

Trump Is No Longer The Ace of His Base

August 16th, 2017

Friends,

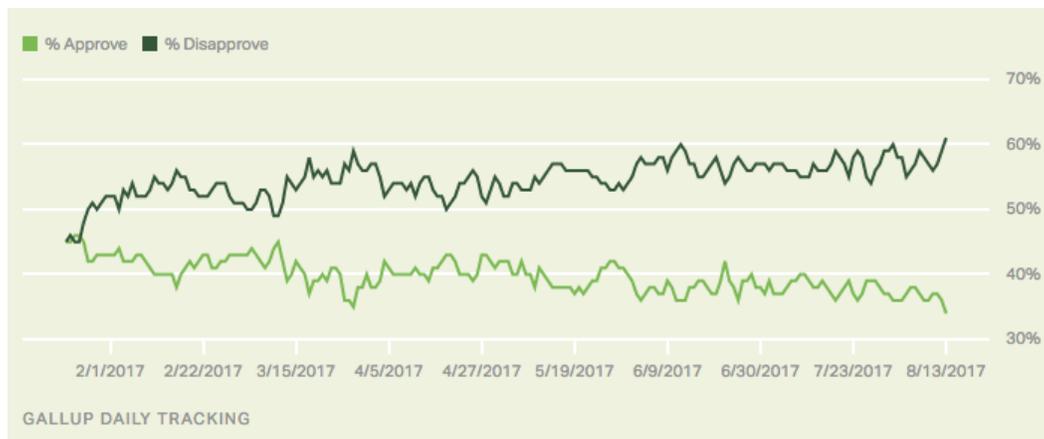
Below you will find the ALG Research National Polling Summary, which provides a pollster's take on data and trends that affect political campaigns. This week we take a look at President Trump's job approval rating.

Trump entered office with a historically low approval rating, one that is made even more notable when taking into account the low rate of unemployment, a booming stock market, high consumer confidence, and the fact that the United States is not currently engaged in a drastically unpopular war. As outrage over the President's response to the violence in Charlottesville this past weekend has become the subject of a vast public outcry, it's important to remember just how unpopular Trump was even before the events of the last two weeks.

Below, we take a deeper look at how low Trump's job approval rating is, what issues are driving perceptions of his job performance, and signs that support amongst the voters who propelled him into office may be beginning to weaken.

Recent Polls Show Trump's Job Approval at a Record Low

Three recent polls from [CNN](#), [Quinnipiac](#), and [Gallup](#) all found that the President's job approval rating had dropped to record lows of 38%, 33%, and 34% respectively. As seen in this trend graph from Gallup, these polls are all reflective of a slow and steady decline in Trump's job approval rating, as well as a slow yet steady increase in his disapproval rating.



[Gallup](#)

Most shocking about these recent polls however, is the proportion of people who have very firmly made up their minds and say they disapprove "strongly" of Trump's job performance. In the CNN poll, out of the 56% of respondents who said they disapprove of the way Trump is handling his job as president, 47% said they "strongly" disapprove and only 9% said they

“somewhat” disapproved. The Quinnipiac poll showed a similar split amongst respondents. Out of the 61% who said they disapproved of how Trump is handling his job, 55% said they “strongly” disapproved, with just 6% saying they “somewhat” disapproved.

These numbers show that Trump’s job approval rating is not a soft number that will be easily influenced by White House attempts to win Americans back over, but rather is indicative of strongly held opinions amongst Americans that are unlikely to change without a significant shift in strategy. While it’s not impossible for Trump to win over Americans who currently strongly disapprove of his job performance, it is unlikely, and leaves the White House a very narrow path to attempt to rebuild public perception of Trump’s job performance thus far.

Job Approval by Unaffiliated/Independent Voters Also Reaches Record Low

Trump’s approval ratings amongst Americans who aren’t affiliated with a political party or identify as Independents, many of whom are frequently recognized as swing voters, are also declining. In the recent [Gallup](#) poll Trump’s approval amongst Independents sank to a record low of 29%. The [Quinnipiac](#) poll also found job approval amongst Independents was low, with just 34% of Independents approving of Trump’s handling of his job so far.

Half of Non-College White Americans Now Disapprove of Trump

The recent [Quinnipiac](#) poll also showed that a half of white Americans without a college degree hold a negative view of Trump’s job performance so far. 50% said they disapproved of Trump’s handling of his job as President, while 43% said they approved. Largely hailed as one of the groups that propelled Trump to victory, this could present big problems for Trump and his coalition moving forward into the midterms. While job approval and vote share are distinctly different measures, they are also intrinsically linked and a drop to just 43% approval from a group that voted for the President by a margin of [67% to 28%](#) certainly signals that the President’s base is not as strong as it once was.

Majority Don’t Approve of Trump’s Actions on Healthcare or Foreign Affairs

The [CNN](#) poll showed that Americans most strongly disapprove of Trump’s handling of health care policy, with 62% disapproving of how he is handling the issue and just 31% saying they approve of how is handling the issue. These numbers eclipse his basic approval rating, and show that healthcare will continue to be a major issue where the White House needs to regain ground after several failed attempts to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act.

A majority of Americans also disapprove of Trump’s approach to immigration policy (40% approve / 55% disapprove), helping the middle class (39% approve / 54% disapprove), and foreign affairs (35% approve / 61% disapprove). With the ongoing tension with North Korea, it will be interesting to see if and how Trump’s approval ratings on foreign affairs change, or if they hold steady in the coming months.

Americans were split on whether or not they believe Trump is doing a good job of handling the economy as President. 45% of Americans approved of Trump’s handling of the economy while 47% said they disapproved. While his net approval rating is only slightly negative here, it could be the start of a troubling trend for Trump. He began his term with a [net positive approval](#) rating of his handling of the economy, and has frequently pointed to the economy’s performance as a

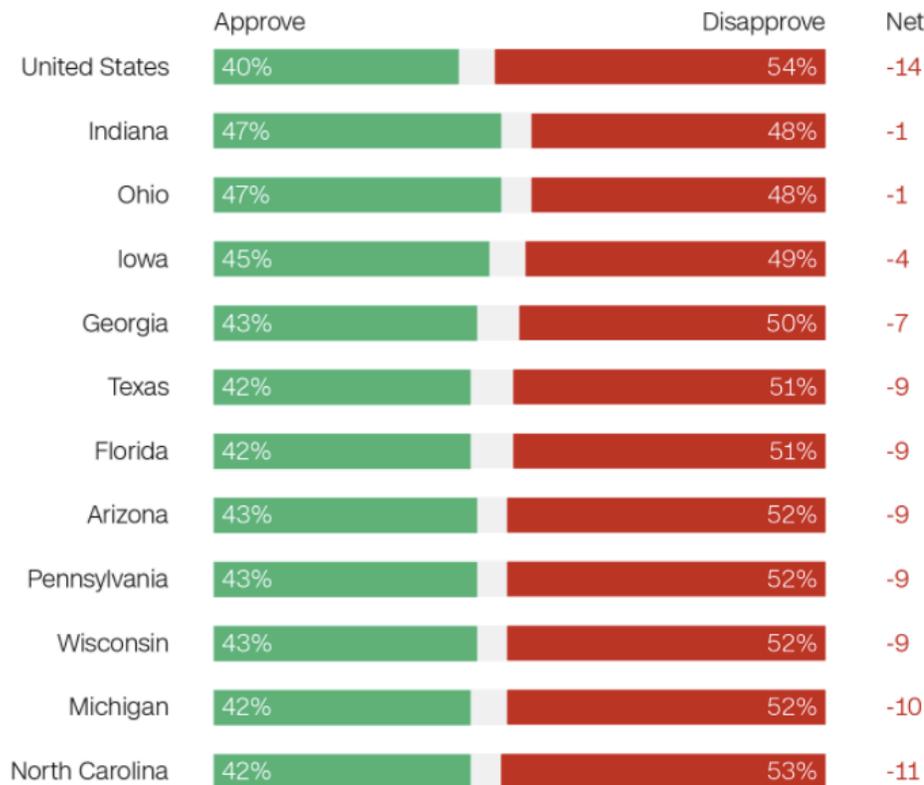
sign of his Presidency's success thus far. Further deterioration in his numbers here would have a huge impact on his overall support.

Americans were also split on national security issues. 48% of Americans said they approved of his handling of national security so far, and 47% said they disapproved.

Trump's Numbers Also Declining in Key Swing States

Trump is also starting to lose favor in states that carried him to victory in November 2016. A [CNN](#) poll conducted in July showed that he now has negative approval ratings in the 11 states below, all of which he won in November. Of the 11 states polled, 7 are key presidential battleground states and many have a number of key elections in the 2018 midterms that will help determine the balance of the House of Representatives and the Senate for the remainder of Trump's current term in office. Almost all of them also have competitive gubernatorial races.

Trump's approval is underwater in 11 states he won in November



Source: Gallup U.S. daily survey, January 20 - June 30, 2017. 81,155 adults nationwide, ± 4 percentage points in most states, no greater than ± 8 percentage points in all states.

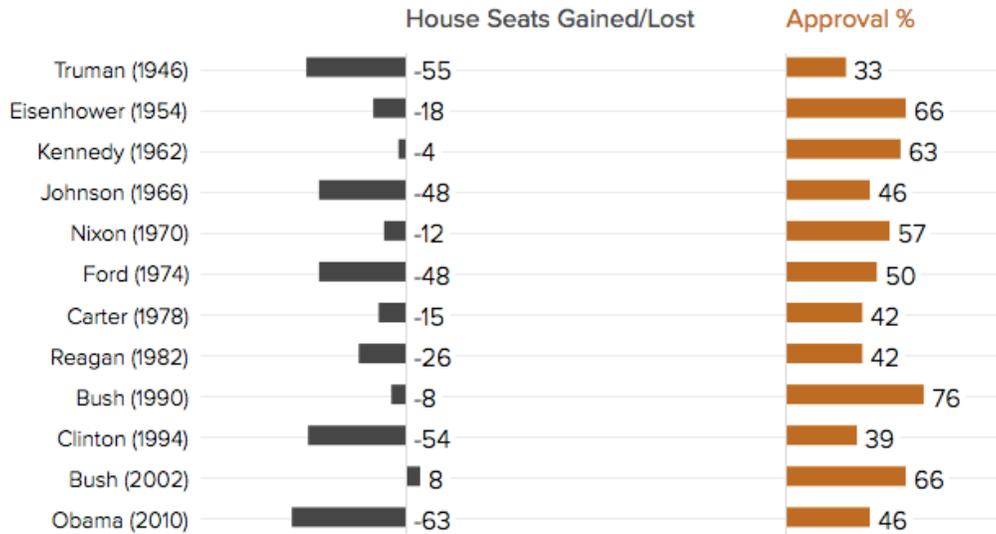
[CNN](#)

Democrats Have a Path to Retaking the House of Representatives

Trump's job approval also holds important implications as both parties prepare to fight for Congressional majorities in 2018. The chart below from [NBC News](#) shows the number of House

seats gained or lost in midterm elections side-by-side with September approval ratings from those elections.

House Seats Gained/Lost by September midterm approval



NBC NEWS

Data: Vital Statistics on Congress, Gallup

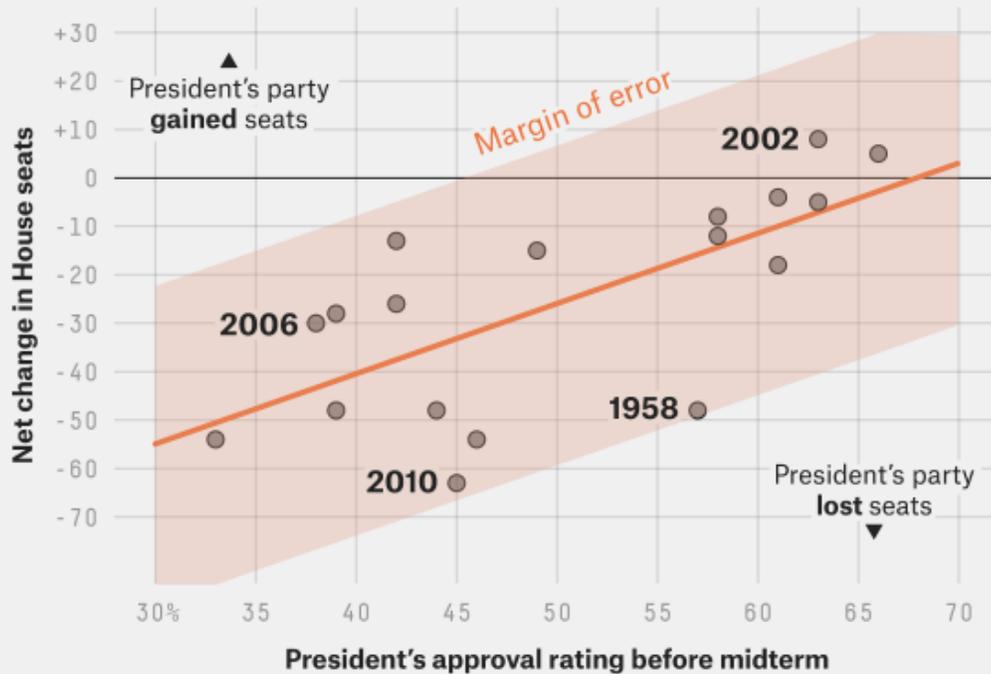
[NBC News](#)

With the midterm elections over a year away and Trump’s approval under 40% in all of these recent polls, we could be looking at midterm election results comparable to those of 1946, 1978, 1982, and 1994. *In these years when Presidential approval was at 45% or lower in September of the midterm election year, the party in power lost an average of 37.5 seats in the House of Representatives in November elections.* That would be more than enough for Democrats to take back the House.

Unfortunately, the President’s low job approval is not an ace in the hole for Democrats. This chart from [FiveThirtyEight.com](#) also shows that while Democrats are currently positioned to take back the House of Representatives, there is a large margin of error to consider here that reflects institutional challenges, such as gerrymandering, that will impact the Democrats’ chances.

House Republicans could weather Trump

Net seat change for president's party in the House vs. his final approval rating before midterm elections since 1946



1974 includes approval rate data from both Gerald Ford and Richard Nixon, since they likely both had an impact on the midterms.

FiveThirtyEight

SOURCE: GALLUP, BROOKINGS INSTITUTE

FiveThirtyEight.com

However, if Democrats are able to capitalize upon Trump's weaknesses on healthcare policy, foreign affairs, immigration policy, and helping the middle class - not to mention his implosion amongst Independents - it could certainly lead to them retaking the House in 2018.