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IEWS OF FEINGOLD COMPARED TO OTHER FEDERAL OFFICEHOLDERS
by G. Donald Ferree, Jr.

While many residents do not yet feel they have enough information about Senator Russ Feingold to have a clear impression of him, what they do see, they tend to like. And some nine months before the election, twice as many say they would like to see him returned to office as would prefer to see "someone else" in his job. Thus, while there is plenty of time for a campaign to make a big difference, Feingold enters the fray in a relatively strong position here in Wisconsin, which moreover seems for the moment to be stronger than that enjoyed by President Bush. These conclusions are based on 502 interviews the Badger Poll@ conducted with randomly chosen state residents between January 27 and February 4, inclusive.

Just over six in ten have enough information about Russ Feingold to enable them to state an overall favorable or unfavorable impression. Overall, those willing to come down on one side or the other split about three to one favorable. As may be seen in the detailed tables following this summary, men and women as groups were quite similar. There was increasing familiarity with Feingold as respondents' age increased (with the middle two groups quite similar to one another), but among all groups those with a favorable impression strongly outnumbered those viewing the junior Senator unfavorably. Democrats and Independents (both by self-description) tended to have onesidedly positive views, but among Republicans opinion broke narrowly unfavorably.

Parallel questions were asked concerning two other federal officeholders. On balance, residents were more likely to have an impression of George Bush (nine in ten did). However, the ratio of favorable views to unfavorable is about three to two, less clearly positive than is the case for Feingold. Moreover, groups align differently. Views of Bush are more positive for the middle age groups than for the youngest, which is closest to splitting evenly. The eldest, on the other hand are the only ones among whom the balance of views is negative. When it comes to partisanship, differences in views of Bush are much starker than is the case for Feingold. Independents look more or less like the population overall, while Democrats break four to one negative and Republicans almost unanimously see him positively.

In terms of familiarity -- or willingness to come down on one side or the other -- Kohl falls between Feingold and Bush, with some three in four coming down on one side or the other. Kohl is seen most onesidedly positively by the youngest group (among whom familiarity is lowest), and least so among those between forty-five and fifty-nine. Among all three partisan groups, views of Kohl are more positive than is the case for Feingold, with Independents

differentiating least between the two.

Six in ten rated both Bush and Feingold in terms of favorability. One in four viewed them the same (either both favorable or both unfavorable). In the remaining group residents were about twice as likely to view Feingold more positively than to have a more positive impression of the President. Only a bit more than half were able or willing to state an overall impression of both Senators, with almost all of them rating the two similarly.

For all three federal officeholders, respondents were also asked to use a four point scale of excellent, good, fair, or poor to rate their respective job performance. Overall, somewhat less than one resident in two rates Feingold as either excellent (10%) or good (36%). By contrast, nearly four in ten opt for fair (31%) or poor (7%). As was the case for favorability ratings, Republicans took a more critical stance than either Independents or Democrats.

On the same scale, Kohl does about as well. Just under half rate HIS performance as excellent (9%) or good (42%), contrasted with four in ten calling it fair (32%) or poor (7%). These differences are small enough that one may not have much confidence that they reflect real distinctions in the population as opposed to random fluctuations due to sampling.

Both Senators do a bit better than Bush on this rating scale, however, as was the case with the favorability/unfavorability items. While the President also garners just under one in two who call his performance excellent (11%) or good (37%), just over half opt for fair (29%) or poor (22%). His ratings, moreover, are much more clearly related to partisanship than is the case for either Senator. Of those rating both the President and the junior Senator -- some seven in eight, ten percent more rate Feingold higher than give the advantage to Bush -- this does not reflect a question literally asking residents which man they would rate higher, but from comparing the ratings. Someone calling Bush "excellent" would either go the the group rating Bush higher if their rating for Feingold was good, fair, or poor, or both same if they called it excellent. A similar comparison of Kohl and Feingold job ratings shows eight in ten "grading" both, with half of all residents assigning the same grade to both Senators, and roughly equal balance between those rating Kohl better and those rating Feingold better.

While there are differences among the three individuals for whom job ratings were sought, they all fall roughly in the same ballpark. Such is not the case, however, for Congress as an institution. Only one in three is willing to give Congress (about whom the question occurred between that for the President and the individual Senators) either excellent (1%) or good (31%) ratings. Two thirds think fair (50%) or poor (14%) is more like it.

Republicans view Congress most positively -- among this group the balance between the two higher rankings and the two lower ones is almost perfect. Self-described Independents and Democrats are very close to one another. Those who rated both Feingold and Congress in the abstract tended to give the incumbent an edge, with one in three rating them the same and those rating Feingold higher outnumbering the counterpart group viewing Feingold more positively.

Finally, for both federal incumbents, residents were asked in separate questions whether they wanted to see the incumbent re-elected or to see or "someone else" in their position. Feingold does better. Overall, those answering the question come down two to one (52%-26%) in the affirmative. Not surprisingly, Democrats say the want Feingold returned, and by a strong (68%-14%) majority. But Independents (yes by 60%-19%) do not lag very far

behind. While a plurality of Republicans would like to see Feingold replaced, they come down on this side only by about three to two.

The identical question for Bush found state residents quite split, with some 42% looking to the Chief Executive's second term, but slightly more (49%) saying they would like "someone else". Partisan patterns were much sharper, somewhat shy of both Democrats and Republicans taking the "partisanly appropriate" choice.

A number of these questions have occurred on Badger Polls® before, and results are summarized in the accompanying chart. While Bush's performance ratings seem down this January, and there are also indications that views of the Congress are less positive than they were, KOhl's ratings seem quite stable, with only minor poll to poll fluctuation which could just as easily indicate random "noise" as a systematic shift. The same, essentially is true for Feingold's job ratings. There are hints of, if anything a slight increase in the proportion giving him excellent ratings and if anything a slight decrease in the fraction calling his performance poor. But stability seems mostly the theme, which contrasts with the apparent worsening in evaluation of the President.

The trend is shorter for favorability ratings. Here, although the differences are relatively small, views of Bush, while remaining favorable on balance, seem to have slipped a bit. By contrast, for both Senators, the balance has shifted some in the positive direction.

When it comes to the predisposition to want an incumbent re-elected, Senator Feingold may have gained some ground over the past months. Last May the public favored giving him another term by a four to three margin, which edged up to five to three, and now in January, stands at two to one. By contrast, Bush stood at five to four in May, was at an even split in October, and now has a small plurality hoping to see "someone else". One must be careful of short-term trends (Bush seemed up some in December, not shown here because there was no comparable Feingold rating), for instance. Moreover, the past month or so has shown disproportionate emphasis on the Democrats, along with the growing questions about Iraqi WMD. Nonetheless, with these caveats, Feingold appears early on in election year, to be in a somewhat stronger position than the President.

Federal Officeholders at Four Points in Time

	January	October	May	February
Rating of George W. Bush				
EXCELLENT	11%	15%	25%	19%
GOOD	37	35	35	39
FAIR	29	27	25	25
POOR	22	21	14	16
TOO SOON TO TELL (vol)	--	--	*	--
DON'T KNOW	1	1	1	1
REFUSED		*	1	1
Rating of US Congress				
EXCELLENT	1%	1%	1%	1%
GOOD	31	34	34	37
FAIR	52	48	46	45
POOR	14	15	15	12
DON'T KNOW	2	2	4	5
REFUSED	--	--	1	*
Rating of Herb Kohl				
EXCELLENT	7%	8%	6%	6%
GOOD	42	42	39	40
FAIR	32	31	32	30
POOR	7	9	9	7
DON'T KNOW	11	10	14	16
REFUSED	*	*	1	1
Rating of Russ Feingold				
EXCELLENT	10%	10%	7%	8%
GOOD	36	38	38	40
FAIR	31	29	30	27
POOR	7	11	11	10
DON'T KNOW	15	12	15	15
REFUSED	--	--	*	1
Impression of Bush				
FAVORABLE	54%	60%		
UNFAVORABLE	39	34		
DON'T KNOW ENOUGH	6	5		
DK	1	2		
REFUSED	----			
Impression of Feingold				
FAVORABLE	46%	41%		
UNFAVORABLE	16	23		
DON'T KNOW ENOUGH	36	35		
DK	2	1		
REFUSED	--	*		
Impression of Kohl				
FAVORABLE	58%	50%		
UNFAVORABLE	16	19		
DON'T KNOW ENOUGH	25	30		
DK	1	1		
REFUSED	--*			

VOTE03. I'm going to read you a list of people in public life. For each of them, please tell me if you have a favorable impression of them, an unfavorable impression, or don't know enough to make up your mind. George W. Bush

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
FAVORABLE	54%	58%	49%	18%	57%	95%	51%	59%	60%	39%
UNFAVORABLE	39	36	42	76	37	3	43	33	33	56
DON'T KNOW ENOUGH	6	6	7	5	7	2	6	7	7	3
DON'T KNOW	1	--	1	1	--	--	--	1	*	2
REFUSED	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

VOTE06. Russ Feingold (PROMPT FOR CATEGORIES AS NECESSARY)

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
FAVORABLE	46%	48%	45%	58%	58%	27%	34%	45%	45%	54%
UNFAVORABLE	16	18	14	5	12	36	8	16	17	20
DON'T KNOW ENOUGH	36	32	39	33	28	37	55	36	37	23
DON'T KNOW	2	2	2	4	2	--	2	2	1	3
REFUSED	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

VOTE07. Herb Kohl (PROMPT FOR CATEGORIES AS NECESSARY)

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
FAVORABLE	58%	57%	60%	72%	61%	43%	55%	59%	57%	64%
UNFAVORABLE	16	21	11	6	11	34	3	12	21	18
DON'T KNOW ENOUGH	25	22	27	21	25	22	41	27	21	17
DON'T KNOW	1	1	2	1	2	1	--	2	2	1
REFUSED	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

GBRF2. (CONSTRUCTED ITEM) Comparison of Bush favorability to Feingold

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
BUSH HIGHER	13%	16%	10%	--%	10%	34%	3%	16%	13%	14%
BOTH SAME	24	25	22	16	33	27	19	26	26	19
FEINGOLD HIGHER	25	23	26	45	27	1	21	18	21	40
ONE/BOTH DK	39	36	42	38	30	38	57	40	40	27

HKRF2. (CONSTRUCTED ITEM) Comparison of Kohl favorability to Feingold

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
KOHL HIGHER	7%	7%	6%	2%	6%	12%	3%	8%	7%	7%
BOTH SAME	43	45	41	50	44	40	31	40	42	55
FEINGOLD HIGHER	4	5	3	3	5	5	--	4	4	5
ONE/BOTH DK	46	43	49	45	45	43	67	48	47	32

BUSH06. As of now, do you think you would like to see President Bush reelected in 2004, or would you rather see someone else in the White House?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
LIKE RE-ELECTED	42%	49%	35%	11%	35%	87%	48%	43%	45%	31%
LIKE SOMEONE ELSE	49	45	54	86	50	7	48	47	45	61
DON'T KNOW	9	6	11	3	13	6	4	10	9	7
REFUSED	*	1	--	--	1	--	--	--	1	--

RATE03. Thinking more generally of politics, how would you rate the job the US Congress is doing? Excellent, good, fair, or poor?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
EXCELLENT	1%	2%	1%	2%	2%	1%	2%	1%	2%	1%
GOOD	31	27	34	23	21	49	42	38	29	21
FAIR	52	52	52	56	57	46	40	52	53	56
POOR	14	18	11	17	19	4	15	5	15	21
DON'T KNOW	2	1	3	2	2	1	1	5	1	1
REFUSED	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

RATE04. How would you rate the job Herb Kohl is doing as Senator from Wisconsin? (PROMPT FOR CATEGORIES AS NECESSARY)

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
EXCELLENT	7%	9%	6%	13%	8%	3%	7%	7%	6%	10%
GOOD	42	36	48	54	43	28	41	44	38	49
FAIR	32	37	28	22	36	40	27	25	39	29
POOR	7	8	5	3	5	14	--	9	8	6
DON'T KNOW	11	10	13	7	8	13	25	14	9	6
REFUSED	*	1	--	--	--	1	--	--	1	--

RATE05. How about the job Russ Feingold is doing as US Senator from Wisconsin? (PROMPT FOR CATEGORIES AS NECESSARY).

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
EXCELLENT	10%	12%	9%	19%	13%	3%	7%	8%	7%	21%
GOOD	36	34	38	46	40	22	33	44	34	33
FAIR	31	32	29	22	30	43	34	23	35	29
POOR	7	10	5	2	6	17	--	8	9	8
DON'T KNOW	15	12	18	11	11	16	26	17	15	9
REFUSED	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

GBRF1. (CONSTRUCTED ITEM) Comparison of Bush rating with Feingold rating

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
BUSH HIGHER	27%	32%	23%	5%	25%	63%	18%	26%	30%	26%
BOTH SAME	20	20	20	16	21	18	33	22	18	14
FEINGOLD HIGHER	37	35	39	67	43	4	20	34	36	51
ONE/BOTH DK	16	13	18	11	11	16	29	18	15	9

CNRF1. (CONSTRUCTED ITEM) Comparison of Congress rating with Feingold rating

	GENDER			PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
	TOT	M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
CONGRESS HIGHER	15%	16%	13%	6%	11%	34%	11%	17%	17%	11%
BOTH SAME	33	32	34	32	29	38	33	33	36	29
FEINGOLD HIGHER	36	38	34	50	48	12	30	32	32	51
ONE/BOTH DK	16	13	18	12	12	16	26	18	16	9

HKRF1. (CONSTRUCTED ITEM) Comparison of Kohl rating with Feingold rating

	GENDER			PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
	TOT	M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
KOHL HIGHER	14%	17%	10%	13%	14%	18%	13%	13%	15%	15%
BOTH SAME	50	46	54	52	47	50	46	50	53	47
FEINGOLD HIGHER	16	19	12	19	23	11	5	15	14	24
ONE/BOTH DK	20	18	23	16	16	21	36	22	18	14

FEING01. As of now, do you think you would like to see Senator Feingold re-elected in 2004, or would you rather see someone else in the Senate instead?

	GENDER			PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
	TOT	M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
LIKE RE-ELECTED	52%	50%	54%	68%	60%	33%	55%	48%	52%	54%
LIKE SOMEONE ELSE	26	32	20	14	19	49	15	25	29	27
DON'T KNOW	22	18	26	18	21	18	30	26	18	20
REFUSED	*	--	*	--	--	--	--	--	*	--

QD05. Generally speaking, do you consider yourself a Democrat, a Republican, an Independent, or something else?

	GENDER			PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
	TOT	M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
DEMOCRAT	33%	25%	40%	100%	--%	--%	39%	33%	27%	39%
REPUBLICAN	27	32	21	--	--	100	27	30	24	26
INDEPENDENT	26	30	22	--	100	--	10	21	34	24
OTHER	10	9	10	--	--	--	18	9	10	6
NONE	3	2	4	--	--	--	1	3	4	2
DON'T KNOW	2	1	2	--	--	--	5	2	1	1
REFUSED	1	*	1	--	--	--	--	1	--	1

QD11. In what year were you born? (ENTER FOUR-DIGIT YEAR) (Calculated and grouped as below)

	GENDER			PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
	TOT	M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
18-29	11%	11%	11%	13%	4%	11%	100%	--%	--%	--%
30-44	25	23	26	25	21	28	--	100	--	--
45-59	39	42	35	32	50	36	--	--	100	--
60 and over	23	22	24	28	21	23	--	--	--	100
DK/REFUSED	2	1	2	1	3	2	--	--	--	--

* denotes less than .5%

-- denotes 0%

HOW THE POLL WAS DONE

This BADGER POLL@ was conducted by the University of Wisconsin Survey Center as part of its ongoing program of research designed to benefit the research community and the people of Wisconsin, under the direction of G. Donald Ferree, Jr., Associate Director for Public Opinion Research of the Center. The media sponsors of the survey are the (Madison) Capital Times, and the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel. The BADGER POLL@ is intended to be a "poll of record" for the state, investigating matters of concern to Wisconsinites including politics, culture, and their daily lives, adhering to the highest standards of polling methodology and rigorous independence.

A total of 502 randomly chosen state residents were interviewed for this survey by telephone between January 27 and February 4, inclusive. Telephone numbers were generated by computer in proportion to the number of adults living in each area of the state. Theoretically, results from this survey have a "margin of error" of a little over +/- 4%. This means that, had we asked every eligible resident in Wisconsin, exactly these questions at the time the survey was conducted, there is only a one in twenty chance that the answers would differ by more than that in either direction from what we report here. There could be differences because of changes in question wording, events occurring in the meantime, or any of the practical difficulties involved in taking a scientific survey. Results based on subgroups are subject to a larger "margin of error".