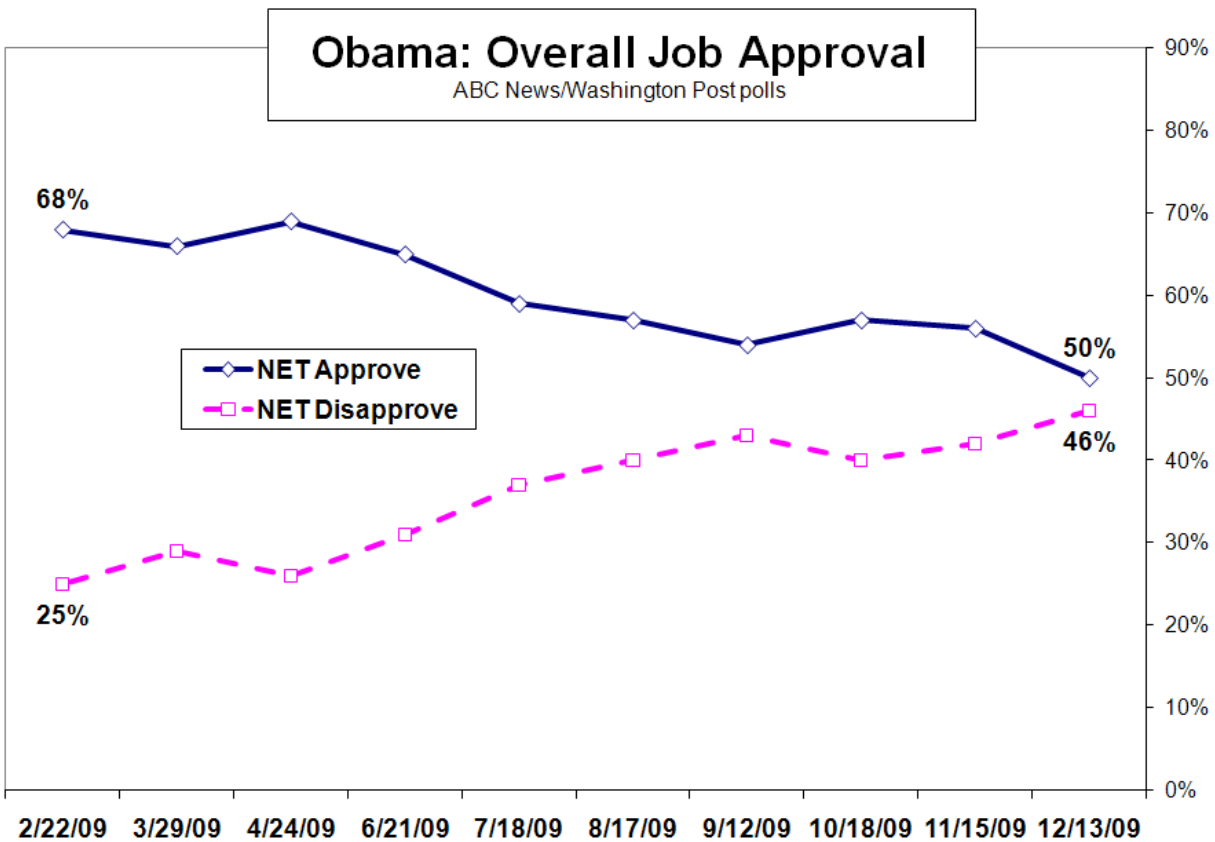


Double Punch of Economy, Health Care Sends Obama to New Lows in Approval

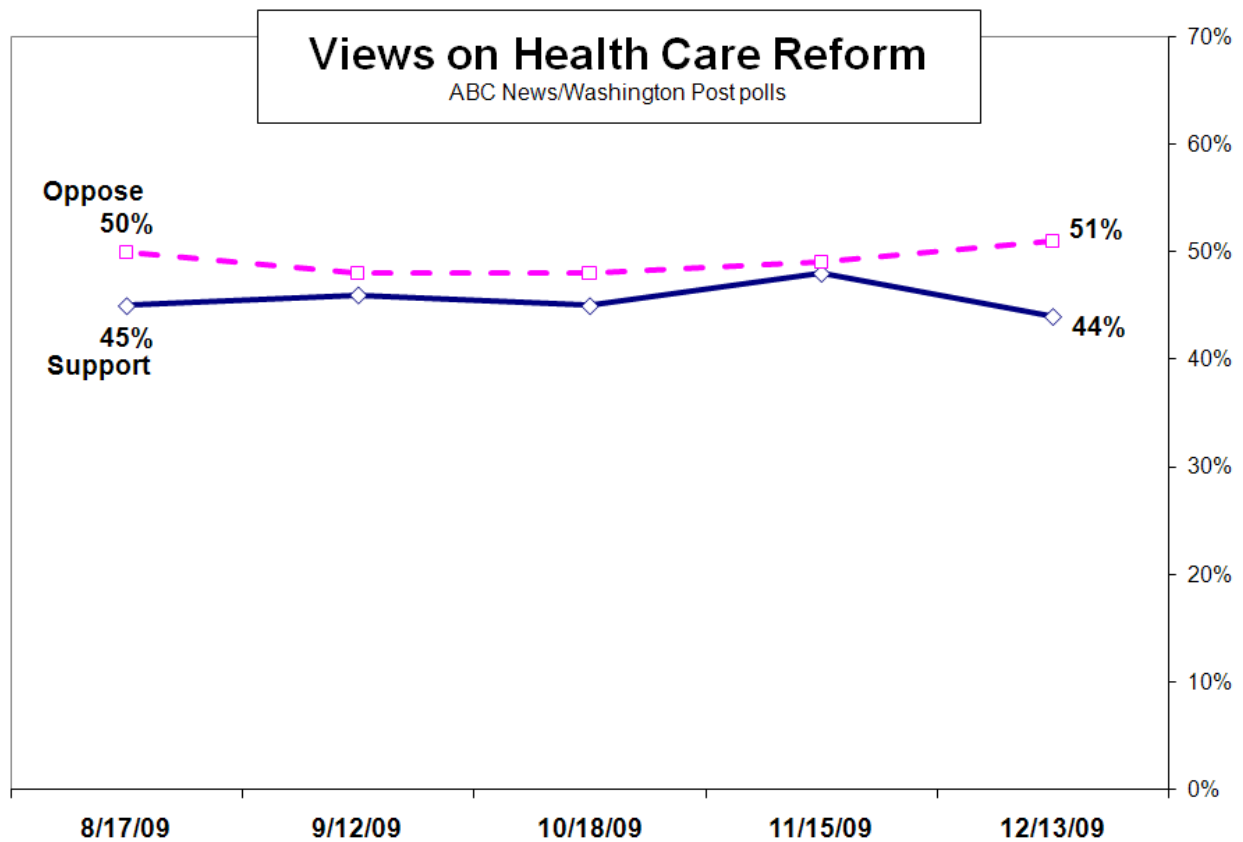
A double punch of persistent economic discontent and growing skepticism on health care reform has knocked Barack Obama's key approval ratings to new lows, clouding his administration's prospects at least until the jobless rate eases.

Fifty percent of Americans in this ABC News/Washington Post poll approve of the president's work overall, down 6 points in the last month; nearly as many, 46 percent, now disapprove. On the economy, 52 percent disapprove, a majority for the first time. On the deficit, his worst score, 56 percent disapprove.



Such numbers aren't unexpected; Ronald Reagan, in similar economic straits, was down to 52 percent overall approval at this point in his presidency. But it's not just the economy: Fifty-three percent also disapprove of Obama's work on health care, and the public by 51-44 percent now

opposes the reform package in Congress – both more than half for the first time in ABC/Post polls.



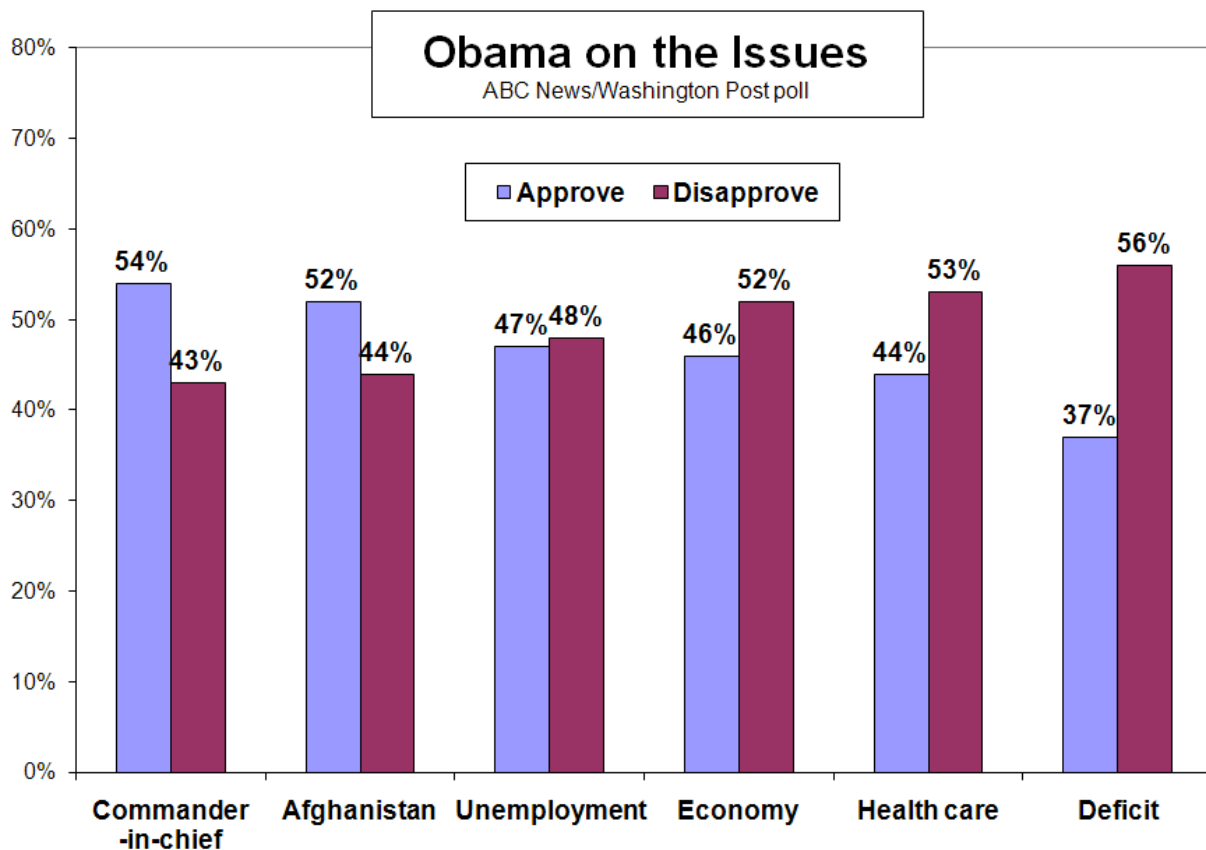
There are further challenges. Obama’s approval rating among independents, the crucial center of national politics, is just 43 percent, a new low and down from a peak of 67 percent in the heady days a month after he took office. He’s down by 9 points this month among moderates. He’s got just 41 percent approval among whites, vs. 76 percent among nonwhites; and just 42 percent among seniors, a reliable voting group (looking to the 2010 midterms) and one particularly disenchanted with health care reform.

Intensity’s also a problem for the president. Forty-four percent “strongly” disapprove of his performance on the deficit; just 16 percent strongly approve. On the economy it’s 40 percent vs. 23 percent; on health care, 43 percent vs. 27 percent. On his job performance overall, 33 percent strongly disapprove, 31 percent strongly approve – not a meaningful difference given polling tolerances, but the first time his strong disapproval’s numerically exceeded his strong approval.

One result on the economy (there will be more later this week) underscores what Obama’s up against: Regardless of GDP growth and the assessments of many economists, 86 percent of Americans say that as far as their own experience goes, the recession is not over.

BETTER – Obama gets a split decision, 47-48 percent, on handling unemployment; that could be worse with 10 percent of the workforce jobless. And there are better notes for the president: He’s got 54 percent approval as commander-in-chief, a weakness in the election campaign but today his best issue of the seven tested in this poll. And his rating on handling the war in Afghanistan is swimming against the tide – up 7 points this month, to 52 percent approval, as most of his other marks fell.

More, 58 percent, approve of the troop surge Obama’s ordered, and there’s been an 8-point gain in the past month in the number of Americans who say they war’s been worth fighting, to 52 percent. Views on Afghanistan haven’t helped the president generally because more Republicans support him on that issue, but not on others. (His approval on Afghanistan has doubled among Republicans, to 44 percent.) Still, given his challenges on the domestic front, it’s a subject on which Obama may have bought himself some needed time.

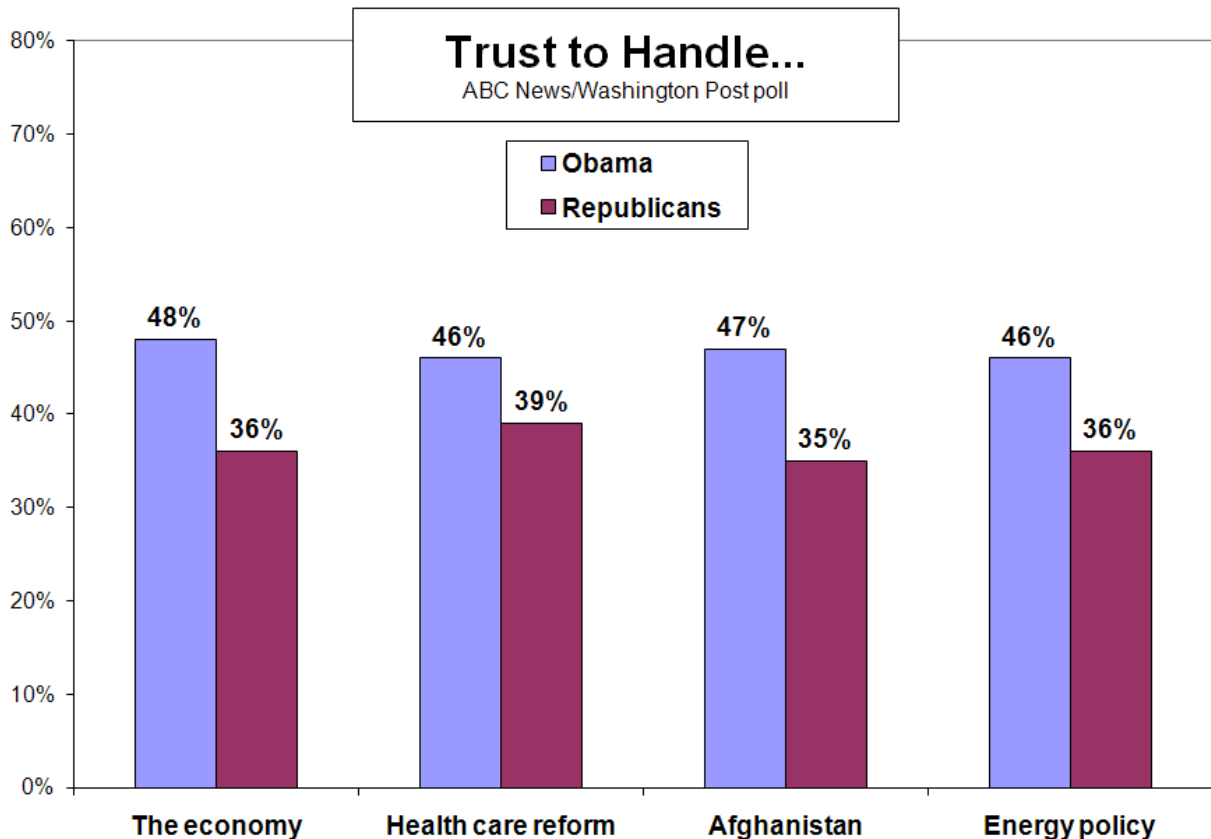


TRUST – Obama still leads the Republicans in Congress to handle several top issues of the day, albeit in most cases by attenuated margins. Those include a 12-point advantage, 48-36 percent, in trust to handle the economy; 12 points on the war in Afghanistan; 10 points on energy policy; and a slight 7 points on health care.

The changes are telling. On one hand Obama has undermined the Republicans’ competitiveness in trust to handle the war in Afghanistan; they’ve lost 6 points. But on health care it’s a different

story: His lead in trust to handle reform has dwindled from 28 points in June to 20 points in July and 13 points last month en route to today's single-digit edge.

Meanwhile Obama's advantage over the Republicans in trust to handle the economy, while stable since September, is down from 23 or 24 points this summer and a remarkable 37 points at his peak approval last spring.

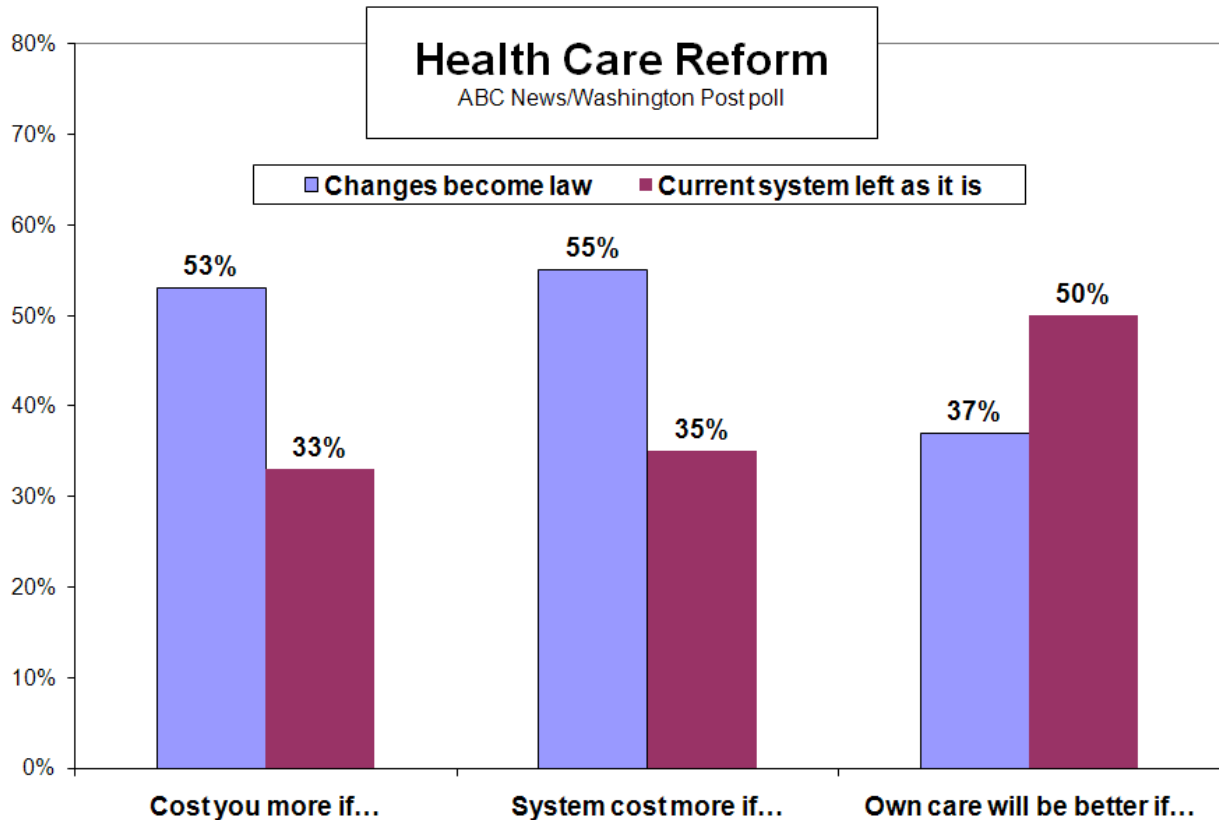


There's another encouraging note for the opposition: Twenty-six percent of Americans in this survey identify themselves as Republicans, compared with just 20 or 21 percent in the three previous ABC/Post polls from September to November. It's the most since October 2008.

HEALTH CARE – Support for the health care reform package never has been robust, ranging from 44 to 48 percent in ABC/Post polls since August, at low ebb now; and opposition's steadily been stronger in intensity. But the 7-point margin for opposition, 51-44 percent, is its most to date – indeed statistically significant for the first time – and the differential in intensity of sentiment has grown since September.

At root are skeptical views of the impact of reform on cost and care alike. Americans by 20-point margins think the changes that have been proposed would do more to raise their own costs, and the costs of the system overall, than simply leaving things as they are. By a closer margin, but

still 13 points, more also think the quality of their care would be better in the current system than in one changed as proposed.



There are other concerns. Americans by 2-1, 45 percent to 22 percent, think reform would weaken rather than strengthen the popular Medicare system; seniors in particular think so, by 57 percent vs. 12 percent. And a steady two-thirds of Americans think the changes would increase the federal budget deficit. Some say that's worth it – but their numbers have thinned.

As in the past, some elements of reform are more popular, others less so. On the positive side in this poll is the idea of extending Medicare to cover people 55 and older who don't have other insurance; 63 percent are in favor, a sizable majority albeit down from 75 percent in 2006. The idea is least popular among seniors, with just 42 percent support. (Public opinion doesn't always carry the day, of course; expanded Medicare was set back this week by opposition from Sen. Joe Lieberman, I-Conn., and Ben Nelson, D-Neb.)

There's a much sharper split on a public option for people who are uninsured vs. a program, as proposed in the Senate, in which the federal government would negotiate with private insurers for this coverage. Thirty-six percent prefer the former; 30 percent, the latter; and an additional 30 percent say the current system simply should be left as it is. No consensus there.

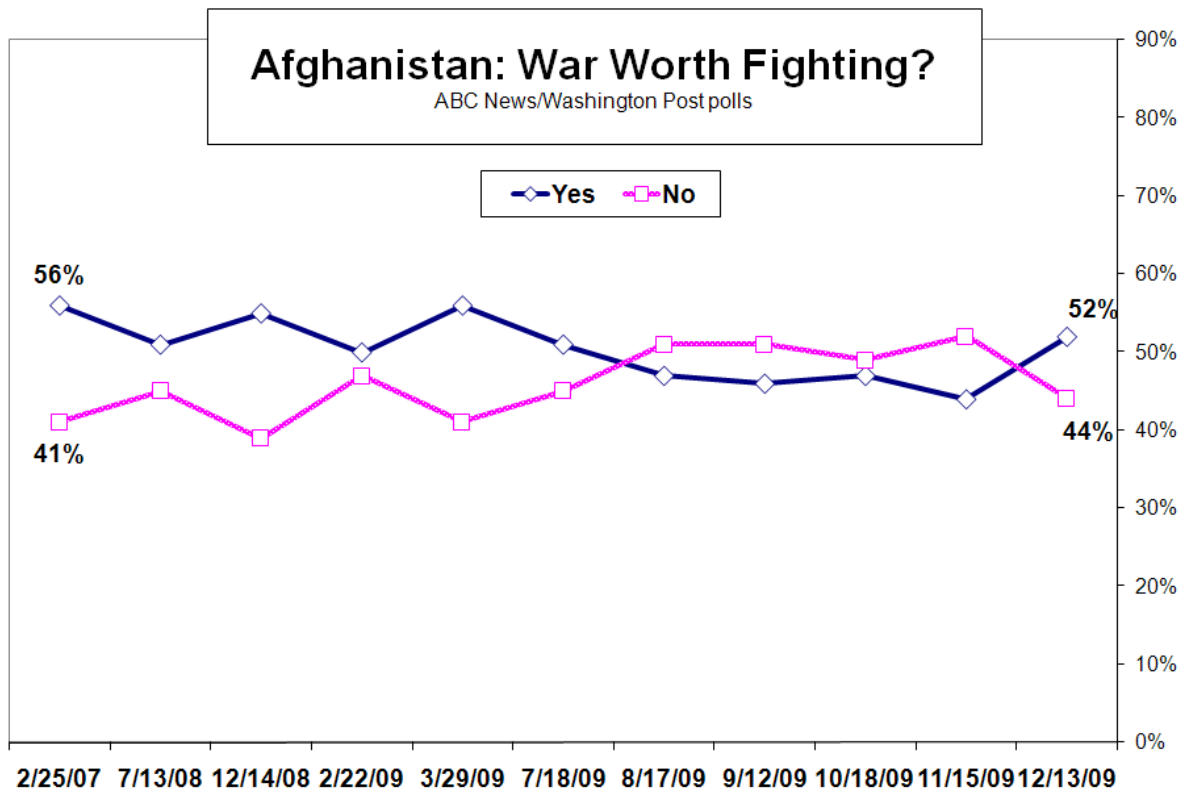
Views on reform are highly partisan; 78 percent of Republicans are opposed, 75 percent of Democrats in favor. Independents make the difference: just 35 percent now support the reform package, down 10 points from last month.

The differences in intensity also are telling: Among Republicans, 66 percent not only oppose reform, but do so “strongly.” Fewer Democrats, 48 percent, strongly support it.

AFGHANISTAN – Results on Afghanistan show some of the powers of presidential persuasion, but also indicate some of its limits. Polls in advance of Obama’s decision showed substantial opposition to sending more troops; in the event, as noted, 58 percent support it – led by 66 percent of Republicans, who are more apt to support the war; but also joined by 59 percent of Democrats, who are more inclined to support Obama.

The “war worth fighting” result, up 8 points, shows the same effect; so does an 8-point increase in the number of Americans who say the United States must win the war in Afghanistan in order to prevail against terrorism more broadly – 56 percent now say so. In polling from 2007 to early 2009, no more than 45 percent (and as few as 31 percent) said that about the war in Iraq.

While most Republicans and independents previously said the success of counterterrorism depends on the outcome in Afghanistan, Obama’s produced a 15-point shift in that direction among Democrats, from 33 percent in November to 48 percent now. Similarly, young adults, his best support group, are now 15 points more apt to see the war in Afghanistan, and the war on terrorism, as connected.

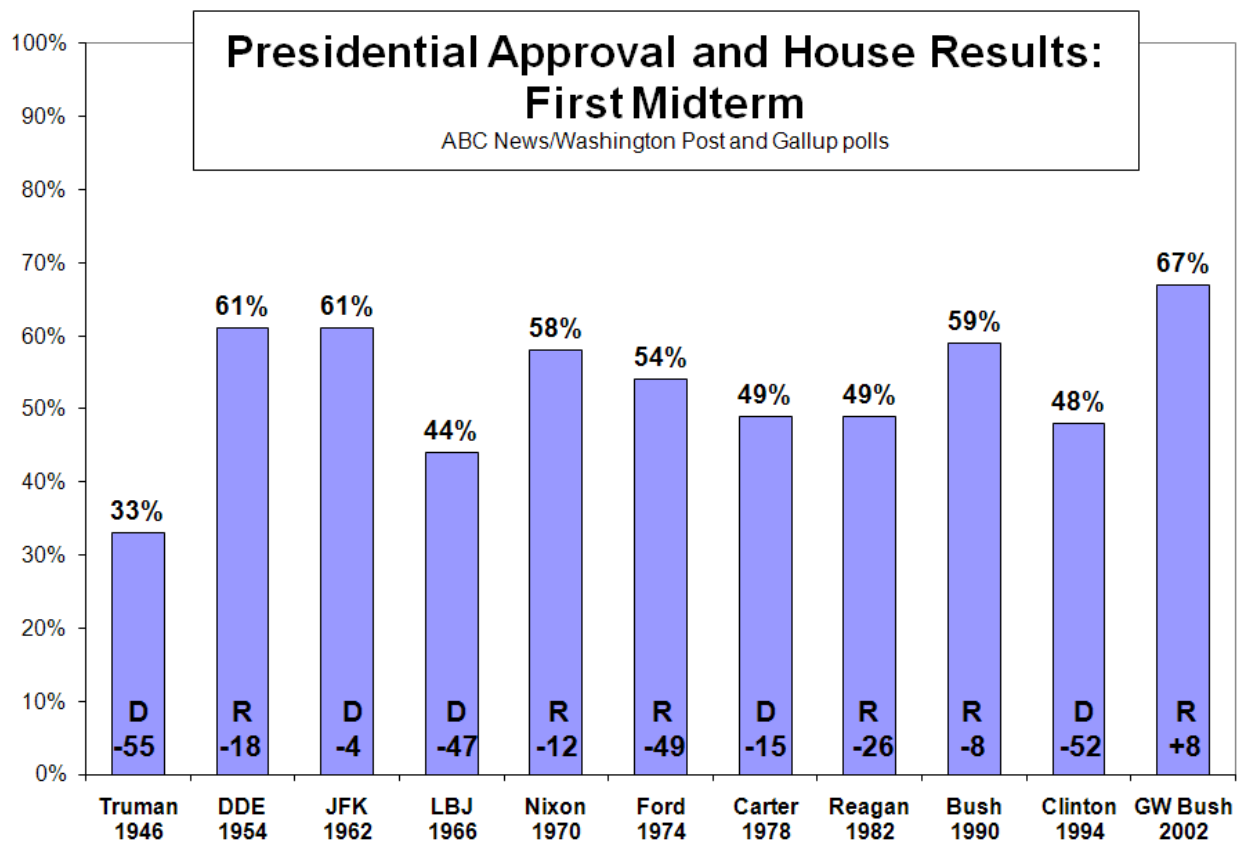


At the same time, a tepid majority overall, 52 percent, expresses confidence that Obama’s strategy for Afghanistan will succeed; a mere 11 percent are very confident of it. And 55 percent oppose his having set a deadline for U.S. forces to begin withdrawing in summer 2011.

The poll also shows some of the emotion behind views on Afghanistan, where the nexus to the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, makes the equation different than it was in Iraq. Nearly three-quarters of Americans describe themselves as highly angry about the Taliban having given support to al Qaeda before 9/11; that includes nearly four in 10, 39 percent, “extremely” angry. People who remain angriest about 9/11 are the most apt to say the war’s been worth fighting, to support sending more forces and to see the outcome as linked to U.S. efforts against terrorism overall.

NOV. 2, 2010 – Finally, elections being the life force of politics, these results beg the question of what Obama’s 50 percent approval rating portends for his party in 2010. The answer: Nothing good if it doesn’t change.

An ABC News evaluation of presidential approval data and election results since 1946 shows a strong relationship between the two; the lower a president’s approval rating, the better his party’s odds of losing House seats in his first midterm election. Incumbents in general also are at greater risk, regardless of their party – likely because low presidential approval often is associated with political discontent more generally.



In first midterm elections since Harry S. Truman's, presidential approval as measured just before the election correlates with the incumbent re-election rate at .80 and with the number of House seats gained or lost by the president's party at .77. (A correlation is a measure of a statistical relationship in which 1 is a perfect match, meaning the data move precisely together, and 0 is no match at all, meaning the data move entirely independently. These are high correlations).

There are provisos: One, the evaluation is limited to the 11 first-midterm elections for which we have presidential approval data. Another, each election does have its own dynamics. Bill Clinton, at 48 percent approval in 1994, lost 52 House seats; Jimmy Carter, at 49 percent approval in 1978, lost just 15. (Reagan, at 49 percent in 1982, was between the two, losing 26.)

Chiefly, though, there is time for change: Using presidential approval a full year before the midterms, the correlations are lower, .51 for a president's approval rating and losses in his party, .18 for approval and the incumbent re-election rate overall. While Obama's 50 percent approval is a warning, what'll count most in the midterms is his rating a little more than 10 months hence.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone Dec. 10-13, 2009, among a random national sample of 1,003 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	
12/13/09	50	31	18	46	13	33	4
11/15/09	56	32	23	42	13	29	2
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?

12/13/09 - Summary Table*

	----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
a. The economy	46	23	24	52	12	40	2
b. Health care	44	27	18	53	10	43	3
c. The situation in Afghanistan	52	24	28	44	13	32	4
d. The federal budget deficit	37	16	21	56	12	44	6
e. His duties as commander-in-chief of the military	54	29	25	43	18	25	3
f. Unemployment held for release.	47	21	26	48	15	33	5

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

Trend:

a. The economy

	----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
12/13/09	46	23	24	52	12	40	2
11/15/09	51	26	25	47	12	36	2
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 opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
12/13/09	44	27	18	53	10	43	3
11/15/09	47	28	19	49	8	41	3
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. The situation in Afghanistan

	----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
12/13/09	52	24	28	44	13	32	4
11/15/09	45	23	23	48	16	32	6
10/18/09	45	22	23	47	17	31	7
9/12/09	55	23	33	37	17	21	7
8/17/09	60	25	35	33	14	19	7
7/18/09	62	33	29	30	13	17	8
4/24/09	63	NA	NA	26	NA	NA	11

d. The federal budget deficit

	----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
12/13/09	37	16	21	56	12	44	6
11/15/09	42	19	23	53	10	43	5
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

e. His duties as commander-in-chief of the military

	----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
12/13/09	54	29	25	43	18	25	3
10/18/09	57	33	24	37	13	24	6

f. Unemployment

	----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
12/13/09	47	21	26	48	15	33	5
7/18/09	52	26	26	42	11	31	6

3. Who do you trust to do a better job handling [ITEM] - (Obama) or (the Republicans in Congress)?

12/13/09 - Summary Table*

	Obama	Reps	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
a. The economy	48	36	1	12	3
b. Health care reform	46	39	1	13	2
c. The situation in Afghanistan	47	35	1	14	4
d. Energy policy	46	36	*	12	5

*Half sample asked items a,b; other half sample asked items c,d.

Trend where available:

a. The economy

	Obama	Reps	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
12/13/09	48	36	1	12	3
11/15/09	52	37	1	8	1
9/12/09	48	37	1	12	2
7/18/09	56	33	1	9	2
6/21/09	55	31	2	9	2
4/24/09	61	24	2	11	2
3/29/09	58	25	1	14	2
2/22/09	61	26	1	9	3

b. Health care reform

	Obama	Reps	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
12/13/09	46	39	1	13	2
11/15/09	50	37	1	10	2
9/12/09	48	36	1	12	3
7/18/09	54	34	1	10	1

6/21/09 55 27 2 11 4

c. The situation in Afghanistan

	Obama	Reps	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
12/13/09	47	35	1	14	4
11/15/09	46	41	1	9	3

d. No trend.

4. 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	
12/13/09	44	25	19	51	11	40	5
11/15/09	48	30	18	49	10	39	3
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

5. In the long run, do you think [ITEM] if (the changes that have been proposed become law) or if (the current system is left as it is now)?

12/13/09 - Summary Table

	Changes become law	Current system left as it is now	Same either way (vol.)	No opinion
a. Your own health care will cost you more	53	33	6	8
b. The quality of health care you receive will be better	37	50	6	6
c. The country's health care system overall will cost more	55	35	3	7

6. 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
12/13/09	22	45	24	9
10/18/09	18	43	31	8
9/12/09	22	40	32	6

7. 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 -----			Decrease	No effect	No opinion
	NET	Worth it	Not worth it			
12/13/09	66	23	43	11	19	4
10/18/09	68	31	37	10	18	3
9/12/09	65	NA	NA	9	24	2

8. Do you think the government should or should not expand Medicare to cover people between the ages of 55 and 64 who do not have health insurance? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

	----- Should -----			----- Should not -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
12/13/09	63	48	15	33	9	24	4
9/12/06	75	55	20	23	9	14	2

9. There are a few ideas on health insurance for people who are not insured through work, or Medicare or Medicaid. One is to (create a government health insurance plan to compete with private insurance plans for these people). Another is to (have the government negotiate with private insurers to offer these people insurance that meets government specifications). A third is to (leave the current system as it is). Which of these would you prefer for people who do not have health insurance - (a government plan to compete with private plans), (private plans coordinated by the government), or (the current system as it is now)?

	Government plan to compete with private plans	Private plans coordinated by the government	Current system as it is now	No opinion
12/13/09	36	30	30	4

10. Which comes closer to the way you feel: government reform of the nation's health care system (is necessary to control costs and expand coverage), or government action on health care (will do more harm than good)? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

	----- Necessary -----			-- More harm than good --			
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	No opinion
12/13/09	51	38	13	46	10	36	3
9/13/09	53	36	17	44	14	30	3
8/17/09	51	35	16	46	10	35	3
6/21/09	58	34	23	39	15	24	3

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

	Yes	No	No opinion
12/13/09	82	17	*
11/15/09	84	15	1
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	*

12. Changing topics, many economists say that using the standards they apply, the recession probably is over. Thinking about your own experience of economic conditions, would you say that from your point of view the recession is over, or not over?

	Over	Not over	No opinion
12/13/09	13	86	1
10/18/09	16	82	1

13-17 held for release.

18. On another subject, all in all, considering the costs to the United States versus the benefits to the United States, do you think the war in Afghanistan has been worth fighting, or not? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

	----- Worth fighting -----			--- Not worth fighting ---			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
12/13/09	52	33	19	44	10	35	4
11/15/09	44	30	14	52	14	38	4
10/18/09*	47	28	19	49	13	36	4
9/12/09	46	28	18	51	14	37	3
8/17/09	47	31	15	51	10	41	3
7/18/09	51	34	18	45	11	34	4
3/29/09	56	37	19	41	12	28	4
2/22/09	50	34	17	47	9	37	3
12/14/08	55	NA	NA	39	NA	NA	5
7/13/08	51	NA	NA	45	NA	NA	4
2/25/07	56	NA	NA	41	NA	NA	3

*10/18/09 "was" and "has been" wording half sampled. Previous "was".

19. Do you support or oppose Obama's decision to send approximately 30,000 additional U.S. military forces to Afghanistan? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

	----- Support -----			----- Oppose -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
12/13/09*	58	36	22	40	10	30	2
2/22/09	64	40	25	33	11	22	3

* Changed from "decision to send approximately 17,000"

Compare to:

Do you support or oppose Bush's decision to send approximately 28,000 additional U.S. military forces to Iraq? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

	----- Support -----			----- Oppose -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
4/15/07*	35	24	11	65	9	56	*
2/25/07	32	20	12	67	11	56	1
1/19/07	34	21	13	65	10	56	1
1/10/07	36	25	11	61	9	52	2

* Changed from "proposal to send approximately 22,000"

20. How confident are you that Obama's new strategy for Afghanistan will succeed - very confident, somewhat confident, not so confident or not confident at all?

	----- Confident -----			----- Not confident -----			No opinion
	NET	Very	Somewhat	NET	Not so	Not at all	
12/13/09	52	11	41	45	25	20	3

Compare to: As you may know, Obama is developing a strategy for Afghanistan that he's expected to announce in the next few weeks. How confident are you he will come up with a strategy that will succeed - very confident, somewhat confident, not so confident or not confident at all?

----- Confident -----	----- Not confident -----	No
-----------------------	---------------------------	----

	NET	Very	Somewhat	NET	Not so	Not at all	opinion
11/15/09	55	17	38	43	23	20	1

21. Obama has said U.S. forces will start withdrawing from Afghanistan in summer 2011. Do you think they should start withdrawing sooner than that, later than that, or is this schedule about right?

	Sooner	Later	About right	Withdraw now (vol.)	No opinion
12/13/09	31	19	39	1	9

22. Regardless of when you think the U.S. withdrawal should begin, do you support or oppose Obama having set a specific deadline for this to occur?

	Support	Oppose	No opinion
12/13/09	42	55	3

23. Do you think (the United States must win the war in Afghanistan in order for the broader war on terrorism to be a success), or do you think (the war on terrorism can be a success without the United States winning the war in Afghanistan)?

	US must win war in Afghanistan for success	Can be a success without US winning war in Afghanistan	No opinion
12/13/09	56	36	8
9/12/09	48	45	7
2/22/09	50	41	9
12/14/08	51	40	9
7/13/08	51	42	7

24. Regardless of when a withdrawal begins, do you expect that a large number of U.S. forces will remain in Afghanistan for many years, or do you think that will not happen? (IF WILL REMAIN) Is this something you would SUPPORT or OPPOSE?

	Will remain	Will not happen	No opinion
12/13/09	71	24	5

25. How do you feel today about the Taliban having given support to Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda before the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001- would you say you're extremely angry about that, very angry, somewhat angry, or not so angry?

	-Extremely/Very angry-	-Somewhat/Not so angry-	No opinion
12/13/09	73	18	2

26-32 held for release.
33-35 previously released.

END