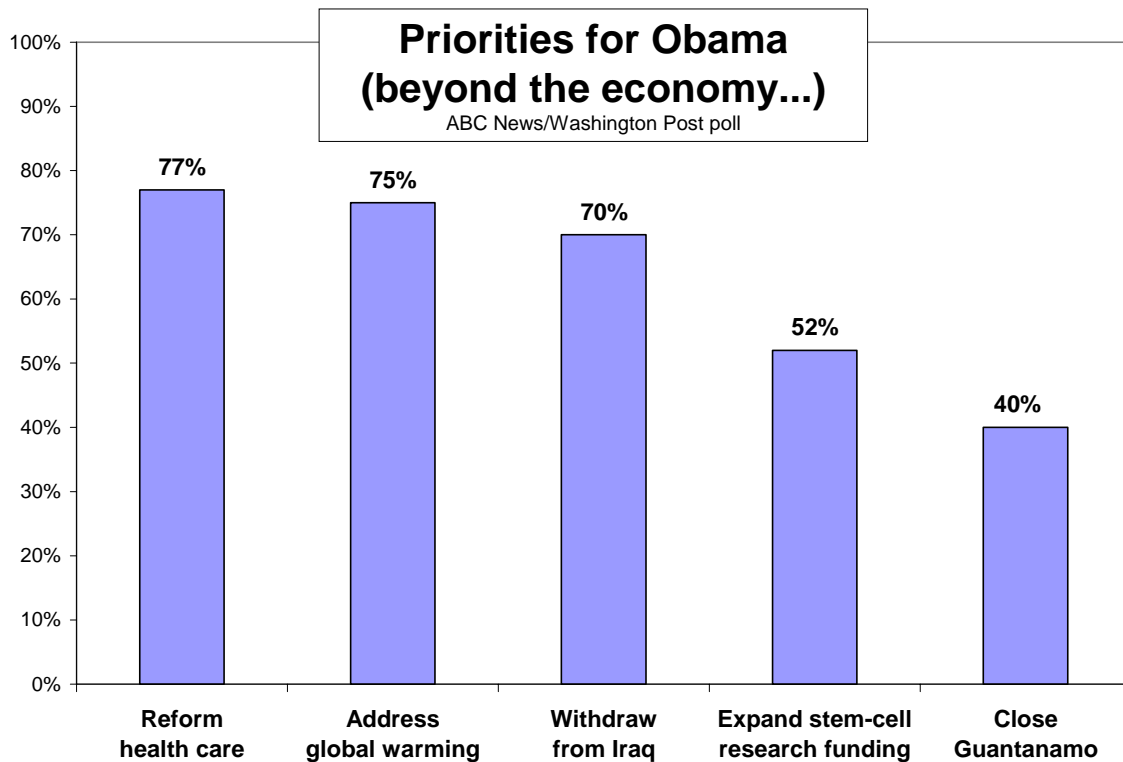


Obama's Dance Card: Full

Fix the economy, revamp health care, reduce global warming, pull out of Iraq and improve America's image in the world. And by the way – welcome to Washington.

So reads Barack Obama's dance card, a daunting to-do list coupled with high hopes. It offers him opportunities and hazards alike – a chance to outshine the unpopular George W. Bush, but with the risk of falling short of the public's substantial expectations.

Apart from dealing with the economy, the public's priorities for Obama in this ABC News/Washington Post poll include making major changes in the country's health care system (77 percent favor it), implementing policies to try to reduce global warming (75 percent) and withdrawing U.S. forces from Iraq in the next 16 months (70 percent).



Some specific sub-steps are popular as well: Within the aim of addressing global warming, 84 percent say Obama should require electric utilities to increase their use of renewable energy sources. Within health care, 74 percent favor higher federal spending on children's health insurance. And within the overriding task of dealing with the economy, 66 percent favor a moratorium on home foreclosures.

Two other items tested on this list drew less support: Fifty-two percent said Obama should expand federal funding of stem-cell research, and well under half, 40 percent, said he should close the U.S. military prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba – something he’s pledged to do “in a responsible way.” That’ll take some careful maneuvering given the public’s division on the question; 44 percent in this poll oppose closing Guantanamo.

WHEN – Priority is not urgency, however, and – again apart from the economy – fewer say Obama should initiate action on these items right away after taking office. Fifty-five percent say he should act quickly to require more renewables in electric power generation, 51 percent say he should start right away to make major changes in the U.S. health care system, 50 percent favor fast action to increase funding for children’s health insurance and 48 percent favor moving quickly to deter home foreclosures.

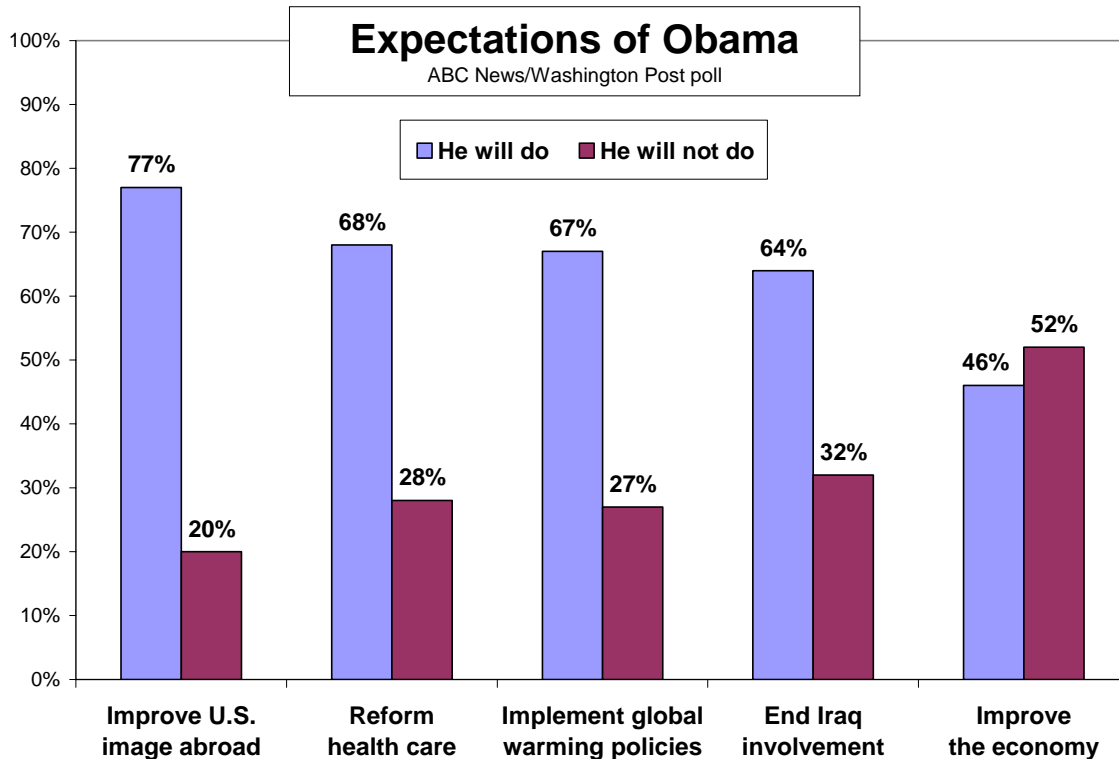
Fewer, 43 percent, say Obama should move quickly to withdraw from Iraq; 40 percent, to implement policies to reduce global warming; and 18 or 19 percent, to close Guantanamo or to fund stem-cell research.

PARTY – There are sharp partisan differences in support for action by Obama on many of these. Half or more Republicans do support his attempting major changes in the health care system and trying to address global warming – 53 and 50 percent, respectively – but that’s vastly below the levels among Democrats and independents.

Support for withdrawing from Iraq, moreover, ranges from 87 percent of Democrats to 43 percent of Republicans; for funding stem-cell research, from 66 percent of Democrats to 37 percent of Republicans; for closing Guantanamo, from 52 percent of Democrats to 24 percent of Republicans. They’re closer on two other issues, renewable energy sources and a foreclosure moratorium. But the list shows that beneath partisanship lie real differences in issue preferences and priorities.

	Obama tasks			Dem-Rep gap
	Dems	Inds	Reps	
Withdraw from Iraq	87%	70%	43%	44 points
Address global warming	89	78	50	39
Major health care changes	89	81	53	36
Increase children’s health insurance funding	86	74	56	30
Fund stem-cell research	66	49	37	29
Close Guantanamo	52	38	24	28
Foreclosure moratorium	74	61	63	11
Require renewables in electricity generation	89	80	79	10

EXPECTATIONS – As noted, expectations of Obama are running high: Seventy-seven percent believe he’ll be able to improve the United States’ image abroad, and 64 to 68 percent think he’ll be able to end U.S. involvement in Iraq, implement global warming policies and make significant improvements in the health care system.



The danger to Obama is that unmet expectations can produce a negative response. At the same time, expectations are highest among his core supporters, Democrats, who are less likely to turn against him. Republicans are far more skeptical.

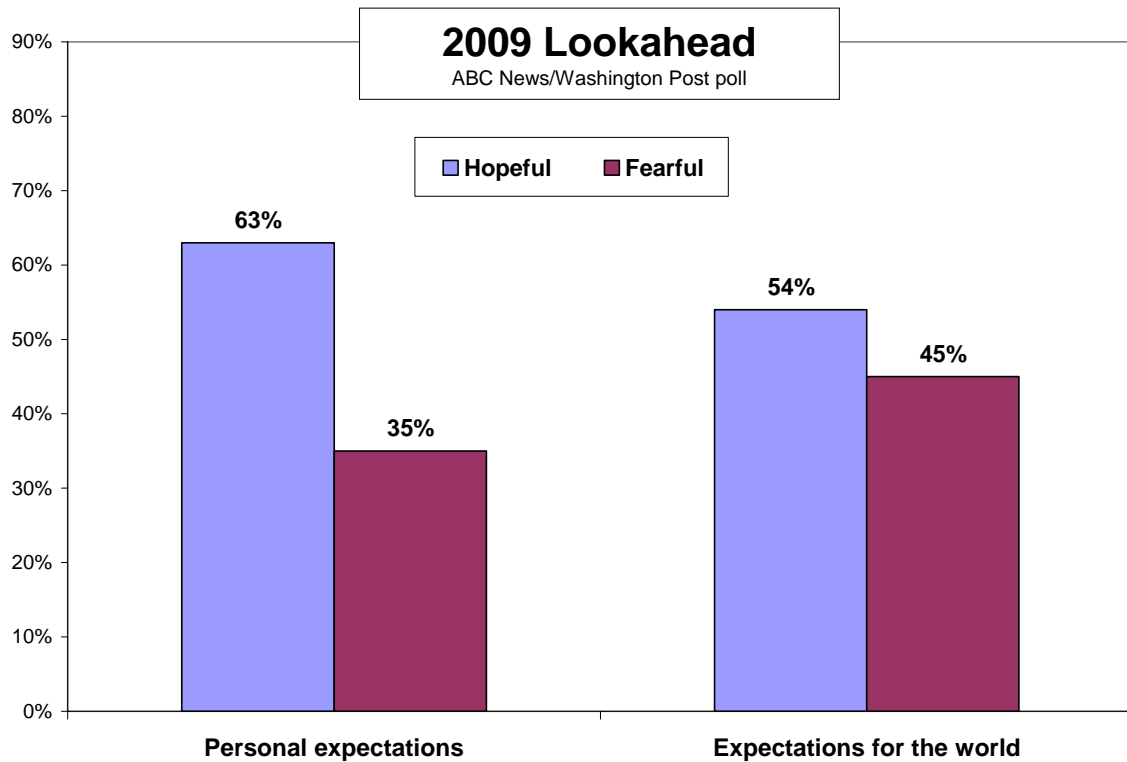
Also, expectations are most muted on Obama's greatest challenge, the economy. Given the challenges, 52 percent (especially Republicans, but also most independents) don't think he'll be able to do much to improve it.

	Expectations of Obama			
	Dems	Inds	Reps	Dem-Rep gap
Will improve the economy	68%	39%	21%	47 points
Make major health care changes	90	61	43	47
End involvement in Iraq	79	63	47	32
Improve U.S. image abroad	91	73	60	31
Implement global warming policies	79	62	53	26

HOPES and FEARS – Whatever the challenges ahead, 63 percent of Americans say they're more hopeful than fearful about what the year ahead holds for them (although, given economic conditions, that's down 10 points from 2006), and 54 percent are more hopeful than fearful about what the year will hold for the world in general.

Again, it's remarkable to note the extent that partisanship informs these views. In December 2004, after Bush's re-election, 88 percent of Republicans were personally

hopeful for the year ahead; now just half as many are, 44 percent. And four years ago 53 percent of Democrats were personally hopeful. Now it's 75 percent.



In another measure, 68 percent describe themselves as optimistic about the policies Obama will pursue – including 45 percent of Republicans, rising to nearly nine in 10 Democrats. And surprisingly given other measures of economic discontent (see earlier analysis), 68 percent say that, thinking about the next 12 months, they're optimistic about their family's financial situation.

That may reflect a range of factors – an innate optimism; a sense that as bad as they are, things should improve in the year ahead; and, again, the weight of expectations on Barack Obama. Optimism about family finances is 16 points higher among people who also are optimistic about the policies he'll pursue as president.

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. 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).

1-12 previously released.

13. Apart from dealing with the economy, do you think Obama should or should not [ITEM]? (IF SHOULD) Should he start that right after taking office, or wait until later in his presidency?

12/14/08 - Summary Table*

	NET	----- Should ----- Right after	Wait	Should not	No opinion
a. Withdraw U.S. forces from Iraq within the next 16 months	70	43	27	26	4
b. Make major changes in the U.S. health care system	77	51	26	20	3
c. Implement policies to try to reduce global warming	75	40	34	20	5
d. Close the U.S. military prison at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba	40	18	22	44	16
e. Expand federal funding of embryonic stem-cell research	52	19	33	42	7
f. Increase federal spending on children's health insurance	74	50	24	23	3
g. Require electricity companies to increase the use of renewable sources of energy, such as wind, solar and hydroelectric power	84	55	29	14	2
h. Impose a period of time during which banks cannot foreclose on delinquent mortgages	66	48	18	28	5

* Half sample asked items a-d; other half sample asked items e-h.

14. As president, do you think Obama will or will not be able to [ITEM]?

12/14/08 - Summary Table

	Will	Will not	No opinion
a. End the U.S. involvement in Iraq	64	32	4
b. Make significant improvements in this country's health care system	68	28	4
c. Implement policies to try to reduce global warming	67	27	6
d. Improve America's image in the world	77	20	4

15. Looking ahead to next year, are you more hopeful, or more fearful, about what the year 2009 holds in store for you personally?

	More hopeful	More fearful	No opinion
12/14/08	63	35	2
12/11/06	73	24	2
12/18/05	67	31	2
12/19/04	66	30	4
12/21/03	85	12	4

12/15/02	63	35	2
12/19/01	80	16	4

16. How about for the world in general? Are you more hopeful, or more fearful, about what the year 2009 holds in store for the world in general?

	More hopeful	More fearful	No opinion
12/14/08	54	45	1
12/11/06	55	43	2
12/18/05	59	40	1
12/19/04	54	43	2
12/21/03	69	27	4
12/15/02	43	56	1
12/19/01	62	35	3

17. Thinking about the next 12 months, would you say you feel (optimistic) or (pessimistic) about (ITEM)?

12/14/08 - Summary Table*

	Optimistic	Pessimistic	No opinion
a. the state of the national economy	48	50	3
b. your own family's financial situation	68	29	2
c. the policies Obama will pursue	68	26	6
d. the situation in Iraq	65	30	5
e. the way things are going in this country	51	46	4
f. the country's ability to defend itself against terrorist attacks	67	30	3
g. the situation in Afghanistan	49	47	4

* Full sample asked items a-c; half sample asked items d-e; other half sample asked items f-g.

Trend where available:

a. the state of the national economy

	Optimistic	Pessimistic	No opinion
12/14/08	48	50	3
9/29/08 RV	43	53	4
4/13/08 RV	40	58	2
2/1/08	45	51	4
12/9/07	45	52	3
12/11/06	64	33	3
5/15/06	52	46	1
12/18/05	55	44	1
12/19/04	58	40	2
6/20/04	64	34	2
1/14/03	63	35	2

b. your own family's financial situation

12/14/08	68	29	2
9/29/08 RV	61	34	5
4/13/08 RV	66	31	3
2/1/08	67	30	3
12/9/07	72	25	3
12/11/06	82	16	2
5/15/06	79	20	1
12/18/05	73	26	1
12/19/04	75	23	2

c. the policies Obama will pursue

12/14/08	68	26	6
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Compare to:

Bush:

12/11/06	47	47	6
5/15/06	43	53	4
12/18/05	53	43	4
12/19/04*	51	45	5

* "... in his second term in office"

d. the situation in Iraq

12/14/08	65	30	5
12/9/07	46	50	4
12/11/06	40	57	3
10/22/06	42	55	3
5/15/06	43	55	2
12/18/05	54	44	2
12/19/04	46	51	2
6/20/04	52	45	3
5/23/04	55	43	2
1/18/04*	58	39	2

*"Thinking about the coming year"

e. the way things are going in this country

12/14/08	51	46	4
12/11/06	61	36	2
5/15/06	48	50	2
12/18/05	57	42	2
12/19/04	57	41	2
7/25/04 RV	67	30	3
6/20/04	62	36	2
1/14/03	69	29	2

f. the country's ability to defend itself against terrorist attacks

12/14/08	67	30	3
12/11/06	71	27	2
10/22/06	70	26	3
5/15/06	65	32	3
12/18/05	65	34	1
12/19/04	66	30	4
6/20/04	66	31	3
1/14/03	75	23	3

g. No trend.

18-40 previously released.

END