

## **Presidential and Congressional Approval Ratings Slip as Americans Still See No Improvement in Economic Outlook**

***Americans Tend to Be Wary of General Healthcare Reforms, Yet Majorities Support Specific Proposals***



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## **Presidential and Congressional Approval Ratings Slip as Americans Still See No Improvement in Economic Outlook**

### ***Americans Tend to Be Wary of General Healthcare Reforms, Yet Majorities Support Specific Proposals***

**Washington, DC** – Just over half of U.S. adults (53%) approve of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as President while 43% disapprove, according to a new telephone poll of over 1,000 adults conducted by Ipsos Public Affairs. Obama's job approval rating shows a decline of three percentage points over the past month and twelve percentage points over the past six months, marking a new low since he took office.

While more than eight in ten Democrats approve of his performance (82%), just 45% of Independents and 21% of Republicans do.

Obama's traditional strongholds remain positive toward his performance: African-Americans (89% approve), Hispanics (70%), those with a household income of less than \$25,000 (64%), those under 35 (63% approve), and those who are currently not employed (62%). However, the new poll shows a six-point decline among women (61% in early October vs. 55% currently).

### National Mood Pessimistic toward Congress, Economy

While Americans support for Obama continues to decline, he receives relatively good ratings compared to our Congressmen and women. Just 29% of adults surveyed approve of the way Congress is handling its job, a decline of eight points since February. Nearly seven in ten (68%) say that they disapprove of the job Congress is doing, with Republicans (84%) and Independents (74%) being particularly likely to view Congress in a negative light.

- Adults aged 55 and older (75%), those with a household income of at least \$25,000 (74%), and men (73%) are also more likely than others to be critical of how Congress is handling its job.

Notably, while both chambers have Democratic majority, more Democrats disapprove of Congress' performance than approve of it (52% vs. 44%).

Parallel to growing disapproval of the President and Congress, perceptions about the direction of the country continue to erode, as fewer than four in ten (38%) feel that things in the U.S. are heading in the right direction (down from 40% one month ago and 55% six months ago). Nearly six in ten (57%) now say the country is off on the wrong track and 4% are unsure.

Americans also remain apprehensive about the economy as a majority (59%) say that the economy has stabilized but not yet begun to improve (up four points in one month) and one third (32%) still believe that the worst is still yet to come (up one point). Only 7% hold the view that we have already turned the corner – a percentage that is actually lower by 4 points.

Yet despite the criticism toward the White House and Congress, a plurality of Americans (48%) plan to vote Democratic in the 2010 midterm elections, while 41% say that they would vote for the Republican candidate. Just 2% would cast their vote for a third party candidate and 6% are unsure. Three percent do not plan to vote next November.

Very few partisans expect to cast their vote across the aisle; 6% of Democrats plan to vote Republican and 6% of Republicans plan to vote Democrat. While many Independents are undecided (33%) or plan to vote for a third party candidate (11%), they are nearly twice as likely to vote blue as they are red (22% vs. 12%). More than one in five (22%) doesn't plan to go to the polls on Election Day.

### Healthcare Reform: Need for Specifics

Americans remain largely divided when it comes to healthcare reform in general, though opinions tend to be more positive when it comes to the specifics of the proposed reforms. When asked broadly if they favor or oppose the healthcare reform proposals presently being discussed, 39% say that they favor the reforms while 49% oppose them. Opposition to the health reform in general has grown over the past month when 42% opposed the reforms being discussed, showing an increase of seven points since then.

- While six in ten Democrats (62%) approve of the reforms being discussed, just 29% of Independents and 14% of Republicans concur.

However, when the reform is framed as the “creation of a public entity to directly compete with existing health insurance companies,” a slight majority (51%) favor the proposal while 49% oppose it.

- Opinions about this option vary widely depending on political affiliation, as Democrats are more than twice as likely as Republicans to support it (67% vs. 31%). Independents fall in the middle, with 50% approving.

An even greater proportion (57%) would favor “legislation to permit the creation of insurance co-operatives NOT run by the government,” suggesting that Americans are more likely to prefer less government involvement. This option enjoys majority support across the aisle, with 61% of Republicans and 56% of Democrats being in favor.

When the reform is defined as including “specific regulations to ensure basic patients' rights, such as portability of coverage,” 75% of Americans are in favor while just 17% oppose.

- Though at least two thirds of adults across party lines offer their support, Democrats are more likely to favor regulations to ensure patients' rights (83%) than are Republicans (68%) or Independents (67%).

Support for all three of these more specific proposals has remained quite steady through the fall, as there have been no significant differences since late August.



## Two Thirds Approve of Administration's Handling of Swine Flu Vaccine

As 63% of U.S. adults express concern that they themselves, someone in their household, or a close friend will get sick from the swine flu, two thirds of (65%) feel confident that that the Obama administration has done everything in its power to ensure the H1N1 swine flu vaccine is available in time for flu season. Just a third (32%) reports that they are not confident in the Obama administrations handling of this issue.

*These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted October 30 – November 1, 2009. For the survey, a nationally representative, randomly selected sample of 1,077 adults aged 18 and older across the United States was interviewed by Ipsos. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate within 3.0 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult population in the U.S. been polled. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error. These data were weighted to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the actual U.S. population according to U.S. Census figures. Respondents had the option to be interviewed in English or Spanish.*

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