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Americans Concerned Lack of Civility Breeds Violence... Plurality Blames Trump for Discord... Dems Lead on Generic Congressional Ballot Question For Immediate Release

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This NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll Reports:

With the midterm elections just days away, there is growing uneasiness among Americans about the lack of civility in Washington. In fact, nearly eight in ten U.S. residents are concerned that violence or acts of terrorism will be the end result of the tone in the nation's capital. There is consensus among Americans that the level of civility between elected officials in Washington has worsened since President Donald Trump took office. While clear partisan differences exist, a plurality of Americans believe the president's conduct is to blame for the political rancor in Washington as well as the recent onslaught of suspicious packages sent to critics of the president. A majority of Americans consider the president's reaction to these incidents to be irresponsible, and half also characterize reporting by the media in the same way.

These attitudes swirl within a political environment marked by heightened interest in and enthusiasm for next week's congressional midterm elections. According to this NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll, the Democrats have a 6-point advantage over the Republicans among registered voters, down from 10 points, on the congressional generic ballot question just last week. However, among voters likely to cast a ballot, the gap between Democrats and Republicans widens to 9 points.

79% of Americans, including 82% of likely voters, are concerned that the lack of civility in Washington will lead to violence. This includes a plurality of residents (45%) who are very concerned and 34% who are concerned. 21% are either not very concerned (12%) or are not concerned at all (9%). Democrats (63%) are more than twice as likely as Republicans (31%) to be very concerned. A plurality of independents (46%) are also very concerned.

74% of Americans, including 76% of likely voters, perceive the overall tone and level of civility between the Republicans and Democrats in Washington to have gotten worse since Trump became president. This is an increase from 67% in November 2017. 87% of Democrats, 75% of independents, and 63% of Republicans think the political rancor in Washington has worsened since the president took office.

Only 7% of Americans report the tone among the nation's elected officials has improved, and 16% say it has stayed the same. In a USA Today survey conducted by the Gallup Organization in 2009, 35% of Americans said civility during the Obama Administration had gotten worse. 21% said it had improved, and 42% said it had stayed the same.

"Americans are aggrieved by the 'us versus them' fisticuffs that dominate Washington," says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion. "This dissatisfaction especially spikes among Democrats and independents."

A plurality (40%) of Americans, including 42% of likely voters, think Trump is responsible for the divisive tone in today's politics. 29% blame the media, and 17% put the onus on congressional Democrats. Seven percent consider the congressional Republicans at fault.

Partisan politics are in play. 71% of Democrats blame President Trump while Republicans divide. 44% fault the Democrats in Congress, and 42% blame the media. Only 7% of Republicans blame the president. Among independents, a plurality (45%) point a finger at Trump. An additional 30% blame the media.

A plurality of Americans (37%), including 41% of likely voters, believe the way President Trump conducts himself is to blame for incidents like the recent pipe bombs sent to his critics. 21% consider the way the media reports the news to be at fault, and 12% cite the bickering between Democrats and Republicans. 23% think none of these factors are to blame. 68% of Democrats and a plurality of independents (36%) point a finger at Trump's conduct. An additional 20% of independents blame the media. A plurality of Republicans (40%) consider the way the media reports the news to be at fault.

A majority of Americans (52%) believe President Trump's reaction to the suspicious packages that went to high profile Democrats was irresponsible. 39% consider the president's conduct to be responsible.

Half (50%) of Americans say the media has acted irresponsibly in reporting these incidents while 40% say their accounts have been responsible.

Not surprisingly, Democrats (83%) are more likely to perceive Trump's handling of the situation to be careless while Republicans (72%) are more likely to perceive the media's reporting to be

reckless. Majorities of independents think both Trump (57%) and the media (53%) have acted irresponsibly in the aftermath of these incidents.

41% of Americans, including the same proportion of likely voters, approve of the job President Trump is doing in office. This is little changed from 39% reported in the late October NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll. 51% disapprove, including 38% who strongly do so. 28% of Americans strongly approve of the president's job performance.

Turning to the generic congressional ballot, the Democrats (50%) have a 6-point advantage over the Republicans (44%), a decline from the 10-point lead the Democrats previously enjoyed. Democrats (96%) and Republicans (94%) break for their own party. Among independents, the Democrats have a 6-point lead (45% to 39%) over the Republicans, a decline from 10 points. However, among likely voters, the Democrat on the generic congressional ballot has a 9-point advantage over the Republican.

"Democrats have been ahead on the generic congressional ballot throughout this entire election season," says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion. "On Tuesday, the nation will find out if the Democrats have mustered enough votes to change the makeup of Congress or if President Trump has staved off his critics."

A 17-point gender gap, down from 22 points, exists among registered voters. A majority of women (54%) support the Democrat while men divide (48% for the Republican to 45% for the Democrat).

Heightened enthusiasm for this year's elections exists. 55% of registered voters, including 62% of likely voters, say they are very enthusiastic about this year's elections. This compares with 40% who had this view in late October 2010. 76% of registered voters, including 82% of likely voters, consider this year's elections to be very important.