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Unaffected By Bitburg, Embargo

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Reagan's Performance Rating Bounces Back; Recent Controversies Have Little Fall-Out
By George Gallup, Jr.

PRINCETON, N.J.

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Although a substantial propor-
tion of Americans fault President Reagan for both his visit
to the Bitburg cemetery and his embargo on trade with Nicaragua, his overall standing with the public seems'not to have suffered.
In fact, the recent decline in the President's perfor-mance rating, from64%o approval in late-January to 52o/o in mid-April, now appears to have ended. In the latest (mid-May) Gallup Poll, 55olo approve of Reagan's overall performance in office wtnle 37o/o disapprove and 8olo withhold judgment. The latest survey was conducted prior to announcement ofthe President's tax proposal. While the 3 percentage-point improvement since April in Reagan's competency rating in itself is not statistically significant, it nonetheless marks the first uptick in his ratings' trend in almost four months.

Fewer Fence-Sitters?

As shown in the following table, while Reagan's approval ratings have fluctuated since March, the pro portiondisapproving has remained at a rock-steady 37Vo in all three surveys conducted during this period, with an unusually high 1 17o undecided vote recorded in the April
survey.

An hypothesis was advanced at that time that some people may have switched from being moderate Reagan supporters to fence-sitters, awaiting future developments before recommitting themselves. If that hypothesis still holds, the new survey findings suggestthatthese quondam fence-sitters, in fact, are recommitting themselves, and in the President's favor.

Following is the question asked to determine Rea-gan's overall performance rating and the trend since last November's election:

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Ronald Reagan is handling his job as president?

Reagan Performance Ratings
No

Approve Disapprove opinion
o/o o/o o/o

1985 - May 17-20 55 37 8
- April 12-15 52 3'l l l
- March 8-ll 56 37 7
- Feb. 15-18 60 31 9
- Ian.25-28 64 28 8
- Jan. 11-14 62 29 9

1984 - Dec. 7-10 59 32
- Nov. 30-Dec. 3 62 30
- Nov. 9-12 61 3l

Defectors Return To Reagan Camp

The current reversal in Reagan's downward trend in
approval since early this year also marks a return to the
President's camp of certain population segments that had

been a I 1 percentage-point

difference separated the views of men and women, with
58o/o of men but only 47o/o of women approving of
Reagan's job performance, suggesting a return of t}te now-
familiar gender gap that has plagued Reagan throughout
his presidential tenure. With the new survey, the gap has
returned to a more typical4 points, withs7o/o of men and 537o of women approving of Reagan's

these strong Reagan constituencies, significant propor-tions disapprove of the Bitburg visit, including 25o/o of Republicans and 260/o of persons who approve of Rea-gan's job performance in general.
Following is the question asked:

' Do you approve or disapprove of President