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NEWS RELEASE [RMP 2013-II-06]

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U.S. SENATOR JEFF FLAKE OFF TO ATYPICAL START WITH VOTERS;
NEGATIVE JOB RATING OUTPACES FAVORABLE

Phoenix, Arizona, May 3, 2013. Newly-elected U.S. Senator Jeff Flake is off to an unusual start in terms of voter and taxpayer regard for his performance. More often than not newly-elected U.S. Senators are given the benefit of the doubt during the early months and even initial year of their first terms. In Senator Flake's case, however, only 18 percent are willing to rate his performance favorably while a surprising 26 percent already opine that he is doing a "poor" or "very poor job".

By way of comparison, retired Jon Kyl's first job ratings as a U.S. Senator in 1996 were almost a mirror opposite of Senator Jeff Flake: 34 percent positive to only 12 percent negative. The current poll was completed just before Senator Flake parted company with the senior Senator from Arizona, John McCain, by voting against background checks for gun buyers which implies that Senator Flake's negative rating at the time of this survey may trace to others issues.

His lower than usual job rating in this survey may more likely trace to lingering voter anger over the intensely negative campaign ads deployed during both the primary election race against Wil Cardon and later in the general election race against Richard Carmona in which Carmona was attacked at a personal level as having "problems with anger, ethics and with women". While most would agree that both the Cardon and the Carmona counter-campaigns were also ugly and personal, Flake's lower than usual initial job rating may be giving us a glimpse of the growing degree to which the victor in a vitriolic campaign season may wound him or herself in more lasting ways than previously thought. The old adage that voters have a short memory may be weakening after campaigns that devolve from debates over issues into personality attacks.

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We will have to wait for future surveys to assess how Flake's position on gun control laws may further impact his job rating. But, given the passion of voters who favor stronger gun control laws, his vote on this measure and others that are sure to come, may dog the Senator in the coming months and years that the issue is debated. There is already an internet Facebook campaign targeting U.S. Senators who voted against background checks which specifically identifies freshman Senator Flake as being the top beneficiary of NRA independent campaign funds - more than \$344,000.¹

The survey also finds that Republican voters give evidence of being unusually slow to warm up to Senator Flake. Thus, favorable job ratings from Republicans post at only 29 percent while 16 percent of Republicans start off with a negative rating of the Senator. Among Independent voters, negative assessments are double (28%); favorable ones (12%). By way of comparison, in the first survey of Jon Kyl in July of 1995, his favorable job rating among Republican voters was 34 percent while Kyl's negative score was only 12 percent. As might be expected, Democrats in the current survey are the least admiring of Senator Flake: 16 percent favorable to 36 percent unfavorable.

Across the state, the response pattern is fairly uniform, but note that his negative job ratings tend to decrease in the rural counties.

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¹ Source: Public Campaign, OpenSecrets.org and Influence Explorer

For this and other polls, see www.brcpolls.com/results.

RMP (2013-II-06)

EDITOR'S NOTE: This Rocky Mountain Poll - Arizona (2013-II-06), is based on 700 interviews with heads of household statewide including 438 registered voters statewide, conducted between April 3 and 16, 2013. Interviewing was conducted in both English or Spanish by professional interviewers of the Behavior Research Center on both landlines and cell phones. Where necessary, figures for age, sex, race and political party were weighted to bring them into line with their actual proportion in the population. In a sample of this size, one can say with a 95 percent certainty that the results have a statistical precision of plus or minus 3.8 percent of what they would have been had the entire population been surveyed and 4.8 percent had the entire voter population been surveyed. The Rocky Mountain Poll is conducted by the Behavior Research Center of Arizona and is an independent and non-partisan research program sponsored by the Center.

This statement conforms to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

ENCLOSED: Statistical tables.

STATISTICAL DATA

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“Would you say that U.S. Senator Jeff Flake is doing an excellent, good, fair, poor or very poor job in office?”

		EXCELLENT/ GOOD	FAIR	POOR / VERY POOR	(NET POS TO NEG)
U.S. SENATOR JEFF FLAKE	April 2013	18%	25%	26%	(- 8)
<u>Detail</u>					
Republican		29	34	16	(+13)
Independent		12	26	28	(-16)
Democrat		16	26	36	(-20)
Maricopa		17	28	28	(-11)
Pima		13	22	28	(-15)
Rural		23	18	22	(+ 1)
JON KYL	July 1997	34	34	12	(+22)

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