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New PSB poll: Should Congress be able to telework? Americans overwhelmingly support Congress being able to vote “remotely” amid coronavirus pandemic

- 4 in 5 Americans (80%) support Members of Congress being able to vote “remotely” during the coronavirus pandemic, including 53% who “strongly support” this concept
- Strong support exhibited across all major demographics including gender, age, party, and region; strongest support observed among those most impacted by coronavirus.
- 40% say remote voting should be available to “all” Congressional lawmakers while 46% say it should only be for lawmakers “under extreme circumstances” such as quarantine

BACKGROUND: EXISTING RULES BLOCK CONGRESS FROM VOTING “REMOTELY”

The coronavirus / COVID-19 pandemic has made the idea of teleworking a new normal for millions of Americans – but not for Members of Congress. In recent days, state legislatures across the country have adapted to the crisis with some states postponing sessions while others have opted to proceed with “remote” sessions.

However, remote voting is not currently an option for the U.S. Congress. Current congressional rules state that lawmakers must to be physically present in the chamber in order to vote.

A new survey of American adults released today by PSB Research examines attitudes towards the idea of “remote voting” and the U.S. Congress. This concept is highly relevant in the wake of the historic \$2 trillion economic aid package passed on Friday, March 27.

Without the ability to vote remotely, legislators from across the country were forced to race back to the House of Representatives Chamber of the U.S. Capitol in Washington D.C., to cast their votes after nearly 4 ½ hours of debate taking place amid “social distancing” practices.

NEW SURVEY SHOWS 80% SAY CONGRESS SHOULD BE ABLE TO VOTE “REMOTELY”

4 in 5 Americans (80%) say they “support Members of Congress being able to vote ‘remotely’ during the coronavirus pandemic,” according to a new poll conducted by PSB Research.

	(% American adults)	
	SUPPORT	80
OPPOSE	10	
Strongly support	53	
Somewhat support	27	
Somewhat oppose	6	
Strongly oppose	4	
Don't know / not sure	10	

Do you support or oppose Members of Congress being able to vote “remotely” during the coronavirus pandemic?

[FULL QUESTION TEXT & DETAILED CROSSTABS AVAILABLE ON PAGE 4]

In a time of sharp divisions regarding a public health and economic crisis impacting the world, Americans across the board heavily support the concept of allowing Congress to vote remotely. 53% say they “strongly support” allowing on Congress to vote remotely; this intensity of support holds across all major demographics including gender, age, party, and region.

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WHICH MEMBERS OF CONGRESS SHOULD BE PERMITTED TO VOTE REMOTELY?

The overwhelming majority of Americans are open to the general concept of remote voting by Members of Congress, though opinions differ over on who in Congress should be able to.

2 in 5 Americans (40%) say remote voting should be “available as an option to all Members of Congress.” Meanwhile 46% say remote voting should “only [be] under extreme circumstances”, for example, legislators quarantined for health reasons during the coronavirus pandemic.

Fewer than 1 in 10 Americans (9%) say they are uncertain or have no opinion, while only 5% say remote voting by Members of Congress should “not [be] allowed under any circumstances.”

Which comes closest to your view?	(%) American adults	
	Available as an option to all Members of Congress	40
“Remote voting” by Members of Congress should be... Only allowed under extreme circumstances	46	
Not allowed under any circumstances	5	
Don’t know / not sure	9	

[FULL QUESTION TEXT & DETAILED CROSSTABS AVAILABLE ON PAGE 4]

Older Americans are more reluctant to make remote voting available for all lawmakers. 58% of those ages 55-64 as well as 64% of those age 65+ say remote voting should only be allowed “under extreme circumstances.”

By contrast, younger Americans are more likely to embrace the idea of allowing remote voting as an option available for all Members of Congress. 49% of those ages 35-54 say remote voting should be available to “all” in Congress whereas 40% say it should only be an option only for those facing “extreme circumstances” such as medical quarantines. Worth mentioning, this demographic (age 35-54) is the most supportive of the general concept of allowing Members of Congress to vote remotely (84% overall support, including 57% “strongly” support).

NEARLY ALL AMERICANS IMPACTED BY CORONAVIRUS, 1 IN 4 (26%) “EXTREMELY”

One quarter of Americans (26%) say their life has been “extremely impacted” by the coronavirus. An additional 31% say their life has been “very impacted” and 29% say “somewhat impacted.” Just 9% say their life has been “only a little impacted” and only 5% say “not at all.”

Americans ages 35-54 are the most likely to say their lives have been “extremely impacted.” This age demographic represents a plurality of the US population and includes millions on the frontlines in fields such as healthcare, retail, delivery who face greater risk to expose to the coronavirus – as well as millions more who might be working remotely or recently unemployed. In addition, Americans ages 35-54 are often caring for family members such as elderly parents as well as their own children who might now be schooling from home.

Americans who say their lives have been “extremely” impacted by the coronavirus are the most supportive of allowing Members of Congress to vote remotely (89% support, including 73% who “strongly support”). It is not surprising that three in five of those “extremely impacted” (60%) say that remote voting should be an option for “all” in Congress, given that so many in this age group have also been forced to adjust to a new normal which often includes teleworking.

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Many Members of Congress have expressed support for remote voting and nearly 70 signed onto a March 23 letter sent to the House Rules Committee requesting “a temporary change to House Rules to allow remote voting by Members of the House during national emergencies, especially the current one involving COVID-19.”

“Americans are slowly adjusting to a new normal though we are not seeing the same from the U.S. Congress,” says Adam Rosenblatt, Vice President & Senior Strategist at PSB Research, which conducted this study of n=1,000 American adults. “In the face of a global pandemic, countless companies and millions of employees are now teleworking but for now it would seem that Congress prefers to operate the same way it has for over 200 years.”

METHODOLOGY: PSB Research conducted online interviews among n=1,000 American adults age 18+ (nationwide) from March 26-27, 2020. The overall margin of error for this study is +/- 3.10% at the 95% confidence level and larger for subgroups. Some percentages may add to more or less than 100% due to rounding.

FULL QUESTION WORDING and KEY CROSSTABS available on pages 4 and 5

For more information, please contact:

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About PSB Research

PSB Research (psbresearch.com) is a global insights and analytics consultancy rooted in the science of public opinion, serving blue-chip corporate and political clients in over 200 countries. For over 40 years, PSB has provided actionable insights and counsel to help clients address their most complex challenges and win in highly competitive situations. PSB serves Fortune 100 corporations, governments and associations, and has helped elect more than 30 presidents and prime ministers around the world. PSB is a member of the BCW Group of companies, which is a part of WPP (NYSE:WPP), a creative transformation company.

DETAILED FINDINGS (FULL QUESTION WORDING & KEY CROSSTABS)

Q1: Several Members of Congress are medically quarantined and have been diagnosed with the coronavirus (COVID-19).

Current rules state that Members of Congress must be physically present in the Senate or House of Representatives in order to vote on legislation.

Some say the current rules should be changed to allow “remote voting” for legislators who are unable to attend in person during the coronavirus pandemic.

Do you support or oppose Members of Congress being able to vote “remotely” during the coronavirus pandemic?

(%) American adults		Gender		Age				Consider self			Region				Extremely Impacted by COVID-19
		M	F	<35	35-54	55-64	65+	D	R	I	NE	MW	S	W	
SUPPORT	80	83	77	73	84	82	81	85	84	70	79	82	78	81	89
OPPOSE	10	12	9	15	6	9	11	8	12	11	8	9	12	11	5
Strongly support	53	58	48	46	57	54	56	59	58	43	55	50	53	55	73
Somewhat support	27	25	29	27	27	28	25	26	26	27	24	32	25	26	16
Somewhat oppose	6	8	5	11	3	6	4	5	8	6	4	6	8	6	3
Strongly oppose	4	4	4	4	3	3	7	3	4	5	4	3	4	5	2
Don't know / not sure	10	5	14	12	10	8	8	7	4	19	12	10	10	8	6

Q2: Some say that “remote voting” in Congress should only be permitted in the most extreme of circumstances – for example, legislators who are quarantined for health reasons during this pandemic.

Others say that that “remote voting” should be an option available to all Members of Congress.

Which comes closest to your view?

“Remote voting” by Members of Congress should be...

(%) American adults		Gender		Age				Consider self			Region				Extremely Impacted by COVID-19
		M	F	<35	35-54	55-64	65+	D	R	I	NE	MW	S	W	
Available as an option to all Members of Congress	40	45	35	41	49	31	23	47	44	28	44	37	39	41	60
Only allowed under extreme circumstances	46	44	49	40	40	58	64	46	47	46	41	51	47	44	31
Not allowed under any circumstances	5	6	4	6	3	3	7	2	4	8	5	4	5	5	3
Don't know / not sure	9	6	13	13	8	8	6	5	5	18	10	8	9	10	5

DEMO: To what extent would you say your life has been impacted by the coronavirus?

(%) American adults		Gender		Age				Consider self			Region				Extremely Impacted by COVID-19
		M	F	<35	35-54	55-64	65+	D	R	I	NE	MW	S	W	
Extremely impacted	26	26	27	28	36	14	11	32	29	19	27	20	30	27	100
Very impacted	31	33	29	28	27	39	38	37	26	30	30	34	28	33	*
Somewhat impacted	29	27	30	28	25	31	36	24	31	31	28	31	28	28	*
Only a little impacted	9	9	9	6	9	13	12	6	10	12	9	11	9	7	*
Not at all impacted	5	4	6	9	3	3	2	2	4	8	6	3	4	5	*

DEFINITION OF KEY CROSSTABS

Crosstab		Definition of Crosstab	% of total
American adults		US adults age 18+	100
Gender	M	Male	50
	F	Female	50
Age	<35	Age 18-34	30
	35-54	Age 35-54	40
	55-64	Age 55-64	13
	65+	Age 65+	17
Consider self	D	Regardless of party registration, consider self Democrat	32
	R	Regardless of party registration, consider self Republican	34
	I	Regardless of party registration, consider self Independent or something else	34
Region	NE	Northeast	19
	MW	Midwest	23
	S	South	36
	W	West	22
Extremely Impacted by COVID-19		Those who say they life has been “extremely impacted” by the coronavirus	26

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