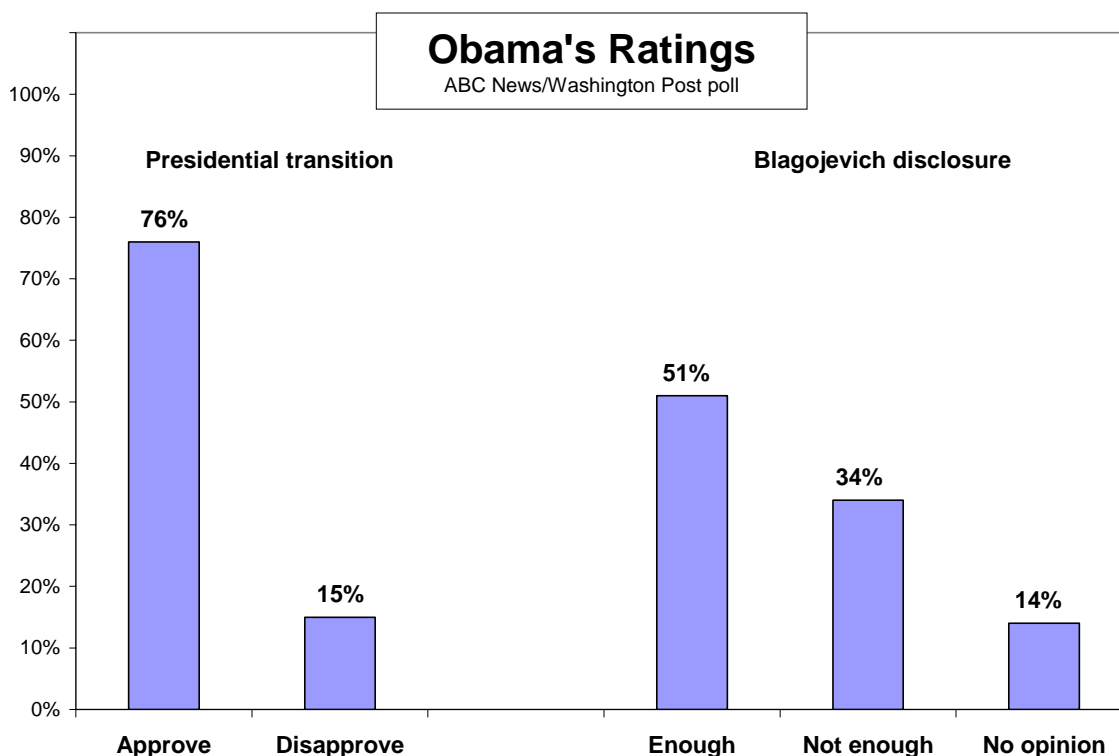


Obama Transition on Track Despite Blagojevich Troubles

The Illinois Senate seat scandal hasn't touched Barack Obama's high ratings for honesty or for handling the transition – but many Americans are waiting to hear more.

A tepid 51 percent in a new ABC News/Washington Post poll say Obama's done enough to explain any discussions his representatives may have had with Gov. Rod Blagojevich, who's accused of seeking bribes in his selection of Obama's successor. The rest either say Obama's not done enough (34 percent) or are unsure (14 percent more).

Obama has not been implicated in the case and has promised to disclose his transition office's contacts with the governor. Clearly it could help: His 51 percent approval in this area is far below his broad 76 percent approval for handling of the transition overall.



Still, Obama's transition approval rating has risen from 67 percent three weeks ago, indicating that the Blagojevich scandal hasn't damaged the president-elect. So does the fact that 67 percent see Obama as honest and trustworthy – slightly better than his rating

for honesty back in October, long before “Blagojevich” was pronounceable by news anchors.

Obama’s approval rating for handling the transition now slightly surpasses Bill Clinton’s at this point in 1992 (72 percent) and George W. Bush’s just before his inauguration (likewise 72 percent in January 2001). Clinton’s final pre-inaugural approval was higher, 81 percent in January 1993.

PARTISANS – Majorities across the partisan spectrum approve of Obama’s handling of the transition – a near-unanimous 91 percent of Democrats, 73 percent of independents and even 59 percent of Republicans. That’s about the same among Democrats since late November, up 10 points among independents – and up a remarkable 20 points among Republicans. Indeed, well beyond Obama’s base, 65 percent of conservatives now approve of his transition work, as do 54 percent of conservative Republicans.

That’s similar to Clinton in 1992. At first just 44 percent of Republicans approved of his handling of the transition; that improved to 53 percent in mid-December and 72 percent just before his inauguration. But less than a month later Clinton’s approval rating among Republicans plummeted to 34 percent – a reminder of the fragility of bipartisan approval.

Indeed, even now, Republicans are less apt to credit Obama with honesty and trustworthiness; 41 percent do so, compared with 63 percent of independents and 89 percent of Democrats.

Satisfaction with Obama’s disclosure of Senate seat discussions declines across all these groups. Sixty-six percent of Democrats say he’s done enough to disclose contacts with Blagojevich – still a broad majority, but 25 points below Obama’s overall transition approval among Democrats. Fifty-one percent of independents say he’s done enough to explain these contacts, as do just 33 percent of Republicans.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone Dec. 11-14, 2008, among a random national sample of 1,003 adults, including landline and cell-only respondents. Results for the full sample have a 3-point error margin; click [here](#) for a detailed description of sampling error and [here](#) for a pdf version with question wording and results. Sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS of Horsham, PA.

Analysis by Gary Langer.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com at <http://abcnews.com/pollingunit>

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Full results follow (*= less than 0.5 percent).

1-4 held for release.

5. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling the presidential transition? Do you approve/disapprove strongly or somewhat?

	----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
12/14/08	76	46	30	15	5	9	9
11/23/08	67	41	26	18	8	10	15

Compare to:

		Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
1/15/01	Bush	72	21	6
1/17/93*	Clinton	81	13	6
12/14/92	Clinton	72	13	15
11/20/92**	Clinton	62	14	24

*"has handled"

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6. Please tell me if the following statement applies to Obama or not: He is honest and trustworthy.

	Yes	No	No opinion	
12/14/08	67	22	11	
10/19/08	RV*	63	29	8
10/9/08	RV**	62	31	7
10/9/08	RV***	60	32	8

*Pew, wording "and trustworthy" omitted

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***Fox

7-39 held for release.

40. As you may know, Illinois governor Rod Blagojevich has been arrested on charges that he sought bribes in exchange for official actions, including appointing someone to take over Obama's seat in the U.S. Senate. Obama has not been implicated in this case. Do you think Obama has or has not done enough to explain any discussions his representatives may have had with Blagojevich about the Senate seat?

	Has	Has not	No opinion
	done enough	done enough	
12/14/08	51	34	14

END