

Seven in Ten Americans Favor Congressional Candidates Who Will Pursue a Major Change in Foreign Policy

October 19, 2006

U.S. Public Wants Less Emphasis on Military Force, More on Working Through U.N.

A Majority Supports Direct Talks with North Korea and Iran

[Full Report](#)
[Questionnaire/Methodology](#)



Going into the November midterm elections, seven in ten Americans say they prefer Congressional candidates who will pursue a new approach to U.S. foreign policy. A new nationwide survey finds a large and growing majority of Americans is dissatisfied with the position of the United States in the world. Most Americans believe that U.S. policies are increasing the threat of terrorist attack and decreasing goodwill toward the United States.

The Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA)/Knowledge Networks poll also finds that large majorities of Americans feel that the United States puts too much emphasis on military force and unilateral action. Most say they want their member of Congress to work to shift the emphasis of U.S. foreign policy in favor of diplomacy, multilateral cooperation, and homeland security.

They also stress the need for programs to reduce the United States' dependence on oil. When given the opportunity to reshape the foreign policy budget, respondents redistribute spending from military programs to other methods of pursuing security.

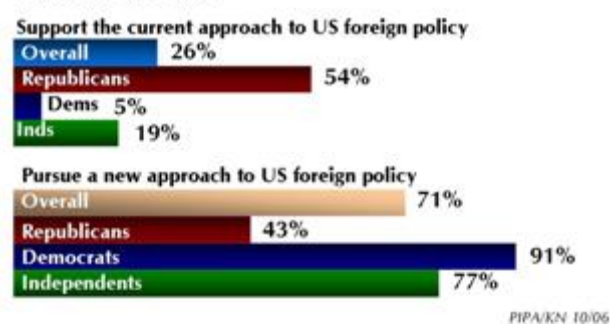
"It is a rare year that foreign policy takes center stage in Congressional elections. Voters are calling for a sea change in U.S. foreign policy. They want less emphasis on military force, and more on soft power," said Steven Kull, director of PIPA and editor of WorldPublicOpinion.org.

On the question of how to deal with the nuclear ambitions of Iran and North Korea, a majority of respondents disagrees with the Bush administration's refusal to seek direct

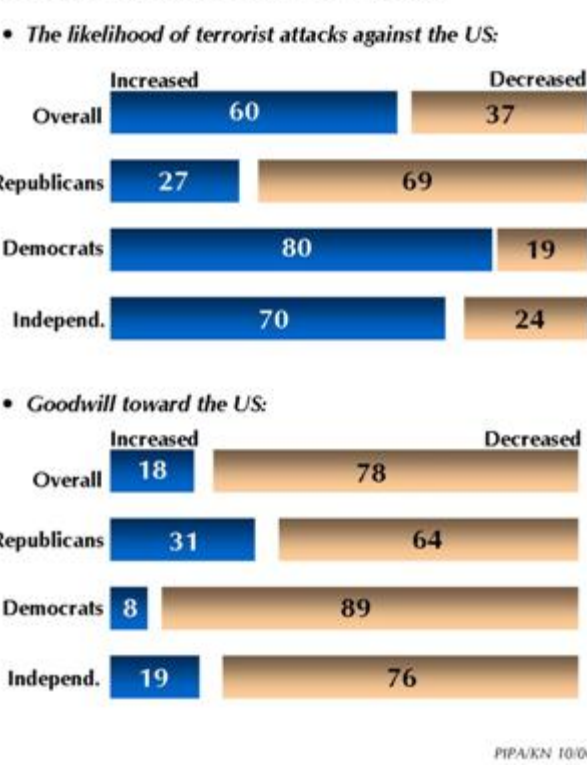
Congressional Candidates and Foreign Policy

Perceived Effect of Current Foreign Policy

When thinking about who you would vote for in the upcoming Congressional race, are you looking more for a candidate who will:



Do you think that the way the Bush Administration has been conducting US foreign policy has, on balance, increased or decreased each of the following:



talks. Fifty-five percent say the United States should enter into talks without

preconditions.

The poll was fielded by Networks, which surveyed people from Oct. 6-15. It increase in the proportion of who express concern about country's standing in the out of three Americans they are "dissatisfied with of the United States in the today," up 17 points from a Gallup poll. The Bush administration's handling of foreign affairs gets poor marks with majorities saying that it has increased the likelihood of terrorist attacks against the United States (60%) and has decreased goodwill (78%).

Knowledge 1,058 finds a sharp Americans their world. Two (68%) say the position world

Many see the United States' current foreign policy as out of balance. Sixty-five percent say that the Bush administration is "too quick to get military forces involved" and 67 percent say that it should "put more emphasis on diplomatic and economic methods." Large majorities favor putting greater emphasis on non-military forms of pursuing security such as working to reduce U.S. dependence on oil (84%), coordinating intelligence and law enforcement efforts with other countries (83%), working through the United Nations to strengthen international anti-terrorism law and enforcement (71%), and building goodwill toward the United States by providing food and medical assistance to people in poor countries (57%).

Far less popular are approaches such as building new nuclear weapons (25%) or helping dissidents try to overthrow the government of Iran (28%).

Americans show a strong preference for Congressional candidates who would seek to increase multilateral cooperation. Seventy-two percent say they would prefer candidates who believe that "the U.S. should do its share in efforts to solve international problems together with other countries." Much less popular are candidates who want the United States to "continue to be the preeminent world leader" (9% support) or to "withdraw from most efforts to solve international problems" (16%).

Using an innovative survey technique, respondents were allowed to redistribute spending within the existing foreign policy budget. The poll shows that Americans would make sharp changes.

- On average they favor cutting spending on military items by \$198 billion, or 36 percent, from 2006 levels, and reducing spending for military operations in Iraq by \$18 billion.
- Americans favor increasing spending on preparation for disasters by an average of \$40 billion. They also support more funding for energy conservation and renewables (\$39 billion), humanitarian and disaster assistance (\$19 billion), initiatives to control the global spread of HIV/AIDS (\$25 billion), helping poor countries develop their economies (\$17 billion), and programs to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons by helping countries secure nuclear materials (\$16 billion).

Americans of both parties are critical of partisanship in the U.S. Congress, according to the survey. Majorities want a Congress that seeks common ground and does more to oversee foreign policy.

- A large majority (90%) rejects the view that the best way to arrive at foreign policy is for each party to fight for what they think is best, favoring instead Democrats and Republicans trying to find common ground.
- Seven in ten (71%) prefer that the views of the American people as a whole influence U.S. foreign policy more than the views of the majority of their own party.
- Republicans (52%), Democrats (85%) and Independents (76%) all disapprove of the way Congress is doing its job
- Majorities also say that "the way the Bush Administration has been conducting foreign policy" has decreased good will toward the U.S.: This sentiment is shared by Republicans (64%), Democrats (89%) and Independents (76%).
- Fifty-three percent overall feel that Congress is not doing enough to oversee U.S. foreign policy, while 21 percent say it is doing too much, and 17 percent say it is doing the right amount of oversight.
- Two-thirds (65%) say that the U.S. government plays on people's fears too much when it justifies its foreign policies to the American people.