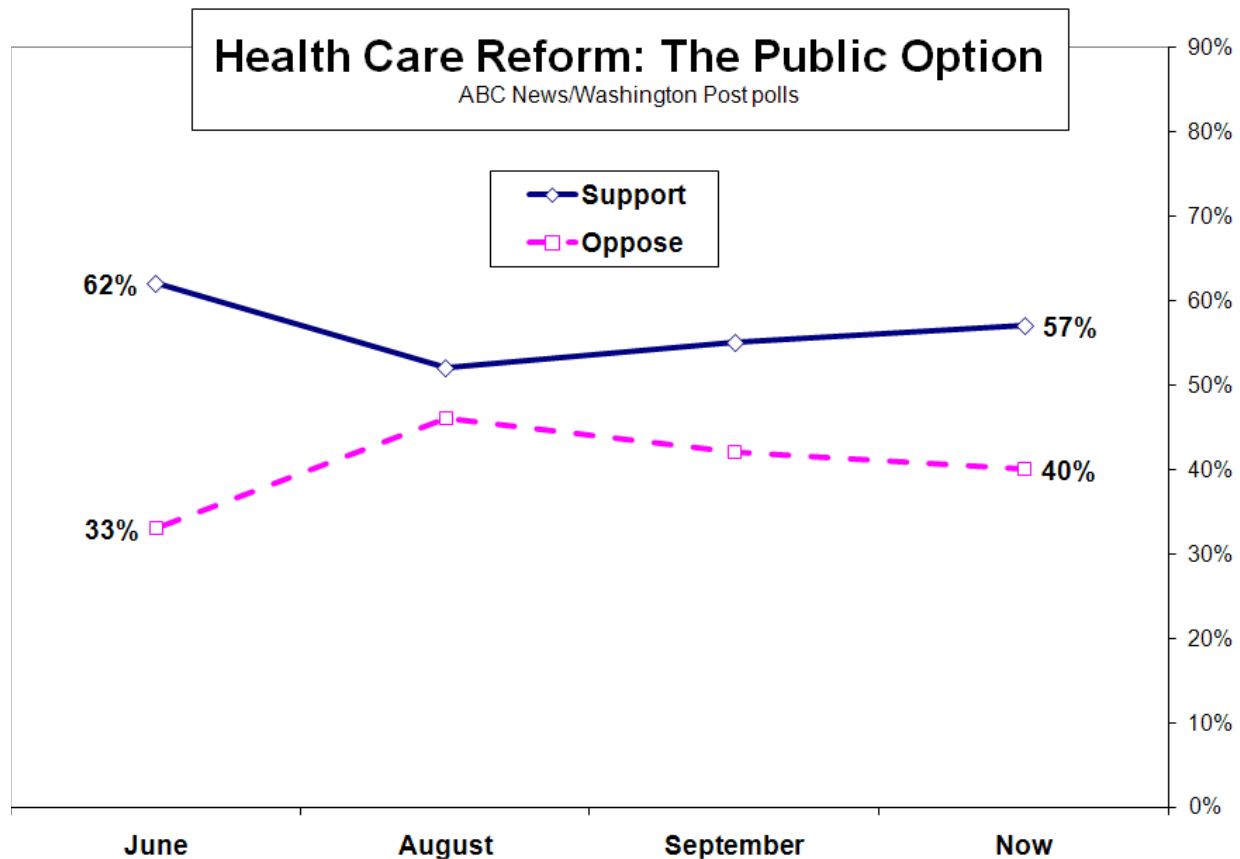


## Division on Health Reform Remains, But With Support for 2 Key Elements

President Obama's holding the line at an even division in public views on health care reform, boosted by support for two key elements – a personal mandate and a public option – and aided by continued weakness in the opposition party.

Americans divide about evenly on the reform plan and Obama's handling of health care alike – neither better nor worse for him since summer. But 57 percent support one of the plan's most contentious elements, a government-sponsored insurance option, and that soars to 76 percent if it's limited to those who can't get affordable private insurance.



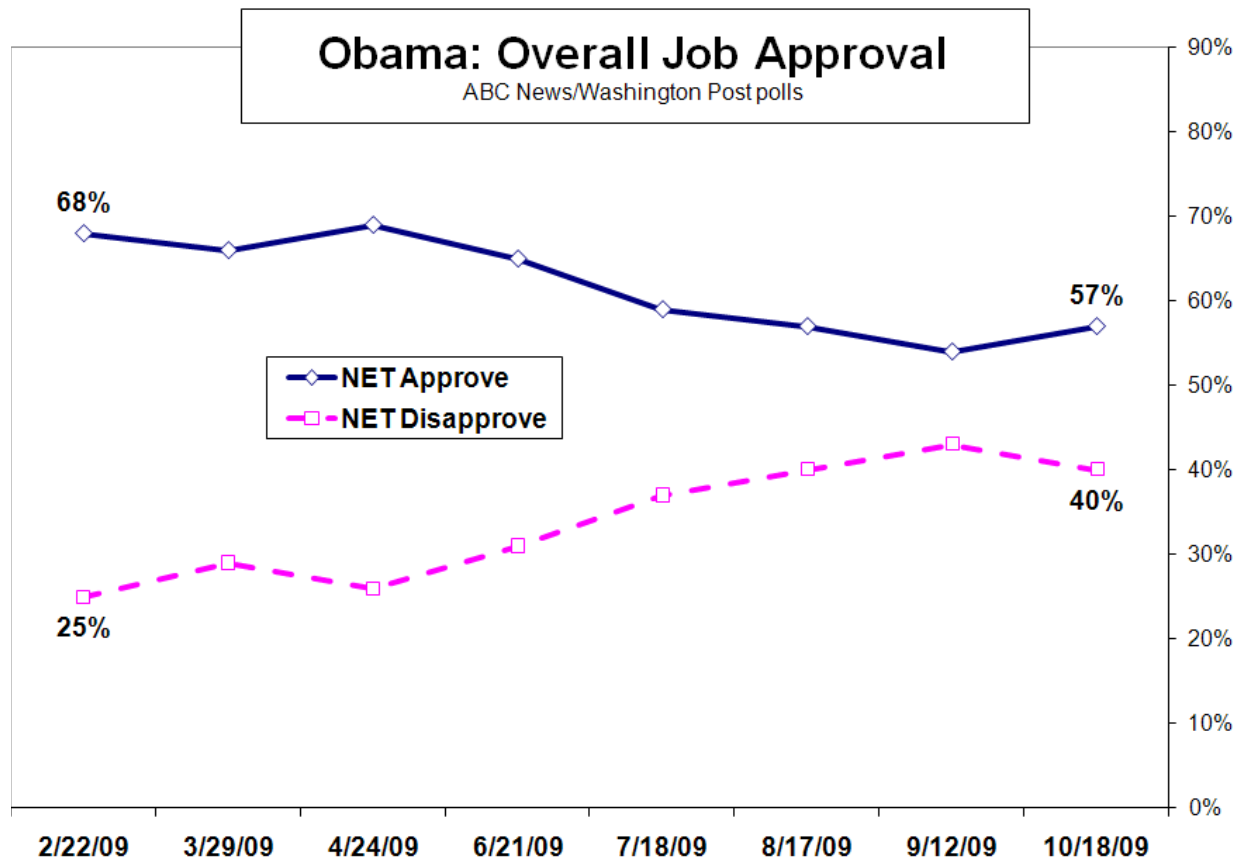
Indeed Americans by 51-37 percent in this latest ABC News/Washington Post poll say they'd rather see a plan pass Congress without Republican support, if it includes a public option based on affordability, than with Republican backing but no such element.

That cuts to the GOP's basic challenges finding political footing: Only 20 percent of Americans now identify themselves as Republicans, the fewest in 26 years. Just 19 percent, similarly, trust the Republicans in Congress to make the right decisions for the country's future; even among Republicans themselves just four in 10 are confident in their own party. For comparison, 49 percent overall express this confidence in Obama, steady since August albeit well below its peak.

The Republican Party's difficulties are shown in another result as well; in an early assessment of preference for congressional candidates in 2010, the Democrats lead by 51-39 percent.

**NINE MONTHS** – Nine months into his presidency Obama faces his own threats, including the economy, concerns about the war in Afghanistan, continued doubts about the deficit and a sense his pace of accomplishment has slowed. Fewer than half, 49 percent, now say he's accomplished a great deal or good amount since taking office, down from 63 percent at the 100-day mark.

Still he's showing resilience, with a 57 percent job approval rating overall – not a significant difference from his 54 percent last month, but the first time since April it hasn't declined.

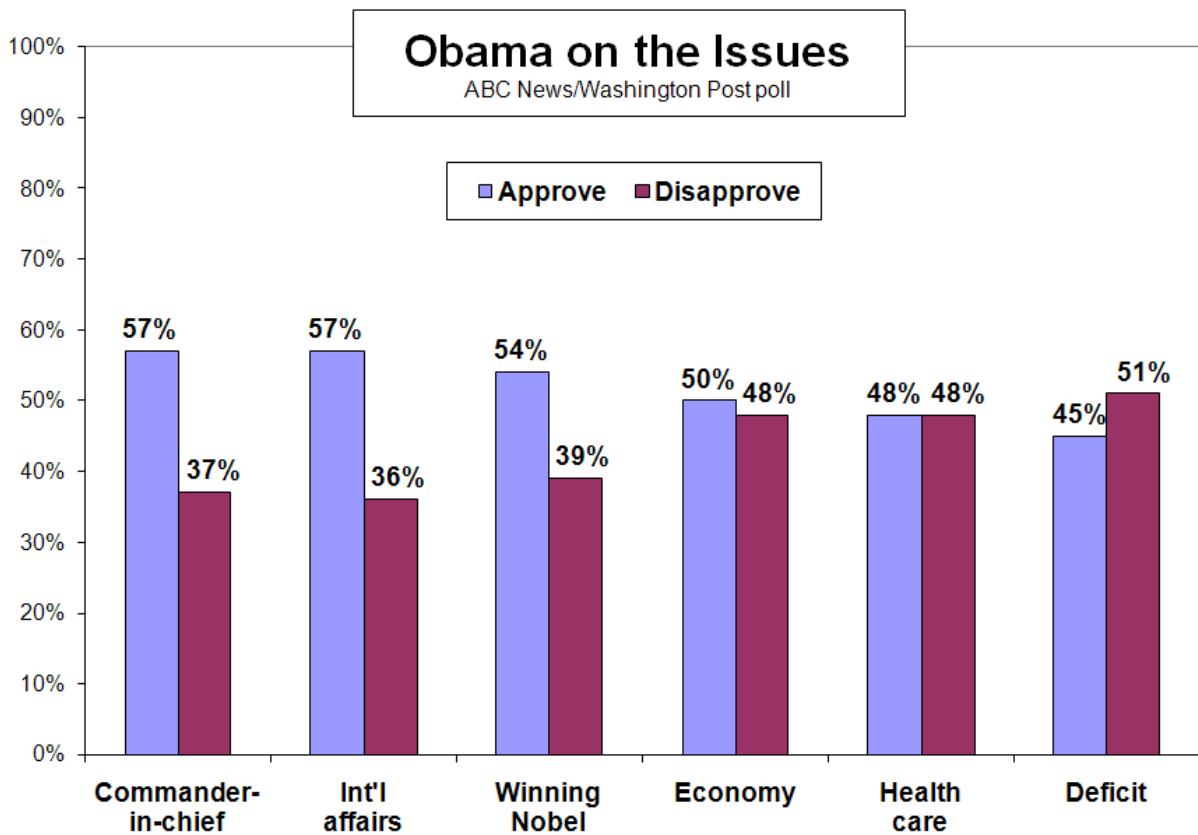


Obama's rating is better in sum than on most individual issues, suggesting a continued boost from his personal appeal. Notably, his approval rating from independents, at 55 percent, is its best since July, while among Democrats he's slipped to a career-low – but still very high – 83 percent. (He's also at a new low, albeit 82 percent, among liberals.) With partisanship at full tilt, just 19 percent of Republicans approve.

While Obama's rated below the postwar average for a president at nine months, 63 percent, that covers a wide range; George W. Bush hit a record 92 percent approval in a post-9/11 rally, vs. Bill Clinton's 51 percent in October 1993. Ronald Reagan, the last president to take office in a recession, was at 59 percent at this point, very similar to Obama now. Reagan continued to lose ground as the economy foundered, perhaps the single greatest cautionary note for Obama today.

ISSUES – On individual issues, some of Obama's best ratings are unexpected: Fifty-seven percent approve of his work as commander-in-chief and on international affairs generally, two areas in which his credentials were questioned during the presidential campaign. Fifty-four percent approve of how he's handled winning the Nobel Peace Prize, making a mild net positive of that unexpected gift.

The president's ratings on domestic issues underscore their particularly contentious nature. Fifty percent approve of his handling of the economy, slipping beneath a majority for the first time (barely – it was 51 percent in the last ABC/Post poll). As has been the case since July, intensity is against him on the economy, with more strongly disapproving than strongly approving.

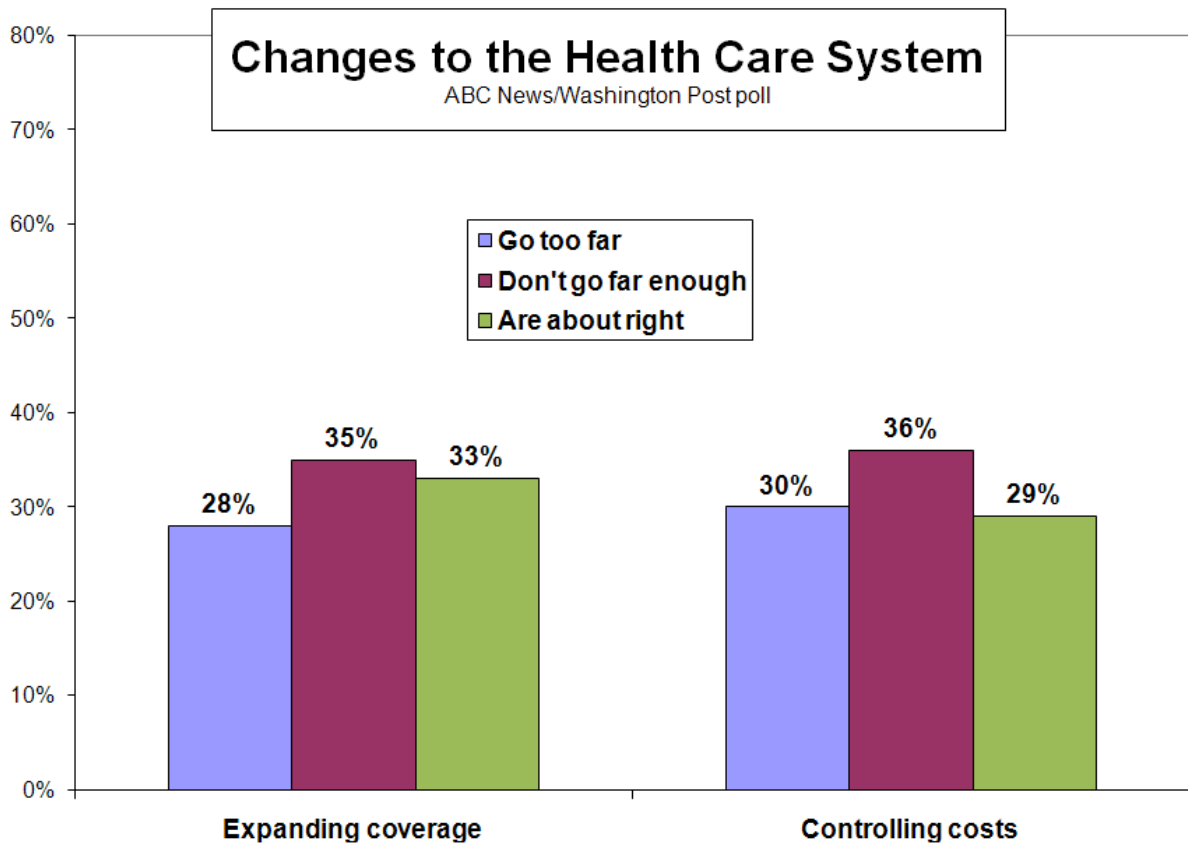


Just 45 percent approve of his handling of the deficit, but that's a bit of a respite, up a bit from 39 percent last month and the most since June. On health care, as noted, he gets an even split: 48 percent approve, 48 percent disapprove, again with more strongly disapproving, 38 percent, than strongly approving, 30 percent.

Whatever Obama’s challenges, it’s a far less bleak political picture than a year ago. Peering into the economic abyss, 90 percent in October 2008 said the country was seriously off on the wrong track, the most in 36 years of polling; it’s 54 percent today – no smiley face, but still 36 points less grim. And then-President Bush, a year ago, had a career-low 23 percent job approval rating – a point away from the 70-year low set by Harry Truman in 1952. Obama’s is 34 points better.

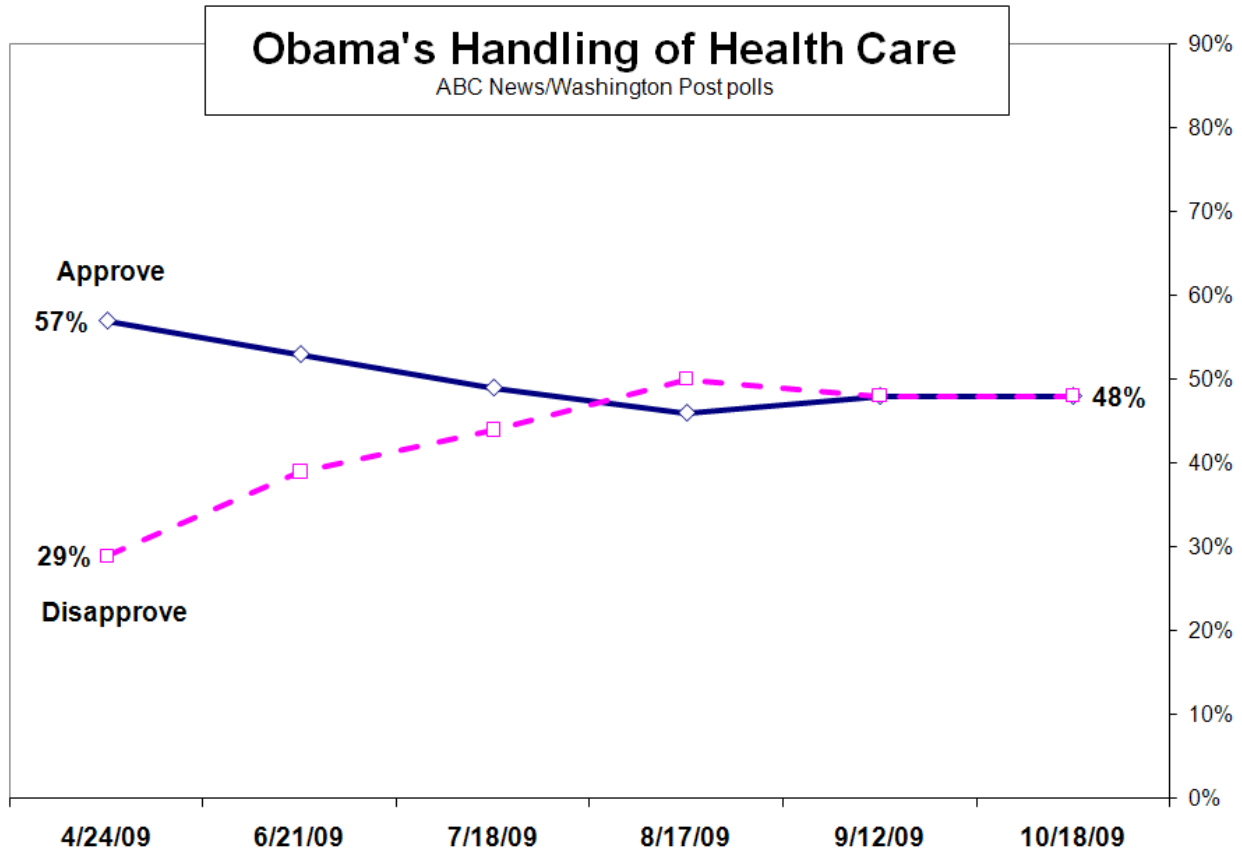
**HEALTH REFORM** – Perhaps a surprising result on health care is the fact that there’s slightly more discontent among supporters of reform than among its opponents: While the differences aren’t vast, more people say it doesn’t go far enough either in expanding coverage or controlling costs as say it goes too far.

In any case enough take one of those two options (“too far” or “not far enough”) to leave relatively few who say reform strikes about the right balance – one third on expanding coverage, 29 percent on controlling costs. That marks the sharp divisions the debate has produced.



Similarly, just 34 percent now say the plan creates the “right amount” of government involvement in the health care system. The biggest change has been a 9-point rise in the past month in the number who say it provides “not enough” change; still, now at 21 percent, this group remains far outnumbered by the 42 percent who see too much of a government role.

Overall, 45 percent support the proposed health care changes being developed by Obama and the Congress, while 48 percent are opposed; that's been essentially steady in three ABC/Post polls since mid-August. Obama's own approval rating for handling health care has been more or less steady since July, after falling from 57 percent at his peak popularity in April.



As noted, 57 percent support a public option, up slightly from a low of 52 percent in August. Support ranges from 77 percent of Democrats and 57 percent of independents down to 26 percent of Republicans, and it's 76 percent among those who currently have no insurance vs. 53 percent among those who do.

Several proposals would limit public plans to people who don't have a choice of affordable private insurance; that sharply boosts support for the idea, notably by 30 points among Republicans, by 32 points who see reform creating too much government involvement in health care and by 33 points among those who worry about its impact on the deficit.

Similarly, 56 percent favor the concept of an individual mandate, a law requiring all Americans to have health insurance – and this likewise jumps, to 71 percent, if it includes financial assistance in obtaining insurance for families below a certain income line.

Among compunctions about reform, a prominent one is the so-called Cadillac tax on high-cost policies; given pro and con statements, 61 percent are opposed. Additionally, 43 percent continue

to think reform will weaken Medicare – peaking at 51 percent of seniors, the group least supportive of reform efforts.

The deficit’s another concern – but, this poll suggests, one with less teeth than might be supposed. Sixty-eight percent of Americans think reform would increase the federal budget deficit. But among those who say so, 46 percent say it’d be worth it.

**METHODOLOGY** – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone Oct. 15-18, 2009, among a random national sample of 1,004 adults, including landline and cell-phone-only respondents. Results for the full sample have a 3.5-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>

Media contact: Cathie Levine, (212) 456-4934.

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

1. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as president? Do you approve/disapprove strongly or somewhat?

	----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
10/18/09	57	33	23	40	11	29	3
9/12/09	54	35	19	43	12	31	3
8/17/09	57	35	21	40	11	29	3
7/18/09	59	38	22	37	9	28	4
6/21/09	65	36	29	31	10	22	4
4/24/09	69	42	27	26	8	18	4
3/29/09	66	40	26	29	9	20	5
2/22/09	68	43	25	25	8	17	7

2. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Obama is handling [ITEM]? Do you approve/disapprove strongly or somewhat?

10/18/09 - Summary Table\*

	----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
a. The economy	50	29	22	48	13	35	1
b. Health care	48	30	18	48	10	38	4
c. His duties as commander-in-chief of the military	57	33	24	37	13	24	6
d. International affairs	57	34	23	36	15	21	7
e held for release.							
f. The federal budget deficit	45	20	25	51	14	37	4
g. The situation							

with Iran 52 24 28 39 12 27 9  
h. His winning the Nobel Peace Prize 54 35 18 39 11 27 8  
\*Full sample asked items a,b; half sample asked items c-e; other half sample asked items f-h.

Trend where available:

a. The economy

	----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
10/18/09	50	29	22	48	13	35	1
9/12/09	51	28	24	46	13	33	2
8/17/09	52	27	25	46	13	33	2
7/18/09	52	29	23	46	10	35	3
6/21/09	56	28	28	41	13	27	3
4/24/09	58	31	28	38	13	25	4
3/29/09	60	34	25	38	12	26	3
2/22/09	60	NA	NA	34	NA	NA	6

b. Health care

	----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
10/18/09	48	30	18	48	10	38	4
9/12/09	48	32	15	48	10	38	4
8/17/09	46	27	19	50	8	42	5
7/18/09	49	25	24	44	11	33	7
6/21/09	53	27	26	39	10	29	9
4/24/09	57	NA	NA	29	NA	NA	13

c. No trend.

d. International affairs

	----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
10/18/09	57	34	23	36	15	21	7
9/12/09	57	32	25	33	12	21	10
6/21/09	61	NA	NA	32	NA	NA	7
4/24/09	67	NA	NA	27	NA	NA	6
3/29/09	62	NA	NA	27	NA	NA	11

e held for release.

f. The federal budget deficit

	----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
10/18/09	45	20	25	51	14	37	4
9/12/09	39	17	22	55	13	42	6
8/17/09	41	19	22	53	12	41	5
7/18/09	43	19	24	49	11	38	8
6/21/09	48	22	26	48	13	35	5
4/24/09	51	NA	NA	43	NA	NA	7
3/29/09	52	NA	NA	43	NA	NA	5

g. The situation with Iran

	----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion

10/18/09	52	24	28	39	12	27	9
6/21/09	52	NA	NA	36	NA	NA	12
4/24/09	54	NA	NA	35	NA	NA	11

h. No trend.

3. Do you think things in this country (are generally going in the right direction) or do you feel things (have gotten pretty seriously off on the wrong track)?

	Right direction	Wrong track	No opinion
10/18/09	44	54	2
8/17/09	44	55	1
6/21/09	47	50	3
4/24/09	50	48	2
3/29/09	42	57	1
2/22/09	31	67	2
1/16/09	19	78	3
12/14/08	15	82	3
10/25/08 LV	13	85	2
10/11/08 RV	8	90	2
9/22/08 RV	14	83	3
8/22/08	19	78	2
6/15/08	14	84	2
5/11/08	16	82	2
1/12/08	21	77	2

Call for full trend to 1973.

4. How much confidence do you have in [ITEM] to make the right decisions for the country's future - a great deal of confidence, a good amount, just some or none at all?

10/18/09 - Summary Table

	-Grt deal/Good NET	Great deal	amt- Good amt	---- NET	Some/None Just some	---- None at all	No opinion
a. Obama	49	29	20	50	27	24	*
b. The Republicans in Congress	19	4	15	79	46	33	2
c. The Democrats in Congress	34	12	23	64	37	27	2

Trend:

a. Obama

	-Grt deal/Good NET	Great deal	amt- Good amt	---- NET	Some/None Just some	---- None at all	No opinion
10/18/09	49	29	20	50	27	24	*
8/17/09	49	28	21	50	26	24	*
4/24/09	60	31	28	40	25	15	1
1/16/09	61	31	30	37	28	9	2

b. The Republicans in Congress

10/18/09	19	4	15	79	46	33	2
8/17/09	21	4	16	78	45	33	1
4/24/09	21	4	16	78	50	28	2
1/16/09	29	8	21	69	49	21	2



c. The Democrats in Congress

10/18/09	34	12	23	64	37	27	2
8/17/09	35	14	21	63	35	29	1
4/24/09	36	12	24	63	38	25	1
1/16/09	43	15	28	56	37	19	2

5. Obama has been president for about nine months. Would you say he has accomplished a great deal during that time, a good amount, not very much or little or nothing?

	-Grt deal/Good amt-			---Not much/nothing---			No opinion
	NET	Great deal	Good amt	NET	Not much	Little or nothing	
10/18/09	49	14	35	50	27	23	1
4/24/09*	63	24	39	36	21	15	1

\* "about three months or nearly 100 days"

6. Overall, given what you know about them, would you say you support or oppose the proposed changes to the health care system being developed by (Congress) and (the Obama administration)? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

	----- Support -----			----- Oppose -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
10/18/09	45	26	19	48	12	36	7
9/12/09	46	30	16	48	12	36	6
8/17/09	45	27	18	50	10	40	5

7. In terms of [ITEM], do you think the proposed changes to the health care system (go too far), (do not go far enough), or are about right?

10/18/09 - Summary Table

	Too far	Not far enough	About right	No opinion
a. Expanding health care coverage to people who don't have it now	28	35	33	5
b. Controlling the costs of health care overall	30	36	29	6

8. Would you support or oppose having the government create a new health insurance plan to compete with private health insurance plans? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

	----- Support -----			----- Oppose -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
10/18/09	57	36	21	40	9	31	3
9/12/09	55	33	22	42	11	31	3
8/17/09	52	33	19	46	11	35	2
6/21/09	62	NA	NA	33	NA	NA	5

9. (IF OPPOSE/NO OPINION FOR GOVERNMENT PLAN) What if this government-sponsored plan was run by state governments and was available only to people who did not have a choice of affordable private insurance? In that case would you support or oppose this idea?

	Support	Oppose	No opinion
10/18/09	45	49	6

8/9 NET:

	----- Support -----				
	NET	At first	Now do	Oppose	No opinion
10/18/09	76	57	19	23	1

10. Which of these would you prefer - (a plan that includes some form of government-sponsored health insurance for people who can't get affordable private insurance, but is approved without support from Republicans in Congress); or (a plan that is approved with support from Republicans in Congress, but does not include any form of government-sponsored health insurance for people who can't get affordable private insurance)?

	Prefer government-sponsored insurance	Prefer Republican support	Neither/No plan (vol.)	No opinion
10/18/09	51	37	6	7

11. Would you support or oppose a law that requires all Americans to have health insurance, either getting it from work, buying it on their own, or through eligibility for Medicare or Medicaid?

	Support	Oppose	No opinion
10/18/09	56	41	3

Compare to: Would you support or oppose a law that requires all Americans to have health insurance, either getting it from work or buying it on their own?

	Support	Oppose	No opinion
9/12/09	51	47	2
6/21/09	49	47	4

12. (IF OPPOSE/NO OPINION LAW REQUIRING INSURANCE) What if the government gave financial assistance in getting health insurance to people with incomes below about 40-thousand dollars for an individual, and below 88-thousand dollars for a family of four? In that case, would you support or oppose a law that requires all Americans to have health insurance?

	Support	Oppose	No opinion
10/18/09	34	63	4

11/12 NET:

	----- Support -----				
	NET	At first	Now do	Oppose	No opinion
10/18/09	71	56	15	28	1

13. Do you think the health care plan creates too much government involvement in the nation's health care system, not enough government involvement or about the right amount?

	Too much	Not enough	Right amount	No opinion
10/18/09	42	21	34	2
9/12/09	45	12	41	1

Compare to: Clinton's plan

	Too much	Not enough	Right amount	No opinion
3/27/94	47	14	34	5
2/27/94	42	16	38	4
1/23/94	40	12	39	8
11/14/93	46	15	33	6
10/10/93	40	18	37	6
9/19/93	38	18	37	7

14. One idea would put a tax on the most expensive health insurance policies. (Supporters say this would help pay for health care reform, and encourage insurers to offer cheaper policies.) (Opponents say this would make these policies too expensive for people who want them.) Would you yourself support or oppose this tax?

	Support	Oppose	No opinion
10/18/09	35	61	4

15. Medicare is the government health insurance program for people 65 and over. Do you think health care reform would (strengthen) the Medicare program, (weaken) Medicare or have no effect on it?

	Strengthen	Weaken	No effect	No opinion
10/18/09	18	43	31	8
9/12/09	22	40	32	6

16. Just your best guess, do you think health care reform would increase the federal budget deficit, decrease it, or have no effect? (IF INCREASE) Do you think that would be worth it, or not?

	----- Increase -----					
	NET	Worth it	Not worth it	Decrease	No effect	No opinion
10/18/09	68	31	37	10	18	3
9/12/09	65	NA	NA	9	24	2

17. Do you have some form of health insurance or health care coverage, or not?

	Yes	No	No opinion
10/18/09	85	15	0
9/12/09	86	14	0
8/17/09	85	14	*
6/21/09	84	16	0
9/30/07	88	12	*
9/12/06	87	13	0
4/19/05	87	13	*
10/13/03	83	17	0
7/12/98	86	14	*
8/27/97	81	19	*
11/13/95	85	15	0
7/17/94	86	14	*
11/14/93	87	13	0
10/10/93	87	13	*

18-37 held for release.

38. One last issue question: If the election for the U.S. House of Representatives in November 2010 were being held today, would you vote for (the Democratic candidate) or (the Republican candidate) in your congressional district? (IF OTHER, NEITHER, DK, REF) Would you lean toward the (Democratic candidate) or toward the (Republican candidate)?

NET LEANED VOTE PREFERENCE

	Dem	Rep	Other	Neither	Will not	No
	cand.	cand.	(vol.)	(vol.)	vote (vol.)	opinion
10/18/09 All	51	39	1	3	2	5

6/15/08	All	52	37	*	2	1	8
11/4/06	LV	51	45	1	1	*	2
	RV	53	43	1	1	*	3
10/22/06	RV	54	41	*	1	*	3
10/8/06	RV	54	41	*	1	1	3
9/7/06	RV	50	42	*	3	2	4
8/6/06	RV	52	39	*	2	1	5
6/25/06	All	52	38	1	2	2	5
	RV	52	39	1	3	1	4
5/15/06	All	53	38	1	3	1	4
	RV	52	40	1	3	1	4
4/9/06	All	54	40	*	2	1	4
	RV	55	40	*	2	*	3
1/26/06	All	55	36	1	3	1	4
	RV	54	38	1	3	1	5
12/18/05	All	50	41	1	3	1	4
	RV	51	41	1	3	1	4
11/2/05	All	53	36	1	3	2	5
	RV	52	37	1	4	2	6
11/4/02	LV	48	48	1	1	0	2
11/3/02	LV	48	48	*	1	0	2
11/2/02	LV	50	49	*	1	0	2
10/27/02	LV	47	49	1	1	0	3
9/26/02	All	46	42	2	2	5	3
	LV	49	47	1	2	0	2
	RV	47	44	2	3	2	3
7/15/02	All	47	45	1	1	1	4
	RV	47	46	1	1	1	4
1/27/02*	RV	43	50	NA	2	1	5
9/6/00	RV	49	42		2	1	6
7/23/00	RV	46	45		3	1	5
2/27/00	RV	45	46		2	1	5
10/31/99	RV	50	43		3	1	3
9/2/99	RV	48	44		3	*	5
3/14/99	RV	50	41		2	1	6
2/14/99	RV	48	41		3	1	7
1/30/99	RV	49	39		8	1	3
11/1/98	RV	51	43		4	*	2
10/25/98	RV	48	43		3	1	4
10/18/98	RV	49	44		3	1	4
9/28/98	RV	49	44		2	*	4
8/21/98	RV	48	45		3	1	3
7/12/98	RV	47	45		2	*	6
1/31/98	RV	49	40		2	1	8
1/19/98	RV	47	44		3	1	5
10/8/96	RV	51	41		2	1	5
9/29/96	RV	48	41		3	1	7
9/22/96	RV	50	43		2	1	4
9/15/96	RV	49	45		1	1	4
9/4/96	RV	48	44		3	*	5
8/29/96	RV	53	39		3	1	5
8/28/96	RV	51	40		3	1	5
8/27/96	RV	51	41		3	0	5
8/26/96	RV	51	41		3	0	5
8/25/96	RV	48	43		3	1	6
8/24/96	RV	47	43		2	1	6
8/19/96	RV	49	42		3	0	6
8/18/96	RV	45	46		3	0	6
8/15/96	RV	46	43		4	1	5
8/14/96	RV	48	42		3	1	6
8/13/96	RV	49	43		3	0	5
8/12/96	RV	49	42		3	1	5
8/11/96	RV	49	40		4	1	6

8/10/96	RV	49	41	4	1	5
8/4/96	RV	48	45	2	1	4
6/30/96	RV	49	44	3	*	3
5/22/96	RV	52	41	3	1	3
3/10/96	RV	51	43	2	*	4
1/21/96	RV	52	43	3	1	1

\*1/27/02 and previous: No "other candidate" option recorded  
Call for full trend to 1981.

\*\*\*END\*\*\*