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***President's Approval Rating Remains Steady, but Congress' Plunges;
Attitudes on Health Care Reform Have Become Entrenched***



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More Think Obama Tried to Do Too Much Than Too Little in His First Year in Office

President's Approval Rating Remains Steady, but Congress' Plunges; Attitudes on Health Care Reform Have Become Entrenched

Washington, DC – Thinking about President Obama's policy agenda in his first year in office, four in ten Americans (41%) say that the President has tried to do too much, while just 19% say Obama has tried to do too little, according to a new telephone poll of over 1,100 adults conducted by Ipsos Public Affairs. Over a third (35%) say he has tried to do the right amount.

- Opinions vary widely across party lines as Republicans (59%) are twice as likely as are both Independents (30%) and Democrats (also 30%) to think Obama's agenda for his first year in office was overly ambitious. A majority of Democrats (54%) feel that Obama tried to accomplish about the right amount, while just 33% of Independents and 16% of Republicans agree.

Among those who think that Obama tried to do too much in 2009, a majority (57%) point to health care reform as the policy area in which he overreached most.

- However, many who feel that Obama tried to take on too much in 2009 focus single out a different area: the economy and jobs (14%), financial sector regulation (10%), the war in Afghanistan (5%), the war in Iraq (4%), energy independence (3%), diplomacy (2%), terrorism (2%), and education (1%).

Americans who wish Obama had tried to do more are most likely to point to the economy and jobs as the area in which he fell short (42%).

- Other areas on which Obama is said to have most fallen short include healthcare reform (16%), the war in Iraq (11%), education (6%), the war in Afghanistan (6%), financial sector regulation (5%), energy independence (3%), and terrorism (3%).

Obama's Approval Rating Holds Steady while Congress's Plunges

Following last week's State of the Union address, 50% approve how Barack Obama is handling his job as the President. In comparison, 52% did so in early January, but the two-point difference is within the margin of error. Likewise, his disapproval rating remains largely unchanged at 46% (compared with 45% three weeks earlier).

- However, Obama's disapproval among Independents decreased 15 points during that period, from 46% to 31%.

The survey shows that Americans have grown even more critical of how Congress is handling its job, with now three quarters (74%) disapproving and just 21% approving of it.

- Republicans are most likely to be disapproving (86%), though roughly two thirds of Independents (63%) and Democrats (67%) also express discontent.

A majority of Americans continue to feel negatively about the direction in which the country is headed, with 57% saying that it is off on the wrong track, up 2 points from last month. Fewer than four in ten (37%) believe that the country is headed in the right direction, a slight decline from early January (down 2 points).



Attitudes about the economy also remain relatively unchanged, with a majority (57%) saying that the economy has stabilized but not yet begun to improve. While over a quarter (28%) believe that we have yet to see the worst of the economic crisis, 10% feel that we have already turned the corner on the recession.

Healthcare Reform: Americans Remain As Split As They Were in the Fall

As it is seemingly floundering in Congress, Americans' attitudes towards healthcare reform remain split, showing a pattern of entrenchment.

Roughly half of Americans are opposed to the proposals presently being discussed (51%, compared with 49% at the end of last October) while 37% are in favor (compared with 39%).

- More than six in ten Democrats (65%, up from 62%) support the current reform proposals, while Republican opposition has hardened (86%, up from 78%). Independents are now slightly more likely to favor the reforms than they were in November (36%, up from 29%), though 41% say that they oppose them.

Americans also continue to have more favorable opinions about the specifics of the proposals:

- Over three quarters (77%) support specific regulations to ensure basic patients' rights, such as portability of coverage – including at least two-thirds across party lines – while just 15% oppose them.
- A smaller majority (52%) also supports legislation to permit the creation of insurance co-operatives not run by the government, while 38% oppose it. Republicans are most likely to back this proposal (59%), while Democrats (49%) and Independents (43%) are more split.
- More support than oppose the creation of a public entity to directly compete with existing health insurance companies (49% in favor vs. 42% opposed). Two thirds of Democrats (68%) support this proposal while a similar proportion of Republicans (65%) oppose it. Independents are slightly more likely to be in favor than to be against this public option (46% vs. 34%).

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted January 28-31, 2010. For the survey, a nationally representative, randomly selected sample of 1,127 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 2.92 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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