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Speech Watchers Give Bush High Marks

Viewers more positive than last year

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GALLUP NEWS SERVICE

PRINCETON, NJ -- An instant reaction poll of speech watchers last night, a majority of whom were Republicans, found President George W. Bush receiving high marks for his State of the Union address -- higher than last year and the year before, though not as high as the ratings he received in his first two years. As a group, speech watchers' positive views of the president increased even more after the address, both generally and about specific policies he proposed.

The major findings of the CNN/*USA Today*/Gallup instant reaction poll are as follows:

- Overall, 86% of speech watchers said their reaction to Bush's address was positive, including 60% who said "very" positive.
 - Last year, 76% said positive, with 45% very positive.
 - Three years ago, shortly after 9/11, 94% were positive and 74% very positive.
- Seventy-seven percent of speech watchers said Bush's proposed policies in general will move the country in the right direction, while 20% said the wrong direction. Last year, the percentage saying the right direction was 70%, while 26% said the wrong direction.
 - In Bush's first two State of the Union addresses, one before and the other after 9/11, speech watchers were more positive -- 91% saying the right direction in 2002, and 84% in 2001.
 - After former President Bill Clinton's two speeches when this sentiment was measured (1994 and 1995), 84% and 83% of speech watchers, respectively, said the president's policies would move the country in the right direction.
- In the pre-speech interview, 67% of people who intended to watch the speech said Bush's policies would move the country in the right direction, compared with 77% who said that after the speech. That 10-point increase is the same as last year's increase, though last year both the figures before and after the speech were lower -- 60% and 70%, respectively.
- When asked to evaluate whether Bush's policies in four specific areas would move the country in the right or wrong direction, speech watchers responded positively:
 - On the economy -- 71% said the right direction, while 26% said the wrong direction, showing a modest improvement over the 64% to 32% margin measured before the speech.
 - On healthcare -- a 70% to 23% ratio of right direction to wrong direction after the speech, which was a large increase from the 55% to 35% ratio before the speech.
 - On Social Security -- also a big change, from 51% saying right direction and 38% saying wrong direction before the speech, to a 66% to 29% margin afterward.

- On the situation in Iraq -- a two-to-one margin (66% to 31%) saying right over wrong direction before the speech, to a four-to-one margin afterward (78% to 20%).
- Bush spent a sizeable amount of time during the address outlining the need for changing the Social Security system, and speech watchers as a group reacted positively.
 - Before the speech, 11% cited Social Security as the most important issue for the government to deal with in the next year, but after the speech, 19% expressed that view.
 - After the speech, 74% of speech watchers said Bush made a convincing case for the government to take action on Social Security in the next year or two, while only 24% disagreed.
- Bush's address also appeared to make speech watchers more positive about the economy and Iraq.
 - Prior to the speech, 71% of speech watchers rated the nation's economy today as very good or good, compared with 76% afterward.
 - Similarly, before the speech, 60% said the situation in Iraq was very good or good, while 70% expressed that view afterward.

Republicans Outnumbered Democrats by Two-to-One Margin Among Speech Watchers

Typically, presidential speech watchers disproportionately identify with the party of the president. Last night, the imbalance in favor of the president's party was by more than a two-to-one ratio, with 52% of viewers Republicans and 25% Democrats. Another 22% identified as independents.

That difference of 27 percentage points between Republicans and Democrats compares with 20 points last year, 12 points in 2003, and 25 points in 2002, shortly after 9/11. Among those who watched Clinton's speeches, Democrats outnumbered Republicans by margins that ranged from 7 to 15 percentage points. When former President George H.W. Bush gave his last State of the Union address in 1992, Republicans outnumbered Democrats in the post-speech poll by just six percentage points, 37% to 31%.

Survey Methods

Results are based on telephone interviews with 485 speech watchers, aged 18 and older, conducted Feb. 2, 2005. For results based on the total sample of speech watchers, one can say with 95% confidence that the margin of sampling error is ± 5 percentage points.

Survey respondents were first interviewed as part of random national adult samples by Gallup Jan. 31-Feb. 1, 2005, at which time they indicated they planned to watch the President's 2005 State of the Union address and were willing to be re-interviewed by Gallup after the speech. Respondents' pre- and post-speech answers are shown for those questions that were asked on both surveys.

The sample consists of 52% of respondents who identify themselves as Republicans, 25% who identify themselves as Democrats, and 22% who identify themselves as independents.

Polls conducted entirely in one day, such as this one, are subject to additional error or bias not found in polls conducted over several days.

101. *What was your overall reaction to Bush's speech tonight -- [ROTATED: very positive, somewhat positive, somewhat negative, (or) very negative]?*

	Very positive %	Somewhat positive %	Somewhat negative %	Very negative %	BOTH/MIXED (vol.) %	No opinion %
George W. Bush						
2005 Feb 2	60	26	10	3	1	--
2004 Jan 20	45	31	13	10	1	--
2003 Jan 28	50	34	11	3	2	*
2002 Jan 29	74	20	3	2	1	0
2001 Feb 27	66	26	6	1	*	1

Bill Clinton

1999 Jan 19	56	27	9	7	1	*
1998 Jan 27	52	32	11	5	*	*

* Less than 0.5%

102. If you had to choose, which of the following do you consider to be the most important issue for the government to deal with in the next year -- [ROTATED: the economy, healthcare, Social Security, taxes, terrorism, (or) the situation in Iraq]?

	The economy %	Healthcare %	Social Security %	Taxes %	Terrorism %	Iraq %	No opinion %
George W. Bush							
2005 Feb 2 (Post-speech)	13	11	19	2	23	30	2
2005 Jan 31-Feb 1 (Pre-speech)	14	12	11	4	23	35	1

103. Do you think the policies being proposed by George W. Bush will move the country in the right direction or the wrong direction?

	Right direction	Wrong direction	No opinion
	%	%	%
George W. Bush			
2005 Feb 2 (Post-speech)	77	20	3
2005 Jan 31-Feb 1 (Pre-speech)	67	29	4
2004 Jan 20 (Post-speech)	70	26	4
2004 Jan 18-19 (Pre-speech)	60	33	7
2003 Jan 28 (Post-speech)	71	20	9
2003 Jan 23-27 (Pre-speech)	52	40	8
2002 Jan 29 (Post-speech)	91	7	2
2002 Jan 25-27 (Pre-speech)	77	16	7
2001 Feb 27 (Post-speech)	84	12	4
2001 Feb 25-26 (Pre-speech)	73	12	15
Bill Clinton			
1995 Jan 24 (Post-speech)	83	15	2
1995 Jan 23 (Pre-speech)	51	35	14
1994 Jan 25 (Post-speech)	84	11	5
1994 Jan 22-24 (Pre-speech)	67	27	6

2001 WORDING: Thinking about the policies of President Bush and his administration, in your view, is George W. Bush leading the country in the right direction or in the wrong direction?

1994-1995 WORDING: Thinking about the policies of President Clinton and his administration, in your view, is Bill Clinton leading the country in the right direction or in the wrong direction?

104. Now thinking about these specific areas, do you think the policies George W. Bush is proposing will move the country in the right direction or the wrong direction? How about for -- [RANDOM ORDER]?

A. The economy

	Right direction	Wrong direction	No opinion
	%	%	%
George W. Bush			
2005 Feb 2 (Post-speech)	71	26	3
2005 Jan 31-Feb 1 (Pre-speech)	64	32	4

2004 Jan 20 (Post-speech)	66	31	3
2004 Jan 18-19 (Pre-speech)	62	35	3

B. Healthcare

	Right direction	Wrong direction	No opinion
	%	%	%
<i>George W. Bush</i>			
2005 Feb 2 (Post-speech)	70	23	7
2005 Jan 31-Feb 1 (Pre-speech)	55	35	10
2004 Jan 20 (Post-speech)	63	35	2
2004 Jan 18-19 (Pre-speech)	48	41	11

C. Social Security

	Right direction	Wrong direction	No opinion
	%	%	%
<i>George W. Bush</i>			
2005 Feb 2 (Post-speech)	66	29	5
2005 Jan 31-Feb 1 (Pre-speech)	51	38	11
2004 Jan 20 (Post-speech)	59	35	6
2004 Jan 18-19 (Pre-speech)	47	38	15

D. The situation in Iraq

	Right direction	Wrong direction	No opinion
	%	%	%
<i>George W. Bush</i>			
2005 Feb 2 (Post-speech)	78	20	2
2005 Jan 31-Feb 1 (Pre-speech)	66	31	3

105. In his speech tonight, do you think George W. Bush did -- or did not -- make a convincing case that the government needs to take action in the next year or two to change the Social Security system?

	Yes, did	No, did not	No opinion
<i>George W. Bush</i>			
2005 Feb 2	74%	24	2

Trends for Comparison: Do you think George W. Bush has -- or has not -- made a convincing case about the need for the U.S. to take military action against Iraq?

	Yes, has	No, has not	No opinion
<i>George W. Bush</i>	%	%	%
2003 Jan 28 (Post-speech)	67	30	3
2003 Jan 23-27 (Pre-speech)	47	52	1

106. Overall, would you describe -- [ITEMS ROTATED] -- as -- very good, good, poor, or very poor?

A. The state of the nation's economy today

	Very good	Good	Poor	Very poor	No opinion
	%	%	%	%	%
<i>George W. Bush</i>					
2005 Feb 2 (Post-speech)	11	65	18	6	*
2005 Jan 31-Feb 1 (Pre-speech)	9	62	22	7	*

* Less than 0.5%

B. The situation in Iraq for the United States today

	Very good	Good	Poor	Very poor	No opinion
	%	%	%	%	%
<i>George W. Bush</i>					
2005 Feb 2 (Post-speech)	14	56	21	8	1
2005 Jan 31-Feb 1 (Pre-speech)	11	49	24		