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Emerson College Poll: Voters Split on Trump 48% to 47%, Think Trump Admin is More Truthful than News Media. Majority Oppose DeVos for Education Secretary, But Support Other Nominees.

BOSTON, MA – The first poll of Emerson College’s Spring 2017 semester shows the nation is split on Donald Trump’s performance as President so far with 48% of registered voters approving of the job that Trump is doing, versus 47% that disapprove. Republicans approve of Trump 89%/5%, while Democrats disapprove of the President by a margin of 81% to 17%. Trump’s failure to pass the 50% threshold for approval can be accredited to his standing among independents, who disapprove of him 52%/42%.

A key finding of the poll shows that voters find the Trump administration to be more truthful than the news media. The Trump administration is considered truthful by 49% of voters, to 48% of voters who consider it untruthful. Meanwhile, the news media is considered untruthful by a 53%-majority of voters, to only 39% who find them truthful (a 14-point gap). Numerous members of the Trump administration – including Trump himself – have been criticized frequently for making false statements. The partisan split on this topic is clear – 89% of Republicans find the Trump administration truthful, versus 77% of Democrats who find the administration untruthful. Conversely, 69% of Democrats find the news media truthful, while a whopping 91% of Republicans consider them untruthful. Independents consider both untruthful – the Trump administration by a margin of 42%/52% and the news media by a margin of 45%/47%.

Trump’s nomination of GOP mega-donor Betsy DeVos for Secretary of Education is opposed by a majority, 51%, of registered voters. Only 34% of registered voters support DeVos’ nomination to the cabinet post, while roughly 15% remain undecided on the controversial nominee. DeVos’ nomination is opposed by voters who attended both public and private school, but voters who attended public school – of which DeVos’ is a strong opponent – oppose her nomination by a significant 19-point margin, 32%/51%. Voters who attended private school also oppose DeVos’ nomination, but by a smaller 11-point margin, 42%/51%.

Trump's other high-profile nominees are more popular among voters. Attorney General nominee Jeff Sessions is supported by 45% of registered voters versus 40% who oppose him. Newly confirmed Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has the support of 48% of voters, to only 33% who oppose him, a 15-point margin of support. Neil Gorsuch, Trump's nominee to the Supreme Court, is supported by voters 52%/32%.

Similarly, voters prefer Gorsuch to former Obama nominee Merrick Garland by a 10-point margin, 39%/29%, though 14% of voters indicated that they would prefer somebody else altogether. 18% of Democrats side with Gorsuch, versus 8% of Republicans who side with Garland. Independents are evenly split between the two – each judge receives 28% support from independent voters, while 26% of independents want somebody else.

Kellyanne Conway, a frequent face of the administration on television who recently made headlines by coining the phrase “alternative facts,” holds a favorability ratio of 39%/45%, a net favorability of -6%. Significantly less popular is Steve Bannon, a controversial figure in the administration who is viewed favorably by only 34% of voters, while 47% view him unfavorably – a net favorability of -13%.

Trump does not yet appear to be a drag on Republican congressional candidates. In a hypothetical match-up for the next congressional election, a generic Democrat beats a generic Republican by a slim, 2-point margin, 48%/46%. The generic Democrat currently has the edge with independents by an 18-point margin, 54%/36%. However, Republicans have been able to keep the race close due to a lack of party unity on the Democratic side – 12% of Democrats currently say they will vote for a generic Republican, versus only 4% of Republicans who say they will vote for a generic Democrat.

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The national Emerson College poll was conducted February 5-6 under the Supervision of Professor Spencer Kimball. The sample consisted of only registered voters, n=617, with a margin of error (MOE) of +/- 3.9 percentage points. The national data was weighted by 2016 election results, gender, party affiliation, race, age and region. It is important to remember that subsets based on gender, age, party breakdown and school carry with them higher margins of error, as the sample size is reduced. Data was collected using an Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system of landlines only. The full methodology and results can be found at www.theecps.com.