Republican Governor or voted Republican for President. But it was not always thus. Republicans won 4 Presidential races in a row from 1972 through 1984, and 4 of 5 Gubernatorial races from 1964 to 1980.



NEXT MONTH

Priorities for Legislature, 2008