

Service Learning Project II

Hours 4

1. How Powerful Is Public Opinion?

At various times in the recent history of the U.S., public opinion has played a powerful role in presidential politics. Beginning in 1965, public opinion became strongly divided over the Vietnam War (1964-1975). Polls and widespread campus demonstrations showed the growing public opposition to the war. Public opinion not only forced President Lyndon Johnson to withdraw from the 1968 presidential race, but it also may have colored the way the public has viewed the use of American troops overseas ever since.

The Watergate break-in caused the downfall of President Richard Nixon. As news of the president's role in the cover-up of the crime became known, his popularity, as measured by public opinion polls, fell to 25 percent. Nixon resigned in August 1974.

The influence of public opinion on the fate of President Bill Clinton was quite the opposite. In 1998, the throughout the investigation of the scandal concerning his relationship with White House intern Monica Lewinsky, Clinton's approval ratings stayed at incredibly high levels. Even after the House impeached him late that year, his approval ratings remained high. There can be little doubt that the public's approval of his actions as president and the majority's belief that he should not be removed from office influenced the outcome of the trial in the Senate in early 1999. But public opinion about his personal character and fitness to hold office declined steeply as the investigation progressed.

In most situations, legislators, politicians, and presidents use public opinion to shore up their own arguments. It provides a kind of evidence for their own point of view. If the results of polls do not support their positions, they can either commission their own polls or ignore the polls. Politicians find it more difficult to use public opinion on complex issues, such as changes in Medicare or welfare reform, because such complicated issues cannot be discussed fully in a poll. Thus, public opinion can be useless or useful to political decision makers.

Project Questions:

Question 1. Key Notes: Please write 4 most important Key Notes in the above study material;

A.

B.

C.

D.

Question2. Please write an essay on “Water Gate Scandal.” How it was the reason for the downfall of President Richard Nixon?

Note: Answer for the second question, must be typed (Words 100-150). Please attach the extra sheet, no hand written answer for the second question.