



Contact: Thomas Riehle 202-463-7300 [thomas.riehle@ipsospa.com](mailto:thomas.riehle@ipsospa.com)  
Public Release Date: January 24, 2003

## **Memo to State of the Union Speechwriters: Americans Volunteer the Economy, War, Job Issues, Health Care, Education as Top Problems**

### ***Cook Political Report/Ipsos-Reid Survey Asks Adults to Report in Their Own Words The Most Important Problem Facing the Country, and the Biggest Challenges Facing Their Own Families***

*Between January 7-9, 2003, Ipsos-Reid US Public Affairs interviewed for Cook Political Report a representative sample of 1,000 adults nationwide. Half were asked to volunteer the most important problem facing the country, the other half the biggest problems and challenges facing their family. The margin of error for each half sample of 500 adults is  $\pm 4.5\%$ .*

**WASHINGTON, D.C.**, (January 24, 2003) — As President George W. Bush prepares his State of the Union address for Tuesday, January 28, 2003, two open-ended questions in the Ipsos-Reid/*Cook Political Report* poll offer insights into what's on people's minds regarding problems facing the country and the challenges facing them personally.

When it comes to the issues facing the country and its individual citizens and families:

- Terrorism (31% mention it as one of the most important problems facing the country) is less of an issue than at any time in a year, but war and unrest in general (18%) and specifically war with Iraq (8%) are mentioned nearly as often as terrorism.
- Economic issues in general (mentioned by a net 68% all adults, with 51% mentioning "the economy" in general as a top issue and 19% mentioning unemployment) are rapidly growing in importance in the public's mind. Corporate malfeasance, a hot topic last July, has melted away as an issue.
- Other domestic issues (69%) persist, especially education (22%) and health care coverage (27%). On a personal basis, health issues (33%), especially health care concerns, are second only to worries about the cost of living.
- Regarding personal challenges and problems, the cost of living (62%) is the top concern, with general financial problems (31%) soaring in importance. Employment concerns (17%) continue to challenge people, although the content of those concerns is shifting from unemployment worries to other employment concerns. Also persistent are worries about raising children (17%), especially education concerns.



January 7-9, 2003 interviews:  
 Each question asked of half-sample of 500 adults  
 Margin of error: ±4.5

**(ASKED OF HALF THE SAMPLE.)**

7a. In your opinion, what are the most important problems facing the U.S. today? **(PROBE:)** What are some other important problems facing the U.S.?

1/7-9/03	10/1-3/02	7/11-14/02	4/12-14/02	1/4-6/02
----------	-----------	------------	------------	----------

<b><u>FOREIGN AFFAIRS (net)</u></b> .....	<b>70</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>59</b>
Terrorism, terrorist attacks .....	31	40	47	35	42
Wars, unrest throughout the world ....	18	13	8	12	4
War with Iraq (any mentions about Iraq).....	8	12	-	-	-
Immigration, letting too many people in, lack of security .....	5	5	6	5	6
Improve defense, military readiness .....	4	2	2	4	5
Too much focus on other countries, need to be tougher on other countries .....	5	2	6	2	2
Other foreign affairs mentions .....	19	13	7	12	7
<b><u>ECONOMY (net)</u></b> .....	<b>68</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>52</b>
Economy (unspecified) .....	51	30	26	16	24
Unemployment, lack of jobs .....	19	16	11	13	17
Stock market uncertainty, devaluation.....	2	7	7	1	1
Corporate irresponsibility, corruption, fraud, deception, accounting scandals.....	2	6	14	1	-
Taxes, taxes are too high.....	5	3	3	6	5
Cost of living is too high .....	2	2	1	1	1
Other economy mentions .....	9	11	11	16	13
<b><u>DOMESTIC ISSUES (net)</u></b> .....	<b>69</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>52</b>
<b><u>Education (net)</u></b> .....	<b>22</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>20</b>
Education (unspecified).....	15	13	15	11	11
Problems with public schools .....	1	9	5	3	3
Lack of funding for schools .....	2	3	3	1	2
More structure in schools, standardized .....	-	-	1	1	1
Uneducated people (e.g. literacy issues).....	1	-	2	-	-
Other education mentions .....	7	2	1	7	5

Q.7 (cont.)

1/7- 9/03	10/1- 3/02	7/11- 14/02	4/12- 14/02	1/4- 6/02
--------------	---------------	----------------	----------------	--------------

<b><u>Other Domestic Issues (net)</u></b> .....	<b>39</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>25</b>
Health care, coverage .....	27	28	26	22	16
Poverty, hunger, homelessness .....	10	10	8	6	6
Social Security .....	10	6	4	5	5
Abortion .....	1	1	1	1	2
<b><u>Morality (net)</u></b> .....	<b>11</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>8</b>
Morals, moral decay .....	2	5	10	4	2
Not family oriented, family values, breakdown of family unit .....	1	2	2	3	2
Race relations, racism .....	2	2	2	2	1
Youth, no respect for elders, how kids behave .....	1	1	2	1	-
Don't care for others, people don't care .....	-	2	1	1	-
Other morality mentions .....	6	6	1	4	2
<b><u>Crime/Drugs (net)</u></b> .....	<b>8</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>9</b>
Crime (unspecified) .....	3	3	3	1	2
Drugs, issues related to drug use, abuse .....	3	4	3	7	4
Violence, domestic violence .....	1	2	2	2	2
Teen violence (e.g. violence at schools, gangs) .....	1	1	-	-	1
Other crime mentions .....	2	5	2	2	2
<b><u>Environment (net)</u></b> .....	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>
Environment, pollution (unspecified) .....	8	5	7	4	4
Other environmental mentions .....	2	2	3	4	3
<b><u>Energy Crisis (net)</u></b> .....	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>
Oil shortage .....	1	1	-	-	-
Energy (unspecified) .....	1	-	2	2	1
Gas prices .....	1	1	-	2	-
Other energy crisis mentions .....	2	1	1	6	1
<b><u>POLITICAL LEADERS (net)</u></b> .....	<b>11</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>
Government, politicians (other mentions) .....	8	9	5	8	3
The president, George W. Bush in office .....	3	4	2	1	1
<b><u>OTHER (net)</u></b> .....	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>12</b>
Other comments .....	11	11	15	14	12
Nothing, nothing else .....	-	8	6	7	6
Not sure .....	2	2	2	5	3

**(ASKED OF HALF THE SAMPLE.)**

7b. What are some of the biggest problems and challenges you and your family face today? **(PROBE:)**  
What are some other problems or challenges you face these days?

	1/7- 9/03	10/1- 3/02	7/11- 14/02	4/12- 14/02	1/4- 6/02
<b><u>COST OF LIVING (net)</u></b> .....	<b>62</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>54</b>
Finances, financial problems, economics (unspecified) .....	31	26	19	16	24
Money, lack of money .....	15	18	14	12	8
Cost of living, making ends meet .....	11	13	8	10	13
Taxes, taxes too high (e.g. local taxes, property taxes).....	12	8	7	9	7
Stock market uncertainty, devaluation.....	5	8	8	1	2
Saving for retirement, having enough for retirement.....	3	7	6	5	4
Bills, paying bills on time .....	3	2	2	2	2
Other cost of living mentions .....	8	2	4	7	3
<b><u>HEALTH ISSUES (net)</u></b> .....	<b>33</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>28</b>
Health care.....	28	27	22	25	21
Health issues, health, illness (unspecified) .....	4	5	4	1	4
Caring for parents, health care for parents .....	1	1	2	1	-
Getting older, old age.....	2	-	-	2	2
Maintaining health, staying healthy ....	1	-	1	-	1
Other health issue mentions .....	1	2	3	-	3
<b><u>RAISING/EDUCATING CHILDREN (net)</u></b> .....	<b>17</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>19</b>
General education issues (e.g. cost, quality).....	8	13	14	11	12
Paying for education .....	4	4	3	4	4
Bringing children up right, keep on the right track .....	1	3	2	1	1
Bad influences on children (e.g. peer pressure, drugs).....	1	1	-	2	1
Other raising children mentions.....	4	1	4	4	2
<b><u>EMPLOYMENT ISSUES (net)</u></b> .....	<b>17</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>19</b>
Unemployment, keeping job.....	8	15	13	12	18
Job satisfaction, challenged on the job .....	-	-	1	3	-
Other employment issues mentions ...	9	3	4	2	-
<b><u>TIME MANAGEMENT (net)</u></b> .....	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
Finding enough time in the day, free time, time management .....	-	1	2	1	1
Work too much .....	-	-	1	1	-
Other time management mentions .....	-	-	-	-	-
<b><u>OTHER (net)</u></b> .....	<b>34</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>
War with Iraq .....	6	5	-	-	-
Terrorism, terrorist attacks .....	2	4	4	5	7
Crime, violence .....	3	2	4	2	3
Other comments.....	28	27	28	17	16
Nothing, nothing else .....	11	29	29	36	22
Not sure .....	6	6	6	2	5

**For more information on this release, please contact:**

**Thomas Riehle**  
**President**  
**Ipsos-Reid US Public Affairs**  
**202.463.7300**  
[thomas.riehle@ipsospa.com](mailto:thomas.riehle@ipsospa.com)

**About Ipsos-Reid US Public Affairs**

*The survey was conducted by Ipsos-Reid US Public Affairs, the Washington, D.C.-based division of Ipsos, which is the world's fourth largest polling and market research organization, based in Paris. Ipsos-Reid US Public Affairs is a non-partisan, objective public affairs research organization made up of Democratic and Republican campaign and political polling veterans. It was established in Washington in August 2001, and it is led by Thomas Riehle, who has more than 15 years of experience as a political pollster in Washington. The Ipsos-Reid/Cook Political Report poll and the Ipsos-Reid Consumer Attitudes and Spending by Household (CASH) Index poll are usually conducted the first and third week of every month, as part of Ipsos-Reid US Public Affairs weekly omnibus polling service.*

*The political survey is designed in conjunction with Charlie Cook of the Cook Political Report. Founded in 1984, The Cook Political Report is an independent, non-partisan newsletter that analyzes elections for the U.S. House, Senate, governor and President as well as domestic American political trends. The New York Times has called the publication, "a newsletter that both parties consider authoritative" while the dean of the Washington political press corps, the Washington Post's David Broder has called Charlie Cook, its editor and publisher, "perhaps the best political handicapper in the nation." Cook also writes two weekly columns that appear in National Journal magazine and CongressDaily/AM and on nationaljournal.com, and serves as a political analyst for Cable News Network's show "Inside Politics." Researched and written by a staff of five based in Washington, D.C., the Cook Political Report's subscribers are primarily the lobbyists and managers for the political action committees of the nation's major corporations, trade associations and labor unions as well as by news organizations, foreign governments and others with an interest in detailed, impartial information and analysis of Congressional, gubernatorial and presidential elections.*