



THE PLAIN DEALER

Ohio Republicans favor Bush, marine mammals

Saturday, July 01, 2006

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Washington - A poll by the environmental group Oceana concluded that likely Ohio Republican voters are much happier with President Bush's performance than they are with Congress.

Sixty-seven percent of the 500 likely Republican voters in Ohio surveyed by the group rated Bush's job performance as "excellent" or "good," but only 29 percent gave the same positive evaluation of Congress.

Ninety percent of those who participated in the survey conducted by GOP pollster Kellyanne Conway said they believed "it is important to protect marine mammals." The group conducted the poll to convince members of the House Resources Committee that key GOP constituents believe a firm date should be set for commercial fishermen to prevent inadvertent whale and dolphin killings.

The poll's margin of error is plus or minus 4.38 percentage points, Conway said. Her firm conducted interviews June 22-25. Spokesmen for Ohio's GOP congressional leaders said they weren't perturbed by Congress' poor showing in the poll and don't think it foretells trouble at the polls in November.

"Historically, Congress' approval rate is always lower than the ratings for presidents," said Gretchen Hamel, a spokeswoman for House Republican Conference Chairwoman Deborah Pryce of Columbus. "Most times, people are satisfied with their own representatives but not the institution as a whole."

Kevin Madden, a spokesman for House Majority Leader John Boehner of West Chester, said Bush experienced a surge of support after the death of al-Qaida in Iraq leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and establishment of a democratic government in Iraq.

Madden said he wasn't surprised by the poll's results on marine mammals. "I'd say that most Ohio Republicans view themselves as conservationists and sportsmen who care about habitats and the health of the environment," Madden said. "I think it surprises many in the media who unfairly tag Republicans as anti-environment."

"But Republicans have a more sophisticated view of how to keep our environment clean and protect oceanic habitats than knee-jerk, radical environmentalists who are really just anti- corporate crusaders."

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