



WALTER H. CAPPS CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF
ETHICS, RELIGION, AND PUBLIC LIFE

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA BARBARA

POST-ELECTION POLL

“What Americans Expect from
the Next President and Congress”

A Report by

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I. Introduction

Former Senator Alan Simpson once observed, "If you have integrity, nothing else matters. If you don't have integrity, nothing else matters."

The news out of Washington, in the last several years, has not always reflected the kind of integrity Americans expect from their elected leaders.

In a 2006 poll looking at "Honesty and Trust,"¹ more than 8,000 polled rated President George W. Bush at 69% of "low" numbers for "*trustworthiness*." Congress was graded lower, at 76%. According to a New York Times/ CBS News poll conducted in April 2008, 81% of those polled believe "*things have pretty seriously gotten off on the wrong track*."²

Working with Zogby International, the Walter H. Capps Center for the Study of Ethics, Religion and Public Life at the University of California at Santa Barbara put a poll into the field. Its purpose was to learn what Americans think is needed most from incoming President-elect Barack Obama and the new Congress. The following open-ended questions were asked:

1. What *one or two qualities* do you think the country needs most from the new president?
2. What *one or two actions* would you like to see accomplished most by the new president and Congress?
3. What one or two words *best describes* what you think the new president needs to do to get the country back on track?

II. Final Numbers

Zogby conducted an online survey of 3,357 likely voters from 11/05/08 thru 11/06/08. Responses to all three questions totaled 10,081.

A sampling of Zogby's online panel, which is representative of the adult population of the U.S., was invited to participate. Slight weights were added to region, party, age, race, religion, gender, education to more accurately reflect the population.

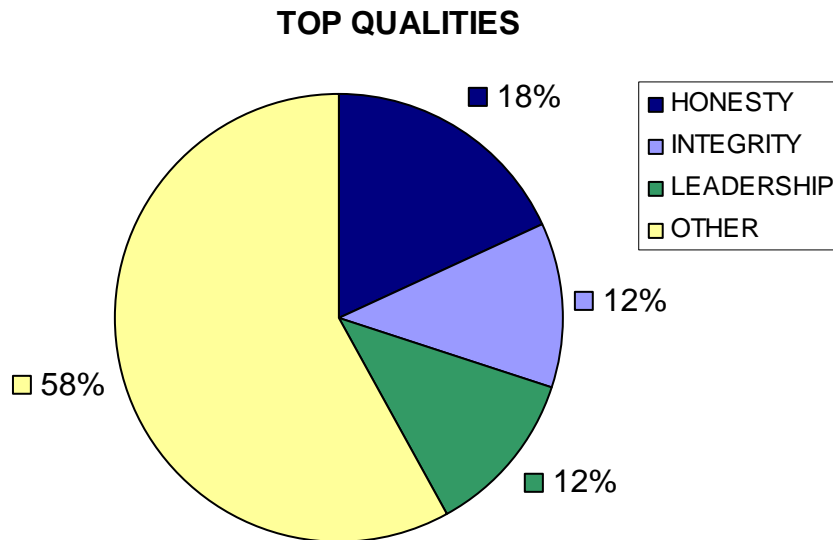
The margin of error is +/- 1.7 percentage points. Margins of error are higher in sub-groups.

¹ "Honesty and Trust in America" Lichtman/Zogby Poll, August 1, 2006

² New York Times/CBS News Poll, April 2, 2008

III. What one or two qualities do you think the country needs most from the new president?

“Honesty” was the quality most cited at 18%, followed by “Integrity” and “Leadership,” both at 12%. These three qualities were cited in 42% of total responses.

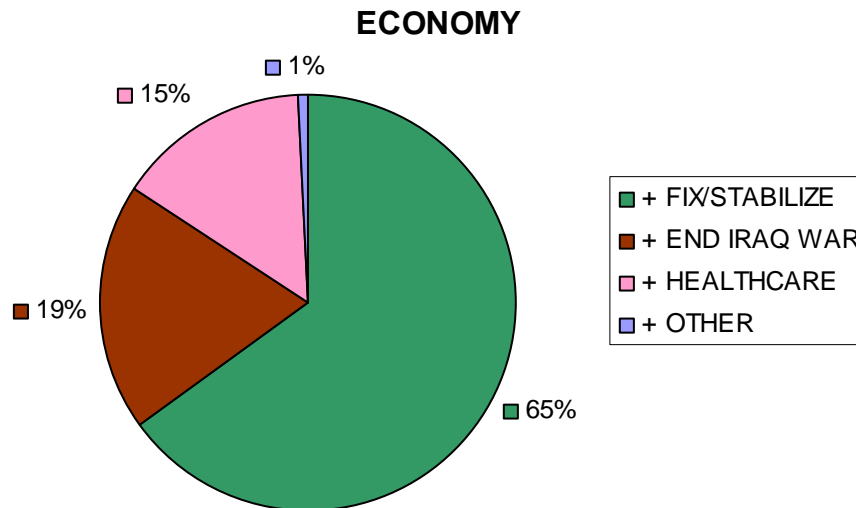


The overlapping quality associated with “Honesty,” “Integrity” and “Leadership” was “Intelligence.”

“Morals/Ethics,” and “Experience” overlapped “Integrity.” And “Vision” overlapped “Leadership.”

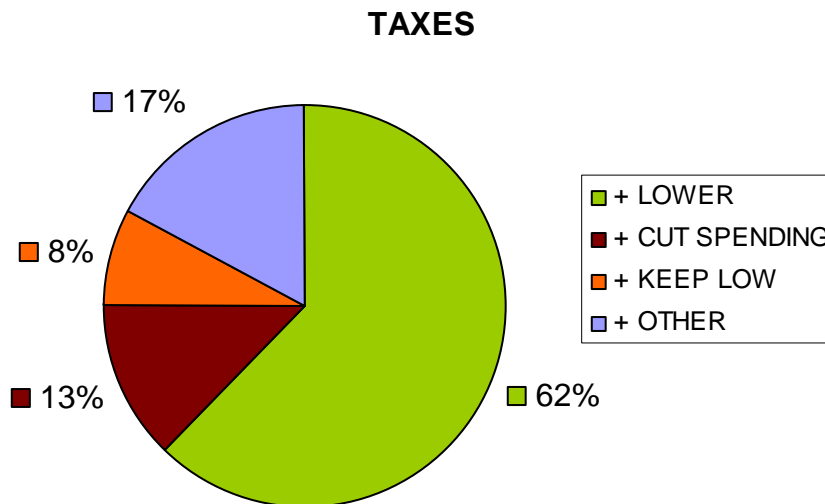
IV. What one or two actions would you like to see accomplished most by the new president and Congress?

Top issue requiring "Action": ECONOMY; (+) indicates top multiple words chosen in addition to "Economy."



What one or two words best describes what you think the new president needs to do to get the country back on track?

Top "Word": TAXES; (+) indicates top multiple words chosen in addition to "Taxes."



V. Conclusions

The results of the survey indicate that Americans are looking for an intelligent president who displays honesty, integrity and leadership.

Upon closer examination, “morals/ethics” and “experience” overlapped with “Integrity”. And “vision” rated high in connection with “Leadership.”

When it comes to specific actions, Americans would like the new president and Congress to address most, it is not surprising that the “Economy” was an overwhelming concern at 65%, followed by “End War/Withdraw from Iraq” at 19% and “Healthcare” at 15%. Clearly, both the Iraq war and healthcare have economic implications, as well.

Second tier issues included: “Energy Policy/Independence” and “Protect/Create Jobs.” “Strengthen National Security” tied with “Diplomacy/Rebuild/Improve International Relations,” followed by “Reduce the Debt” and “Fight Terrorism.”

When asked what the new president needs to do to get the country back on track, a majority of those polled cited “Lowering Taxes” at 62%. This percentage is close to the proportion in the survey who indicated earning below \$100,000 (72%). “Cut Government Spending” followed at 17%.

Additional word searches

Searching for “African-American” and “Black,” yielded no responses. But a search for the word “Race,” pulled up five responses: “...Equality for all races!”; “Fairness to all races...”; “Build race relations”; “Forget race”; and “Stop playing the race and class warfare cards.”

The word “Muslim,” pulled up three responses: “Honest and a Christian (not Muslim);” “Drop his Muslim faith;” and “Forget his Muslim past.”

Searching “White,” the following was pulled up in response to the qualities needed most from the new president: “White and Honest.” And the word “Racist” revealed two comments: “He's a fraud. He's a racist”; “Not be racist.”

However, of the more than 10,000 individual responses from those polled, this would seem to indicate that neither race nor religion played a significant factor in the election of Mr. Obama.

Statements

Americans offered a number of noteworthy pieces of advice to the next president. Among those that stood out –

“...common sense, not party politics.”

“Leadership with substance, not just style”

“...clear vision to unify the country, help for the middle class”

“Bipartisan – needs to be able to effectively work with Republicans”

“Intelligence, wisely chosen advisors...”

“...putting the PEOPLE, not special interests, first”

“Unselfish strength and integrity...”

“Honesty and balls”

“...ability to listen to others with more knowledge”

“Enlightened leadership, compassion for those with other views”

“Diplomacy and consensus-building skills”

“...inspiring and shared vision”

“Sense of personal responsibility to his leadership of the country”

“...intellectual but down-to-earth”

“...Wisdom to protect America”

“Humility”

“Complete honesty, unquestionable integrity.”

VI. Methodology and Sample Characteristics

Zogby International conducted interviews of 3,357 likely voters online. Panelists who have agreed to participate in Zogby polls online were invited to participate in the survey. The online poll ran from 11/05/08 through 11/06/08. The margin of error is +/- 1.7 percentage points. Margins of error are higher in sub-groups. Slight weights were added to region, age, race and gender to more accurately reflect the population.

Sample Characteristics	Frequency	Valid Percent*
Sample size	3,357	100
2008 Presidential Election		
Obama	1,776	52.9
McCain	1,551	46.2
Other	31	.9
Region		
East	738	22.1
South	871	26
Central/Great Lakes	998	29.8
West	739	22.1
Missing	11	--
Age		
18-29	597	17.8
30-49	1,306	39
50-64	909	27.1
65+	538	16.1
Missing	6	--
Education		
No College Degree	1,836	55
College Degree +	1,501	45
Missing	20	--
Race		
White	2,408	73.3
Hispanic	293	8.9
African American	424	12.9
Asian	43	1.3
Other	119	3.6
Missing	69	--

Sample Characteristics	Frequency	Valid Percent*
Less than \$25,000	239	8.1
\$25,000 - \$35,000	312	10.6
\$35,000 - \$50,000	423	14.3
\$50,000 - \$75,000	642	21.8
\$75,000 - \$100,000	504	17.1
\$100,000 +	831	28.2
Missing	406	--
Male	1,565	47.2
Female	1,752	52.8
Missing	40	--

* Numbers have been rounded to the nearest percent and might not total 100.

VII. About the Capps Center

The Walter H. Capps Center for the Study of Ethics, Religion, and Public Life was established at the University of California, Santa Barbara in 2002. The Center seeks to advance discussion of issues broadly relating to ethics, values and public life and to encourage civic participation.

The Center sponsors internships, research and courses on ethics, and lectures both in Santa Barbara and Washington, DC.

VIII. About the Authors

Wade Clark Roof is the J.F. Rowny Professor of Religion and Society and Director of the Walter H. Capps Center for the Study of Ethics, Religion, and Public Life at the University of California at Santa Barbara.

He is the author or co-author of 14 books and over 100 articles in journals and books.

He recently received a Ford Foundation grant to study the 2008 Presidential Election and Prospects for Progressive Religious and Ethical Reflection in the United States.

Jim Lichtman has been writing and speaking on ethics to corporations, associations and schools since 1995. Feature stories and appearances include

USA Today, the *Weekend Today Show in New York*, National Public Radio's *Weekend Edition*, and *CNN NewsNight with Aaron Brown*.

His op-ed pieces have appeared in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Houston Chronicle*, *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, *New York Daily News*, and *New York Times*.

His latest book, *WHAT DO YOU STAND FOR?* features stories “*about principles that matter*,” from Mario Cuomo to the Dali Lama to ordinary citizens.

Jim also serves on the National Advisory Board of the Walter H. Capps Center. His current ethics-related commentaries can be found at ethicsStupid.com.