

December 7, 2007

Democratic Party Winning on Issues

Democrats preferred to handle 6 of 10 issues; Republicans lead on 2

by Lydia Saad

PRINCETON, NJ -- Less than a year before Americans go to the polls to choose the next president and the 111th Congress, Gallup finds the Democrats holding a considerable advantage over the Republicans in public perceptions of which party can handle a variety of national issues.

Overall, the Democratic Party is perceived as better able to handle 6 of 10 issues that are likely to be heavily debated in the 2008 campaigns, and they roughly tie with the Republican Party on another 2. The Republicans lead on illegal immigration and terrorism, but their previously substantial advantage on terrorism has been cut by two-thirds since 2004.

According to the new *USA Today*/Gallup poll, conducted Nov. 30-Dec. 2, 2007, the Democrats' strongest issue areas include healthcare, the housing market, protecting Americans' rights and freedoms, corruption in government, the economy, and Iraq. The two parties are roughly tied on moral values and taxes. The Republican Party leads in public perceptions of which party can better handle terrorism and illegal immigration, but not by as much as the Democrats lead on their best signature issues.

Do you think the Republican Party or the Democratic Party would do a better job of dealing with each of the following issues and problems?

	Republican Party	Democratic Party	Party advantage
	%	%	pct. pts.
Healthcare policy	29	59	Dem +30
The housing market	33	48	Dem +15
Protecting Americans' rights and freedoms	36	49	Dem +13
Corruption in government	29	42	Dem +13
The economy	38	50	Dem +12
The situation in Iraq	38	48	Dem +10
Taxes	42	44	Dem +2
Moral values	43	39	Rep +4
Illegal immigration	44	37	Rep +7
Terrorism	48	38	Rep +10

GALLUP POLL

The Republican Party was in a much stronger position on issues in January 2004, 10 months before President George W. Bush won re-election and the Republicans retained their majority position in Congress.

At that time, the Republican Party held large leads on terrorism (+30 percentage points) and Iraq (+16), and closely matched the Democrats on the economy (-4) -- three of the most important issues to voters in that election.

Republicans' advantage on terrorism has since fallen to only 10 points; they now lose to the Democrats on Iraq by 10 points, and on the economy by 12 points. At the same time, the Democrats' advantage on healthcare has expanded from 21 to 30 points.

Net Percentage Preferring Each Party to Handle Issues

	January 2004	November/ December 2007
Terrorism	Republicans +30	Republicans +10
The situation in Iraq	Republicans +16	Democrats +10
The economy	Democrats +4	Democrats +12
Taxes	Democrats +4	Democrats +2
Healthcare policy	Democrats +21	Democrats +30

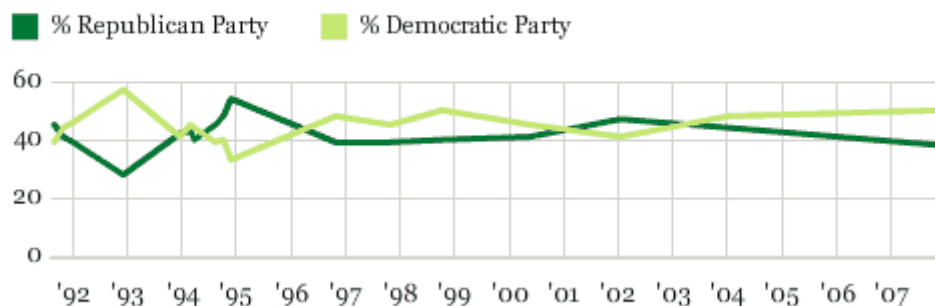
GALLUP POLL

Democrats Above Par on the Economy

Gallup's long-term trend for which party can better handle the economy finds the Democrats doing well on a historical basis. Gallup has been taking this measure periodically since 1982, and in most of those cases the Democrats have led the Republicans in perceptions of which party can better handle the economy -- however, not often by as large a margin as they do today.

Perceptions of Which Party Would Do a Better Job of Dealing With the Economy

Selected trend



GALLUP POLL

Across all 18 party ratings on the economy, the Democrats have averaged a 2-point lead, 44% vs. 42%.

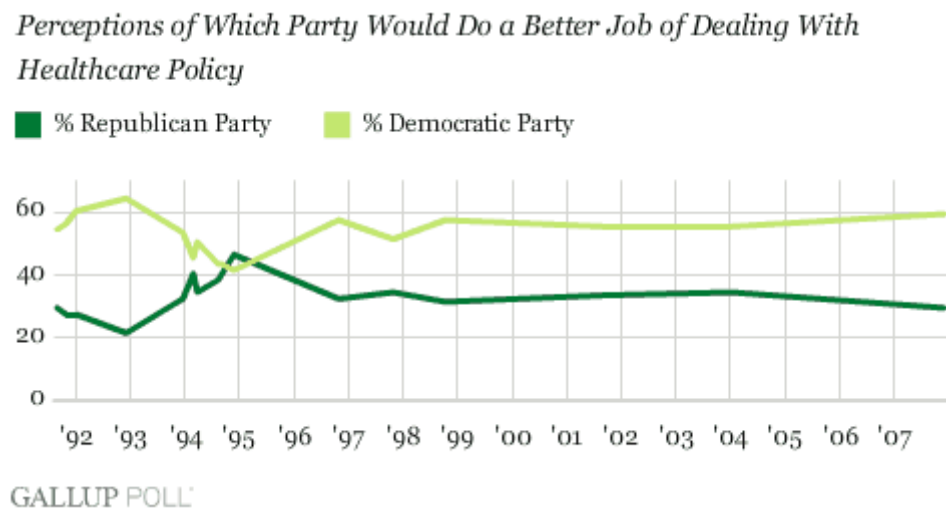
Furthermore, the Democrats consistently tied or led the Republicans on the economy within the year before each of the last four presidential elections, two of which Democrat Bill Clinton won (1992 and 1996), and two of which Republican George W. Bush won (2000 and 2004).

- In January 1992, the Democrats led the Republicans by seven points as the party better able to handle the economy.
- In October 1996, the Democrats led by nine points.
- In May 2000, the Democrats led by four points (within the margin of error).
- In January 2004, the Democrats again led by four points (also within the margin of error).

In short, while it is not unusual for the Republicans to be at parity with or behind the Democrats on this measure, their current 12-point deficit is on the high side. If a disadvantage this large persists in 2008, it could spell trouble for the party if the economy figures as a major issue for voters.

Democrats' Lead on Healthcare Not Unusual

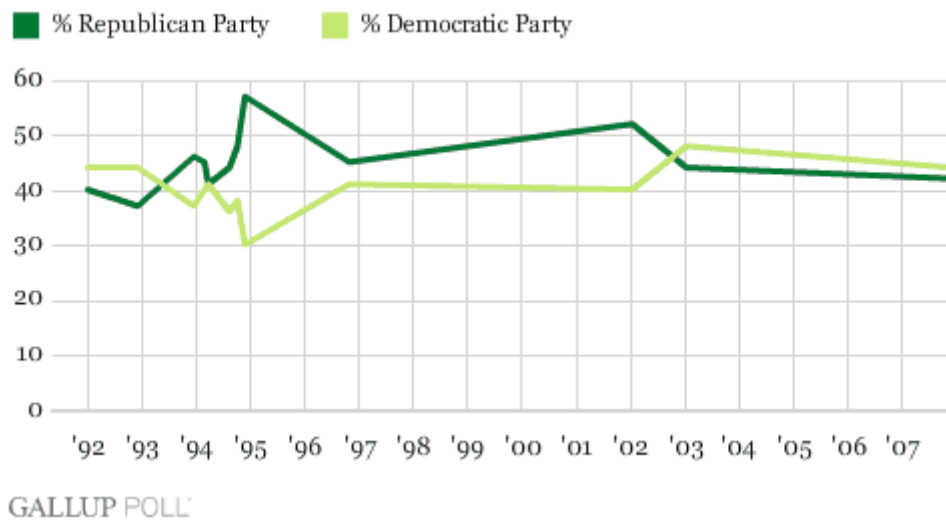
From a historical perspective, the Democrats' current advantage over the Republicans on healthcare policy is less striking. Except for a period in 1994, the Democrats have typically led by a wide margin on healthcare. Their current 30-point advantage is similar to their 33-point lead in January 1992, and not much higher than the 21- to 26-point leads seen in recent years.



Parity on Taxes Is Not Notable, Either

The lead in perceived handling of taxes has shifted back and forth between the Democrats and Republicans over the years. Thus, the fact that the parties are roughly at parity today is not particularly notable. The Republican Party enjoyed 5- to 10-point leads on this measure leading up to November 1994, when Republicans won a historic takeover of Congress. This was followed by a sharp spike in preference for the Republicans on taxes in a late November 1994 poll. However, at most other times, the two parties have been closely matched, as they are today.

Perceptions of Which Party Would Do a Better Job of Dealing With Taxes



Bottom Line

In January 2004, 10 months prior to that year's presidential election that Bush won, the Republican Party dominated public preferences for which party could better handle terrorism and Iraq, was at parity with the Democrats on the economy and taxes, and was well behind the Democrats on healthcare.

Today, some 11 months before the 2008 presidential election, the Republicans hold at best modest leads over the Democrats on immigration and terrorism; they tie the Democrats on taxes; trail by 10 or more points on the housing market, the economy, and Iraq; and are substantially behind on healthcare.

Lacking their previous dominance on terrorism and Iraq, and failing to beat the Democrats on every economic or pocketbook issue tested, the Republicans have a lot of ground to make up on issues. It seems unlikely that their seven-point lead on illegal immigration -- the only issue besides terrorism for which the Republicans are preferred -- positions them to do that.

Survey Methods

Results are based on telephone interviews with 1,006 national adults, aged 18 and older, conducted Nov. 30-Dec. 2, 2007. For results based on the total sample of national adults, one can say with 95% confidence that the maximum margin of sampling error is ± 3 percentage points.

In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls. by Lydia Saad

16. Do you think the Republican Party or the Democratic Party would do a better job of dealing with each of the following issues and problems? How about -- [RANDOM ORDER]?

A. The economy

	Republican Party	Democratic Party	No difference/ No opinion
	%	%	%
2007 Nov 30-Dec 2	38	50	13
2004 Jan 9-11	44	48	8
2002 Jan 11-14	47	41	12
2000 May 18-21	41	45	14
1998 Oct 9-12	40	50	10
1997 Oct 27-29 ^	39	45	16
1996 Oct 26-29 †	39	48	13
1994 Nov 28-29	54	33	13
1994 Oct 7-9	48	40	12
1994 Aug 15-16	45	39	16
1994 Mar 25-27	40	44	16
1994 Feb 26-28	43	45	12
1993 Dec 17-19	42	41	17
1992 Dec 4-6	28	57	15
1992 Jan 3-6	39	46	15
1991 Nov	41	44	15
1991 Sep	45	39	16
1982 Feb	34	43	23

^ Asked of half sample

† Based on likely voters

GALLUP POLL

16. Do you think the Republican Party or the Democratic Party would do a better job of dealing with each of the following issues and problems? How about -- [RANDOM ORDER]?

B. Terrorism

	Republican Party	Democratic Party	No difference/ No opinion
	%	%	%
2007 Nov 30-Dec 2	48	38	14
2004 Jan 9-11	60	30	10
2002 Jan 11-14	61	23	16

GALLUP POLL

16. Do you think the Republican Party or the Democratic Party would do a better job of dealing with each of the following issues and problems? How about -- [RANDOM ORDER]?

C. Healthcare policy

	Republican Party	Democratic Party	No difference/ No opinion
	%	%	%
2007 Nov 30-Dec 2	29	59	12
2004 Jan 9-11	34	55	11
2001 Aug 24-26	33	55	12
1998 Oct 9-12	31	57	12
1997 Oct 27-29 [^]	34	51	15
1996 Oct 26-29 [†]	32	57	11
1994 Nov 28-29	46	41	13
1994 Sep 6-7	40	43	17
1994 Aug 15-16	38	43	19
1994 Mar 25-27	34	50	16
1994 Feb 26-28	40	45	15
1993 Dec 17-19	32	53	15
1992 Dec 4-6	21	64	15
1992 Jan 3-6	27	60	13
1991 Nov	27	56	17
1991 Sep	29	54	17

[^] Asked of half sample

[†] Based on likely voters

GALLUP POLL

16. Do you think the Republican Party or the Democratic Party would do a better job of dealing with each of the following issues and problems? How about -- [RANDOM ORDER]?

D. Taxes

	Republican Party	Democratic Party	No difference/ No opinion
	%	%	%
2007 Nov 30-Dec 2	42	44	14
2004 Jan 9-11	44	48	8
2002 Jan 11-14	52	40	8
1996 Oct 26-29	45	41	14
1994 Nov 28-29	57	30	13
1994 Oct 7-9	48	38	14
1994 Aug 15-16	44	36	20
1994 Mar 25-27	41	41	18
1994 Feb 26-28	45	40	15
1993 Dec 17-19	46	37	17
1992 Dec 4-6	37	44	19
1992 Jan 3-6	40	44	16

GALLUP POLL

16. Do you think the Republican Party or the Democratic Party would do a better job of dealing with each of the following issues and problems? How about -- [RANDOM ORDER]?

E. The situation in Iraq

	Republican Party	Democratic Party	No difference/ No opinion
	%	%	%
2007 Nov 30-Dec 2	38	48	14
2004 Jan 9-11	53	37	10

GALLUP POLL

16. Do you think the Republican Party or the Democratic Party would do a better job of dealing with each of the following issues and problems? How about -- [RANDOM ORDER]?

F. Illegal immigration

	Republican Party	Democratic Party	No difference/ No opinion
	%	%	%
2007 Nov 30-Dec 2	44	37	18

TRENDS FOR
COMPARISON:
Immigration

2002 Jan 11-14	50	33	17
----------------	----	----	----

GALLUP POLL

16. Do you think the Republican Party or the Democratic Party would do a better job of dealing with each of the following issues and problems? How about -- [RANDOM ORDER]?

G. Moral values

	Republican Party	Democratic Party	No difference/ No opinion
	%	%	%
2007 Nov 30-Dec 2	43	39	18
1998 Oct 9-11	46	35	20

GALLUP POLL

16. Do you think the Republican Party or the Democratic Party would do a better job of dealing with each of the following issues and problems? How about -- [RANDOM ORDER]?

H. Corruption in government

	Republican Party	Democratic Party	No difference/ No opinion
2007 Nov 30-Dec 2	29%	42	29

GALLUP POLL

16. Do you think the Republican Party or the Democratic Party would do a better job of dealing with each of the following issues and problems? How about -- [RANDOM ORDER]?

I. Protecting the rights and freedoms of Americans

	Republican Party	Democratic Party	No difference/ No opinion
2007 Nov 30-Dec 2	36%	49	15

GALLUP POLL

16. Do you think the Republican Party or the Democratic Party would do a better job of dealing with each of the following issues and problems? How about -- [RANDOM ORDER]?

J. The housing market

	Republican Party	Democratic Party	No difference/ No opinion
2007 Nov 30-Dec 2	33%	48	19

GALLUP POLL