

Obama's Poll Numbers Are Falling to Earth
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It is simply wrong for commentators to continue to focus on President Barack Obama's high levels of popularity, and to conclude that these are indicative of high levels of public confidence in the work of his administration. Indeed, a detailed look at recent survey data shows that the opposite is most likely true. The American people are coming to express increasingly significant doubts about his initiatives, and most likely support a different agenda and different policies from those that the Obama administration has advanced.

Polling data show that Mr. Obama's approval rating is dropping and is below where George W. Bush was in an analogous period in 2001. Rasmussen Reports data shows that Mr. Obama's net presidential approval rating -- which is calculated by subtracting the number who strongly disapprove from the number who strongly approve -- is just six, his lowest rating to date.

- **Obama's job approval has been strong and steady in the mid-60's**
 - **Gallup 3-day tracking has it at 62% approve, 27% disapprove**
- **In the 5 most recent polls, Obama's job approval has averaged 61% (Real clear politics average) and Rasmussen's data has the lowest numbers.**
- **Over the last five weeks, Rasmussen is consistently 2 -4 points lower on approval than the average of all approval polls released that week.**
- **Obama is not below where GWB was in 2001. March 11, 2001 Gallup = 58% approval rating of GWB (29% disapprove)**

Rasmussen Reports shows a 56%-43% approval, with a third strongly disapproving of the president's performance. This is a substantial degree of polarization so early in the administration. Mr. Obama has lost virtually all of his Republican support and a good part of his Independent support, and the trend is decidedly negative.

- **"A third strongly disapprove" – no other poll that shows this 4-point break has numbers this high- Rasmussen is an outlier:**
 - **17% strongly disapprove (Ipsos March 9)**
 - **18% strongly disapprove (Diageo Hotline Poll, March 2)**
- **Obama has not lost "a good part" Independent support:**
 - **Independents in Fox News Poll Jan 28: 64% approve**
 - **Independents in Fox News Poll March 4: 61% approve**
- **Obama never had strong Republican support to begin with: 37% approved of his job (Fox Jan 28), now 30% approve (Fox March 4) – a 7 point drop would hardly be considered "losing virtually all Republican support"**

A detailed examination of presidential popularity after 50 days on the job similarly demonstrates a substantial drop in presidential approval relative to other elected presidents in the 20th and 21st centuries. The reason for this decline most likely has to do with doubts about the administration's policies and their impact on peoples' lives.

There is also a clear sense in the polling that taxes will increase for all Americans because of the stimulus, notwithstanding what the president has said about taxes going down for 95% of Americans. Close to three-quarters expect that government spending will grow under this administration.

- **Most Americans do not believe Obama will raise their taxes**
 - **Quinnipiac from Mar 2: 61% believe Obama will live up to his promise of not raising taxes on families earning <\$250K.**
- **People think taxation will fix the economy – Rasmussen’s own data (Feb 25): 51% think taxing those over 250K is good for the economy, 31% say bad.**

Recent Gallup data echo these concerns. That polling shows that there are deep-seeded, underlying economic concerns. Eighty-three percent say they are worried that the steps Mr. Obama is taking to fix the economy may not work and the economy will get worse. Eighty-two percent say they are worried about the amount of money being added to the deficit. Seventy-eight percent are worried about inflation growing, and 69% say they are worried about the increasing role of the government in the U.S. economy.

- **Americans believe Obama will get the economy back on track**
 - **NBC March 1: 66% think it’s likely BO will achieve his goal of getting the economy back on track**
- **They approve of how he is handling the economy (57% Quinnipiac Poll, March 2)**
- **64% are confident that President Obama and his economic advisors will be successful in turning around the economy (Diego Hotline, March 2)**
- **Americans support his plan to raising taxes on the rich to reduce the deficit**
 - **67% support, 29% oppose raising taxes on individuals over 200K, families over 250K to reduce the deficit. (Diego Hotline, March 2)**
- **Only 41% agree that “with a deficit over a trillion dollars, we can’t afford to spend trillion on a costly economic stimulus package” (Dem Corps Feb 10)**
- **Americans trust government over business to solve the country’s economic problems (52-42; Gallup March 8)**
 - **Even Independents trust government over business to help the economy (49-47; Gallup March 8)**
 - **Fewer than half now think the government is doing too much. In 2008, 53% said the government is doing too much that should be left to individuals and businesses is on the decline, compared to 47% today.**
 - **Moreover, 42% think the government should do more (Gallup March 8)**
- **75% favor increased spending on building and road repairs, bridges and other infrastructure, even if it means increasing the deficits, 74% to develop new and clean energy, 76% to make healthcare more accessible and affordable. (Newsweek January 16)**

When Gallup asked whether we should be spending more or less in the economic stimulus, by close to 3-to-1 margin voters said it is better to have spent less than to have spent more. When asked whether we

are adding too much to the deficit or spending too little to improve the economy, by close to a 3-to-2 margin voters said that we are adding too much to the deficit.

Support for the stimulus package is dropping from narrow majority support to below that. There is no sense that the stimulus package itself will work quickly, and according to a recent Wall Street Journal/NBC poll, close to 60% said it would make only a marginal difference in the next two to four years. Rasmussen data shows that people now actually oppose Mr. Obama's budget, 46% to 41%. Three-quarters take this position because it will lead to too much spending. And by 2-to-1, voters reject House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's call for a second stimulus package.

- **53% are confident that Obama's economic stimulus package will be successful in turning around the economy (Diageo-Hotline March 2)**
- **Americans are realistic about the timeline of the economic turnaround, the fact that they don't expect an immediate turn around means they are realistic, not pessimistic, nor losing support.**
- **Many Americans are still uninformed about the President. Of the 70% in a Gallup who could offer an opinion, 64% supported the budget and 36% opposed.**

While over two-thirds support the plan to help homeowners refinance their mortgage, a 48%-36% plurality said that it will unfairly benefit those who have been irresponsible, echoing Rick Santelli's call to arms on CNBC.

And although a narrow majority remains confident in Mr. Obama's goals and overall direction, 45% say they do not have confidence, a number that has been growing since the inauguration less than two months ago. With three-quarters saying that they expect the economy to get worse, it is hard to see these numbers improving substantially.

- **Overall, Americans believe that Obama will achieve the goals he sets out to accomplish. In a battery of goals tested on March 1 by NBC:**
 - **82% think it's likely he will achieve his goal of closing Guantanamo**
 - **65% reduce takes for the middle class**
 - **78% extend health care coverage for more Americans**
- **70% of Americans are confident Obama will be able to bring real change to the way things are done in Washington (Diego/Hotline Mar 2).**
- **63% think Barack Obama's priorities and policies are more likely to significantly help the country, only 1 in 4 think seriously harm the country**
- **57% approve of the way President Obama is handling the economy (Quinnipiac Mar 2).**

There is no real appetite for increasing taxes to pay for an expanded health-insurance program. Less than half would support such an idea, which is 17% less than the percentage that supported government health insurance when Bill Clinton first considered it in March of 1993.

- **76% support increased spending, even if it increases the deficit, in order to make health care more affordable and accessible (Newsweek January 16)**

While voters blame Republicans for the lack of bipartisanship in Washington, the fact is that they do not believe Mr. Obama has made any progress in improving the impulse towards cooperation between the two parties. Further, nearly half of voters say that politics in Washington will be more partisan over the next year.

- **71% think Barack Obama has made a reasonable effort to work with and listen to Congressional Republicans (Newsweek 3/5/09) including a majority of republicans – 52%**
- **This Newsweek poll also showed that while Americans think Obama is doing what he can, the problem is in Congress between Congressional leaders, not President Obama.**
 - **Only 45% think Democratic leaders have made a reasonable effort to work with Congressional Republicans.**
 - **Only 37% think Republicans have made a reasonable effort to work with Congressional Democrats**

Fifty-six percent of Americans oppose giving bankers any additional government money or any guarantees backed by the government. Two-thirds say Wall Street will benefit more than the average taxpayer from the new bank bailout plan. This represents a jump in opposition to the first plan passed last October. At that time, 45% opposed the bailout and 30% supported it. Now a solid majority opposes the bank bailout, and 20% think it was a good idea. A majority believes that Mr. Obama will not be able to cut the deficit in half by the end of his term.

Only less than a quarter of Americans believe that the federal government truly reflects the will of the people. Almost half disagree with the idea that no one can earn a living or live "an American life" without protection and empowerment by the government, while only one-third agree.

- **Americans do believe that the government has a role to play in improving their lives.**
 - **75% think that if the government made college more affordable it would be a very effective means of improving economic mobility for individuals and their children**
 - **67% reducing the cost of health care**
 - **81% keeping jobs in America (Pew Economic Mobility Poll/Greenberg Feb 8)**

Despite the economic stimulus that Congress just passed and the budget and financial and mortgage bailouts that Congress is now debating, just 19% of voters believe that Congress has passed any significant legislation to improve their lives. While Congress's approval has increased, it still stands at only 18%. Over two-thirds of voters believe members of Congress are more interested in helping their own careers than in helping the American people. When it comes to the nation's economic issues, two-thirds of voters have more confidence in their own judgment than they do in the average member of Congress.

- **Rasmussen’s Congressional approval rating is lower than any poll we’ve seen this month.**
 - **Gallup March 8 = 39% approve**
 - **Fox March 4 = 41% approve**
 - **NBC/WSJ March 1 = 31% approve**
 - **Rasumssen = 19%**

- **Gallup’s most recently headline on Congressional job approval is “Approval of Congress Hits 4-year high”**
 - **39% approve of the way congress is handling its job, a high since 45% approved in 2005. (gallup March 8)**
 - **Independents’ approval of Congress increased 17 points from Jan to March, from 17% to 34% today.**
 - **Republican support for Congress has not dropped but rather stayed steady from Jan to March- and is currently at 22%**

Finally, what probably accounts for a good measure of the confidence and support the Obama administration has enjoyed is the fact that they are not Republicans. Virtually all Americans, more than eight in 10, blame Republicans for the current economic woes, and the only two leaders with lower approval ratings than Harry Reid and Nancy Pelosi are Republican leaders Mitch McConnell and John Boehner.