

GALLUP

October 28, 2008

Voters Not Eager for One-Party Control of Government

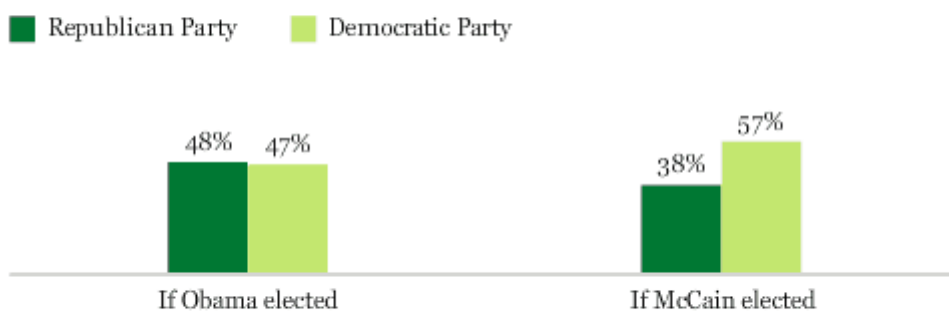
Divide as to which party should control Congress if Obama is elected

by Jeffrey M. Jones

PRINCETON, NJ -- Registered voters appear cautious about giving one party control of the federal government in this election. Most would prefer that the Democrats control Congress if John McCain is elected, but they divide evenly as to which party should control Congress if Barack Obama becomes the next president.

If [ROTATED: John McCain/Barack Obama] is elected president in November, which party would you prefer to have in control of Congress -- [ROTATED: the Republican Party, or the Democratic Party]?

Based on registered voters



Gallup Poll, Oct. 23-26, 2008

GALLUP POLL

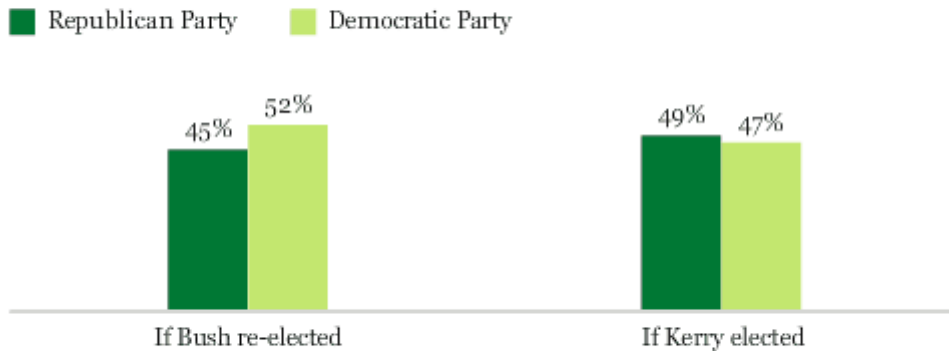
These results are based on an Oct. 23-26 Gallup Poll. They come as McCain has tried to remind voters that electing Obama as president to go along with a Democratically-controlled Congress would give the Democratic Party control of the federal government.

That argument appears to resonate, as voters appear reluctant to want to give one party full control of the government regardless of who is elected president.

Gallup has found a similar pattern of results in prior elections. In 2004, registered voters said they preferred to have the Democrats control Congress if George W. Bush was re-elected, and were divided as to which party should control Congress if John Kerry were to win. Bush won a second term and Republicans retained control of Congress in that election, before voters returned party control of both houses of Congress back to the Democrats in 2006 for the first time in over a decade.

*Preference for Party Control of Congress Based on Presidential Winner,
2004 Election*

Based on registered voters



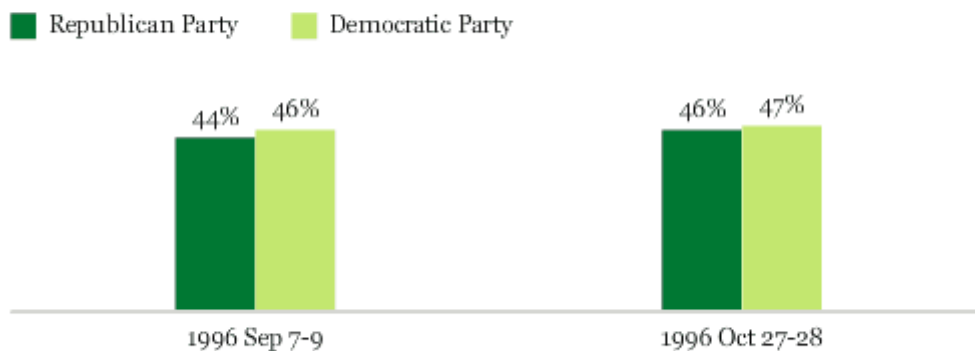
Oct. 22-24, 2004, CNN/USA Today/Gallup poll

GALLUP POLL

In the 1996 campaign, when Bill Clinton was strongly favored to win a second term in office, voters were again divided in their views of which party should control Congress. Some credit the expectation of a Clinton win with swaying voters to elect Republicans to Congress (for balance), and Republicans were able to maintain control of both houses in that election.

*Preference for Party Control of Congress if Bill Clinton Re-Elected President,
1996 Election*

Based on registered voters



GALLUP POLL

This September, Gallup asked Americans directly whether they thought it was better to have Congress and the president controlled by the same political party, or whether it would be better to have different parties controlling the two branches of government. Consistent with the results shown here, the public was evenly divided, with 40% favoring one-party control and 41% split control.

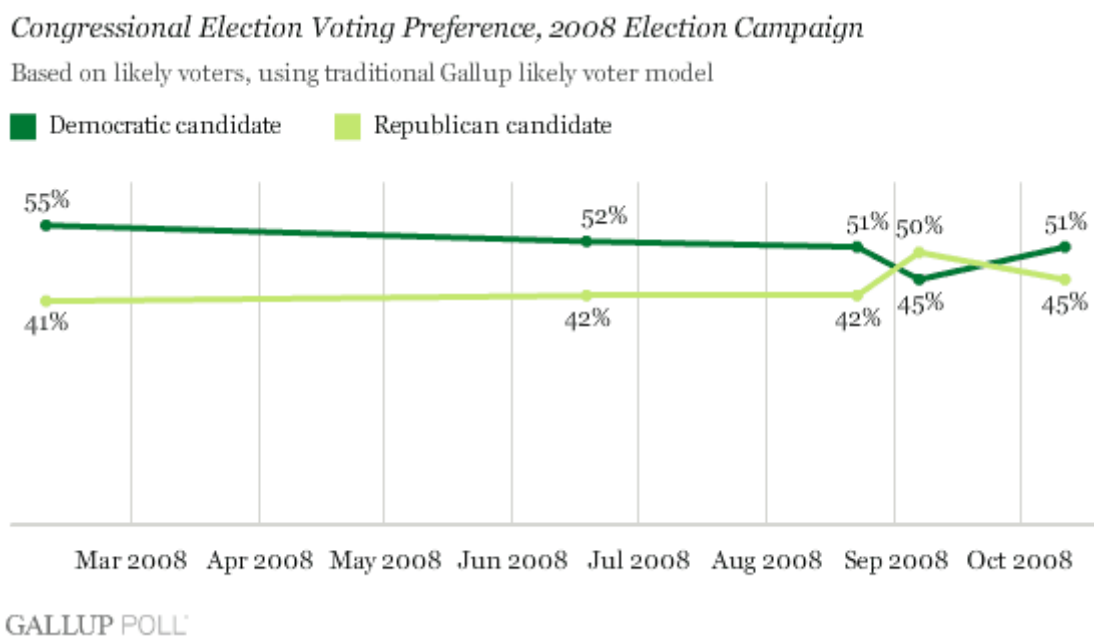
Relation of Vote Choice to Divided-Government Preference

It is unclear to what extent voters who prefer divided government would split their own votes for president and Congress in a deliberate attempt to promote divided party control of the two

branches. In fact, this sort of ticket-splitting is fairly rare among voters, at least in terms of their votes for president and Congress. In the last two Gallup Polls that asked about both presidential and congressional vote choices, only 9% of voters indicated they would vote for a president of one party and member of Congress of the other.

Moreover, a preference for divided control may be only one of many factors influencing their congressional vote, including their opinions of their local incumbent member of Congress. Indeed, despite record-low approval ratings for Congress this year, most voters (59%) continue to say that their own member of Congress deserves to be re-elected. And with Democrats currently in control of Congress, high incumbent re-election rates would help Democrats maintain control.

Gallup measures congressional voting intentions directly using a generic ballot, which asks respondents whether they would vote for the Republican candidate or the Democratic candidate in their district. The generic ballot has proven to be an accurate predictor of the congressional vote. As of mid-October -- and indeed through much of the campaign -- the Democrats lead on the generic ballot.



Perhaps the most likely outcome of the 2008 election may be unified Democratic control, given the Democratic lead in the generic ballot and Obama's lead in the polls for much of the fall, though the potential for change in the final week of the campaign still exists. Obama himself is being careful to warn his supporters not to take the outcome for granted.

While voters do not express a clear preference for one-party control, they seem to be more amenable to full Democratic control than full Republican control. In both 2004 and 2008, more voters said they'd like to see the Democrats control Congress if the Republican presidential candidate won than said they'd like to see the Republicans control Congress if the Democratic presidential candidate prevailed. In neither case was there majority support for one-party government. Of course, voters did elect George W. Bush and a Republican Congress in the 2004

election, so their actual voting choices on Election Day may not necessarily reflect nor replicate their preferences for one-party versus divided government.

The possibility of full Republican control in 2008 seems remote at this point, given the available polling data to date, and Republicans' best chance of sharing power with the Democrats may rest in McCain's pulling off a comeback win.

Survey Methods

Results are based on telephone interviews with 957 registered voters, aged 18 and older, conducted Oct. 23-26, 2008. 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.

Interviews are conducted with respondents on land-line telephones (for respondents with a land-line telephone) and cellular phones (for respondents who are cell-phone only).

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.