

Released:

Thursday, September 5, 2013

Contact:

PATRICK MURRAY

732-263-5858 (office)

732-979-6769 (cell)

pdmurray@monmouth.edu

NATIONAL: PARTY CONTROL OF CONGRESS MAKES NO DIFFERENCE TO PUBLIC

West Long Branch, NJ – Public approval of Congress is abysmal, which should come as no surprise to anyone who has been following Washington politics over the past few years. The latest national ***Monmouth University Poll*** also finds little difference in opinion for the Democratic controlled Senate and the Republican led House of Representatives. Furthermore, Americans think that unified party control of Congress would make no difference.

Three-in-four Americans (76%) disapprove of the job Congress is doing. Only 14% approve. When asked which chamber has been doing a better job for the country, 18% pick the House and 14% name the Senate. The majority (60%) say both have performed about the same. Unsurprisingly, Republicans are more likely to say the House (32%) rather than the Senate (7%) has done a better job. Democrats are somewhat more likely to give the Senate (20%) the edge over the House (10%). In both cases, though, a majority of partisans don't see any difference between the two chambers' performance.

The poll also found that many Americans are unaware that party control of the two chambers is divided. Just under half (49%) know the House is run by the Republican party, while 17% think it is led by the Democrats and 34% do not know. Similarly, just 45% know the Senate is controlled by Democrats, while another 23% think it is GOP led and 32% offer no response on party control.

Interestingly, Republicans are more likely to know that the Senate is controlled by Democrats (58%) than know the House is run by their own party (48%). The pattern is similar for Americans who identify as Democrats – 52% know that the GOP runs the House but just 42% know their own party controls the Senate. Taken together, 35% of Americans can accurately name the parties that control both chambers of Congress, 13% can only name the House majority party and 10% can only name the Senate majority party. The remaining 42% can name neither.

“Americans simply do not believe that Washington has been working on their behalf. Even though most of those polled are initially unaware of the party split in Congressional leadership, they don't

think that unified party control would make much of a difference when presented with this information,” said Patrick Murray, director of the New Jersey-based Monmouth University Polling Institute. “Not only is Congress broken, but most people seem to believe it is beyond repair.”

After being informed of which party leads each chamber of Congress, 43% of Americans say that having the same party control both houses would make no difference to Congressional performance. The remainder are split on whether single party leadership would be better (24%) or worse (20%) for the country. Another 9% say it depends on which party is in control. Among poll respondents who were already aware which party controls each chamber, 32% say that single party control would make no difference, 31% say the country would be better, and 17% say the country would be worse. There are no significant partisan differences in the responses to this question.

Americans are also skeptical that the president’s own party affiliation would make any difference in his or her ability to work with a divided Congress. Looking ahead to 2016, most Americans (56%) say the new president’s party would not have any impact on improving Washington if Congressional control remains split. Just 20% say that a Republican president is likely to make more progress with a divided Congress and a similar 14% say that a Democrat would be able to work better with a divided Congress. Republicans (50%) have more faith that a president of their own party can effectively manage a divided Congress than Democrats do (33%).

“The poll was conducted before the recent bipartisan cooperation on Syria. But agreement on one foreign policy issue is unlikely to have a significant impact on opinion of Washington. The public will be paying closer attention to the upcoming budget and debt ceiling battles as a sign of how the two parties work together,” said Murray.

The latest *Monmouth University Poll* was conducted by telephone with a national random sample of 1012 adults age 18 and older from July 25 to 30, 2013. This sample has a margin of error of ± 3.1 percent. The poll was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute in West Long Branch, New Jersey.

DATA TABLES

The questions referred to in this release are as follows:

(* Some columns may not add to 100% due to rounding.)

1. Do you approve or disapprove of the job the U.S. Congress is doing?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			AGE		
		Yes	No	Rep	Ind	Dem	18-34	35-54	55+
Approve	14%	14%	17%	12%	15%	15%	19%	12%	11%
Disapprove	76%	78%	69%	80%	76%	73%	68%	79%	81%
(VOL) No opinion	10%	8%	14%	8%	9%	11%	12%	9%	8%

2. As you may know, Congress is divided into two chambers. Which one has been doing a better job for the country – the Senate or the House of Representatives – or have they performed about the same?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			AGE		
		Yes	No	Rep	Ind	Dem	18-34	35-54	55+
Senate	14%	15%	9%	7%	12%	20%	13%	13%	16%
House	18%	18%	17%	32%	17%	10%	15%	20%	19%
Performed the same	60%	60%	62%	56%	62%	62%	60%	60%	59%
(VOL) Don't know	8%	7%	12%	6%	9%	8%	12%	7%	6%

[QUESTIONS 3 AND 4 WERE ROTATED]

3. Do you know which party currently controls the Senate? [If YES: Which one – Democrat or Republican?]

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			AGE		
		Yes	No	Rep	Ind	Dem	18-34	35-54	55+
Yes, Democrat	45%	49%	31%	58%	41%	42%	36%	45%	54%
Yes, Republican	23%	23%	23%	21%	22%	26%	19%	28%	22%
No	30%	26%	44%	20%	35%	29%	45%	25%	21%
(VOL) Yes but no answer	2%	1%	2%	1%	1%	2%	0%	2%	2%

4. Do you know which party currently controls the House of Representatives? [If YES: Which one – Democrat or Republican?]

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			AGE		
		Yes	No	Rep	Ind	Dem	18-34	35-54	55+
Yes, Democrat	17%	17%	20%	26%	17%	13%	19%	16%	18%
Yes, Republican	49%	53%	34%	48%	46%	52%	36%	52%	57%
No	31%	29%	41%	24%	35%	31%	43%	29%	23%
(VOL) Yes but no answer	3%	2%	5%	2%	2%	4%	2%	3%	2%

[THE FOLLOWING TABLE COMBINES THE RESPONSES FROM QUESTIONS 3 AND 4]

Congress party control awareness	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			AGE		
		Yes	No	Rep	Ind	Dem	18-34	35-54	55+
Knows both chambers	35%	40%	19%	41%	34%	34%	24%	37%	45%
Knows Senate only	10%	9%	12%	17%	8%	8%	12%	8%	10%
Knows House only	13%	13%	15%	7%	13%	18%	12%	15%	12%
Knows neither	42%	38%	54%	35%	46%	40%	52%	40%	33%

5. Democrats control the Senate and Republicans control the House. Do you think it would be better or worse for the country if one party controlled both chambers of Congress, or would it make no difference?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			AGE		
		Yes	No	Rep	Ind	Dem	18-34	35-54	55+
Better	24%	23%	26%	25%	21%	27%	24%	24%	24%
Worse	20%	21%	17%	15%	21%	22%	23%	18%	19%
No difference	43%	42%	48%	43%	46%	38%	43%	46%	40%
(VOL) Depends on party	9%	9%	8%	11%	8%	9%	7%	9%	11%
(VOL) Don't know	4%	5%	1%	5%	3%	4%	3%	3%	6%

6. Looking ahead to the 2016 Presidential election. If Democrats continue to control the Senate and Republicans control the House, would Washington work better if the next president is a Democrat or is a Republican, or would the president's party affiliation make no difference to how Washington works?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			AGE		
		Yes	No	Rep	Ind	Dem	18-34	35-54	55+
Democrat	14%	15%	12%	1%	7%	33%	11%	14%	18%
Republican	20%	21%	16%	50%	17%	4%	18%	20%	22%
No difference	56%	55%	62%	41%	67%	53%	64%	58%	49%
(VOL) Depends on person	5%	5%	6%	5%	5%	4%	5%	4%	5%
(VOL) Yes but no answer	4%	4%	5%	3%	4%	5%	2%	5%	6%

The *Monmouth University Poll* was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute from July 25 to 30, 2013 with a national random sample of 1,012 adults age 18 and older, including 708 via live interview on a landline telephone and 304 via live interview on a cell phone. Monmouth is responsible for all aspects of the survey questionnaire design, data weighting and analysis. For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling has a maximum margin of plus or minus 3.1 percentage points. Sampling error increases as the sample size decreases, so statements based on various population subgroups, such as separate figures reported by gender or party identification, are subject to more error than are statements based on the total sample. In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

<i>POLL DEMOGRAPHICS (weighted)</i>			
22% Rep	49% Male	31% 18-34	67% White
45% Ind	51% Female	37% 35-54	11% Black
33% Dem		32% 55+	15% Hispanic
			7% Asian/Other

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			AGE		
		Yes	No	Rep	Ind	Dem	18-34	35-54	55+
Unweighted N	1012	850	162	243	450	294	190	326	472
moe	3.1%	3.4%	7.7%	6.3%	4.6%	5.7%	7.1%	5.4%	4.5%

###