



Campaign 2004

Media Reality ✓ Check

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While CBS's Poll Shows Huge GOP Majorities Backing Bush, CBS Reporter Finds a "Fury" on the Right

Anti-Bush Anecdotes Trump Pro-Bush Poll

Last night and this morning, CBS White House reporter John Roberts claimed that President Bush is in trouble with "furious" Republican voters. Previewing Bush's speech to GOP governors last night, Roberts warned that the President's base was ready to bolt. "Many Republican voters are furious about the lingering situation in Iraq and the massive job losses under the President's watch," he told CBS *Evening News* anchor Dan Rather.

Then this morning on CBS's *The Early Show*, Roberts hit the same point in a post-speech wrap-up: "President Bush wants to be seen as the only candidate who can effectively defend America, but an increasing number of people who voted for him in the year 2000 are furious about the daily loss of life in Iraq and say they won't vote for him this time around."

If true, that would be bad news for the President. But the most recent CBS News poll found Republican voters are actually strongly supportive of the President and his policies. A huge margin of Republicans (86 percent) say the U.S. "did the right thing in taking military action in Iraq," compared with 13 percent who say we "should have stayed out of Iraq."

Similarly, 77 percent of Republicans approved of Bush's handling of the economy, with only 18 percent saying they disapproved. (Independent voters also liked Bush's handling of the economy and said the war in Iraq was worth it, but by smaller margins.) Overall, nine in ten Republicans told CBS pollsters they approved of the Bush's job performance.

If Republicans are so united, why would Roberts claim that GOP voters are defecting in "increasing" numbers? On Sunday, the *New York Times* published a story by reporter Elisabeth Rosenthal, who said she had randomly talked to "dozens" of "independents and Republicans who said they

voted for Mr. Bush in 2000 [and now] say they intend to vote for the Democratic presidential candidate this year."

Rosenthal allowed that polls show "an overwhelming majority" of Bush voters would re-elect him, but she sought out a Kerry operative to justify her approach: "'The strong Republicans are with him,' a senior aide to Senator John Kerry said of Mr. Bush. 'But there are independent-minded Republicans among whom he is having serious problems.'"

While the *Times* quoted Democratic strategists, the only

Republicans in the story were malcontents. One voter even demanded anonymity as he vented his spleen: "It's the lies, the war, the economy. We have very good friends who are staunch Republicans who don't even want to hear the name George Bush anymore."

But there may not be as many voters abandoning Bush as CBS or the *New York Times* would wish. As Clay Waters of MRC's TimesWatch.org noted

yesterday, one of the *Times's* angry citizens popped up three weeks ago in another Rosenthal-reported item. "I don't think I could vote for George Bush again when I think of the 500 people killed in Iraq and what's happened to the economy in this country," George Meagher, a South Carolina independent, was quoted as saying in a February 3 story about veterans leaving Bush to support Kerry. Meagher got to voice the same objections in Sunday's *Times*.

Does CBS really consider an anecdotal re-hash of a few aggrieved Republicans more reliable than its own polls showing a united GOP base? If so, get ready for a really biased election year. — Rich Noyes

But a CBS Poll Found Republicans Like Bush

Overall job performance	89% approve
Handling the economy	77% approve
Handling Iraq	85% approve
Handling terrorism	92% approve
Did U.S. do right in Iraq	86% say yes
Bush has right priorities	74% say yes

Based on a CBS News poll of 1221 adults conducted February 12-15 2004. Responses from Republican voters published in the Hotline newsletter February 17.

L. Brent Bozell III, Publisher; Brent Baker, Tim Graham, Rich Noyes, Editors; Geoffrey Dickens, Jessica Anderson, Brad Wilmoth, Brian Boyd, Ken Shepherd, Amanda Monson, Media Analysts; Kristina Sewell, Research Associate. For the latest documentation of liberal media bias, sign up for the daily *CyberAlert* at www.mrc.org.