



Which Side Are You On?

As we enter the final week of this national election, CWA members need to make a choice. As you consider the key issues in the Presidential race, you might be interested in a recent study (below) that shows that Bush supporters "are more likely to be mistaken about factual issues". In addition to being on the side of jobs, universal health care and retirement security...it is also important to be on the side of **reality**. That is one more reason why CWA encourages you to support John Kerry for President.

Divide seen in voter knowledge

By Alan Wirzbicki, Globe Correspondent
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WASHINGTON -- Supporters of President Bush are less knowledgeable about the president's foreign policy positions and are more likely to be mistaken about factual issues in world affairs than voters who back John F. Kerry, a survey released yesterday indicated.

A large majority of self-identified Bush voters polled believe Saddam Hussein provided "substantial support" to Al Qaeda, and 47 percent believe that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction before the US invasion. Among the president's supporters, 57 percent queried think international public opinion favors Bush's reelection, and 51 percent believe that most Islamic countries support "US-led efforts to fight terrorism."

No weapons of mass destruction have been found in Iraq, the Sept. 11 Commission found no evidence of substantial Iraqi support for Al Qaeda, and international public opinion polls have shown widespread opposition to Bush's reelection.

In contrast, among Kerry supporters polled only 26 percent think Iraq had such weapons, 30 percent say Iraq was linked to Al Qaeda, and 1 percent said foreign public opinion favors Bush.

The polls results, said Steven Kull, the head of the Program on International Policy Attitudes at the University of Maryland, which conducted the survey, showed that Americans are so polarized two weeks before the election that many lack even a common understanding of the facts.

"It is rather unique the extent to which we have different perceptions of reality," Kull said.

On other international issues, the survey found that around 70 percent of Bush supporters responding believe that the president supports participation in the land mine treaty and the comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty, and a narrower majority believes he supports the International Criminal Court and Kyoto Accords. In fact, Bush opposes all four treaties.

Kerry supporters correctly identified their candidate's position on every foreign policy issue in the survey except defense spending. Only 43 percent of the Democrat's supporters know he wants to keep the Pentagon budget at the same level rather than cut or expand it.

The survey was conducted in three waves, Sept. 3-7, Sept. 8-12, and Oct. 12-18, by the polling firm Knowledge Networks. The poll's margin of error is between 3.2 and 4 percent.

Kull said it is common for voters to tailor their views on particular issues to those of the candidate they favor overall, but the extent to which Bush supporters are filtering out news from Iraq that might reflect poorly on the president is unprecedented.

According to the survey, the difference doesn't reflect lack of access to information about Iraq.

The poll found that perceptions did not vary significantly by level of education among those who plan to vote for Bush.

And many of the Bush voters surveyed knew that the Duelfer report said Hussein had no WMDs, but continue to believe that he did regardless.

Kull suggested the dissonance among Bush voters reflects the country's difficulty coming to grips with the discrediting of the rationale for the Iraq war.

"This period will really stand out as when the US went to war on assumptions that turned out to be incorrect," he said. "The body politic is still struggling to come to terms with that."