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**Veterans Rate Bush Higher Than Kerry on Many Dimensions,
But Kerry Gained After Convention, Annenberg Data Show**

America's military veterans, a distinctly Republican chunk of the electorate, think much more highly of George W. Bush than of John Kerry. But the Democratic convention improved veterans' overall impression of Kerry, and about as many now view him favorably as think of him unfavorably, the University of Pennsylvania's National Annenberg Election Survey shows.

Fifty-nine percent of 728 veterans registered to vote and interviewed from August 6 through 24 said they had a favorable opinion of Bush while 32 percent had an unfavorable view. By contrast, 42 percent viewed Kerry favorably and 44 percent unfavorably. The difference between Kerry's favorable and unfavorable ratings was not statistically significant; the poll's margin of sampling error was plus or minus four percentage points.

The difference in their opinions of the two candidates reflected veterans' underlying partisanship. Thirty-seven percent of registered veterans called themselves Republicans and 23 percent said they were Democrats, a sharp contrast to the general public, where 33 percent identified with each major party. Veterans, who made up about 15 percent of this sample, are consistently more Republican than the public generally.

Still, Kerry's August standing was better than the 37 percent favorable, 45 percent unfavorable rating veterans gave him between July 5 and 25, the day before the Democratic convention began. On several measures, Kerry made modest gains during and immediately after the convention, which concluded on July 29. But most of these gains washed away in the polling beginning August 6. That was the date when the television advertisement questioning his service in Vietnam began to attract national attention, but renewed assaults by the Bush campaign on his attitudes toward the war in Iraq were another important factor in this period.

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For example, before the convention 57 percent of veterans said the term “strong leader” fitted Bush better than Kerry. That narrowed to a 43 to 37 percent Bush advantage during in polling from July 26 through August 5 during and immediately after the convention period, but opened up again to a 56 to 33 percent Bush advantage in the August 6 through 24 polling.

Similarly, while the general public has consistently rated Kerry above Bush on being knowledgeable, veterans gave Bush a slight, 45 to 42 percent advantage in the pre-convention polling. Then they shifted to a 49 to 33 percent Kerry lead in the middle period, and then went back to a 47 to 42 percent Bush lead in the latest polling.

But there was one significant measure on which Kerry’s gains lasted. Respondents were asked “After John Kerry returned from service in Vietnam, he demonstrated against the war, he testified in Congress against it, and he threw away his campaign ribbons in protest. Do you approve or disapprove of Kerry’s antiwar activities?”

Before the convention, just 30 percent of veterans said they approved, while 62 percent disapproved. In the middle period, 43 percent approved and 52 percent disapproved. In the August 6 through 24 polling, 40 percent approved and 52 percent disapproved.

One factor in the changes may have been Bush’s own improved standing among veterans. With frequent attacks on him during the Democratic convention, Bush’s job approval rating among veterans was 53 percent approve and 45 percent disapprove in the July 26-August 5 polling. From August 6 through 24, it was 59 percent approve and 39 percent disapprove. This was a bigger gain than he had with the general public, where his approval rating went from 50 to 53 percent.

Bush also gained slightly among veterans in their views of his handling the situation in Iraq, but not on his handling of the economy, although on both subjects veterans are more positive than the public generally.

By clear majorities, veterans said they trusted Bush more than Kerry as a military commander-in-chief and for handling the war on terrorism. So did the general public, but veterans were more pro-Bush on these items than was the public.

Fifty-six percent of veterans preferred Bush as a commander-in-chief, and 38 percent preferred Kerry. In the general public, 49 percent chose Bush and 43 percent chose Kerry. On the question of handling the war on terrorism, 57 percent of veterans preferred Bush and 35 percent preferred Kerry. In the general public, 50 percent chose Bush and 39 percent chose Kerry.

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Veterans gave Bush an edge on a variety of other traits, from being inspiring to being steady to sharing their values. But like the public generally, they said terms like “reckless” and “stubborn” fitted Bush better than they fitted Kerry.

Talia Jomini Stroud, a senior research analyst at The Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania, developed the research for this report. That National Annenberg Election Survey, the largest academic election poll, is a project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center (www.AnnenbergPublicPolicyCenter.org). It has been tracking the presidential campaign since October 7, and interviewing will continue until after Election Day. Dr. Kathleen Hall Jamieson is the director of the survey. Ken Winnege is the managing director of the survey. Adam Clymer is the political director of the survey.

Another major election project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center is FactCheck.org, a project that tries to hold politicians accountable by exposing false or misleading campaign statements. It is available online at www.FactCheck.Org.

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Questions

All tables reflect respondents who say they are registered to vote.

A. Opinions of Bush and Kerry

	Veterans			All Respondents		
	7/5 – 7/25	7/26 – 8/5	8/6 – 8/24	7/5 – 7/25	7/26 – 8/5	8/6 – 8/24
For each of the following people in politics, please tell me if your opinion is favorable or unfavorable: John Kerry						
Favorable	37%	43%	42%	43%	47%	46%
Unfavorable	45%	41%	44%	34%	35%	35%
Neutral	15%	14%	13%	19%	15%	16%
For each of the following people in politics, please tell me if your opinion is favorable or unfavorable: George W. Bush						
Favorable	55%	53%	59%	48%	49%	51%
Unfavorable	35%	38%	32%	41%	41%	39%
Neutral	9%	8%	9%	10%	9%	10%
Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling his job as president?						
Approve	55%	53%	59%	50%	50%	53%
Disapprove	43%	45%	39%	48%	49%	46%
Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling the nation's economy?						
Approve	52%	52%	51%	45%	46%	45%
Disapprove	45%	45%	45%	52%	52%	51%
Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is currently handling the situation in Iraq?						
Approve	52%	50%	54%	42%	43%	46%
Disapprove	45%	47%	44%	55%	54%	51%
After John Kerry returned from service in Vietnam, he demonstrated against the war, he testified in Congress against it, and he threw his campaign ribbons away in protest. Do you approve or disapprove of Kerry's antiwar activities?						
Approve	30%	*	40%	40%	39%	39%
Disapprove	62%	*	52%	47%	48%	50%
Who do you trust more to handle the responsibilities of commander in chief of the military: George W. Bush or John Kerry?						
George W. Bush	Question not asked		56%	Question not asked		49%
John Kerry			38%			43%
Both (volunteered response)			1%			1%
Neither (volunteered response)			3%			2%
Who do you trust to do a better job handling the U.S. war on terrorism: George W. Bush or John Kerry?						
George W. Bush	Question not asked		57%	Question not asked		50%
John Kerry			35%			39%
Both (volunteered response)			2%			1%
Neither (volunteered response)			2%			3%

* Data not included because there were too few respondents to analyze.

B. Respondents were asked to rate George W. Bush and John Kerry on each trait using a scale of zero to ten. The following data represents the percentage of people ranking Bush higher, Kerry higher, or both equal.

	Veterans			All Respondents		
	7/5 – 7/25	7/26 – 8/5	8/6 – 8/24	7/5 – 7/25	7/26 – 8/5	8/6 – 8/24
Inspiring						
Bush higher	54%	44%	51%	42%	42%	44%
Kerry higher	36%	44%	40%	43%	46%	43%
Equal	7%	6%	7%	10%	7%	9%
Strong leader						
Bush higher	57%	43%	56%	46%	45%	48%
Kerry higher	33%	37%	33%	39%	42%	38%
Equal	7%	13%	8%	8%	8%	9%
Shares my values						
Bush higher	52%	42%	49%	41%	41%	43%
Kerry higher	35%	45%	38%	44%	46%	43%
Equal	7%	8%	9%	8%	8%	8%
Knowledgeable						
Bush higher	45%	33%	47%	36%	37%	38%
Kerry higher	42%	49%	42%	47%	46%	45%
Equal	9%	11%	9%	11%	11%	12%
Reckless						
Bush higher	39%	41%	45%	44%	45%	44%
Kerry higher	36%	37%	35%	30%	31%	32%
Equal	17%	12%	14%	15%	14%	15%
Steady						
Bush higher	54%	47%	58%	44%	44%	49%
Kerry higher	28%	34%	27%	34%	37%	33%
Equal	10%	9%	12%	14%	11%	11%
Stubborn						
Bush higher	54%	55%	53%	53%	54%	52%
Kerry higher	16%	18%	22%	17%	17%	20%
Equal	14%	13%	14%	15%	14%	17%

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Survey Methodology

The National Annenberg Election Survey (NAES) is a survey conducted each presidential election by the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania.

The 2004 National Annenberg Election Survey is based on telephone interviews which began October 7, 2003 and will continue past Election Day.

The sample of telephone exchanges called was randomly selected by a computer from a complete list of thousands of active residential exchanges across the country. Within each exchange, random digits were added to form a complete telephone number, thus permitting access to both listed and unlisted numbers. Within each household, one adult was designated by a random procedure to be the respondent for the survey. The interviewing is conducted by Schulman, Ronca, Bucuvalas, Inc.

The results have been weighted to take account of household size and number of telephone lines into the residence and to adjust for variation in the sample relating to geographic region, sex, race, age and education.

This report deals with interviewing conducted in three periods. From July 5 through July 25, 2004, 5,051 adults were interviewed, of whom 4,137 were registered to vote, and 630 were registered military veterans. From July 26 through August 5, 3,171 adults were interviewed, of whom 2,610 were registered voters and 403 were registered veterans. From August 6 through 24, 5,381 adults were interviewed, of whom 4,578 were registered voters and 728 were registered veterans.

In theory, in 19 out of 20 cases, results for all registered voters in the first two periods will differ by no more than two percentage points, up or down, from what would have been obtained by interviewing all American adults. For the third period, the margin of sampling error would be plus or minus one percentage point. For smaller subgroups, such as veterans, the margin of sampling error would be higher. For veterans in the July 5-25 and August 6-25 periods, the margin of sampling error would be plus or minus four percentage points. For veterans in the July 26-August 5 period, it would be plus or minus five percentage points. Moreover, some questions were not asked of all respondents, and the margin of sampling error on those questions would be higher.

In addition to sampling error, the practical difficulties of conducting any survey of public opinion may introduce other sources of error into the poll. Variations in the wording and order of questions, for example, may lead to somewhat different results.

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