



CBS NEWS POLL  
For release: Friday, October 9, 2009  
6:30 PM EDT

**DOMESTIC ISSUES: HEALTH CARE REFORM AND THE ECONOMY**

October 5-8, 2009

Congress may be coming closer to creating legislation that would reform the health care system, but Americans give both the Democrats and Republicans in Congress negative marks on handling the issue. Many say the health care debate has been more negative compared to debates on other major issues. In addition, Americans think the Republicans in Congress are not serious about reform -- and a majority would be disappointed if reform doesn't occur.

Views of the national economy remain negative. Americans' outlook for their local economy and their family's finances are especially pessimistic.

This poll was conducted before the announcement that President Obama was the winner of this year's Nobel Peace Prize.

**THE DEBATE OVER HEALTH CARE**

47% of Americans approve of how President Obama is handling health care, while 42% disapprove. These ratings have changed little from two weeks ago.

While public assessments of the President on this issue are mixed, they are considerably better than the ratings of both Democrats and Republicans in Congress. Solid majorities of Americans disapprove of the way both the Democrats (60%) and Republicans (67%) are handling health care.

**HANDLING HEALTH CARE**

	Pres. Obama	Democrats in Congress	Republicans in Congress
Approve	47%	25%	17%
Disapprove	42	60	67
Don't know	11	15	16

In addition, Congress' overall job rating remains low. Only 22% approve, while 65% disapprove.

Although the American public disapproves of both parties' handling of health care, they do see differences when it comes to the each party's approach to the issue. Just over half think the Democrats are really serious about reforming the nation's health care system, compared to 69% who think the Republicans are not serious about reform.

**SERIOUS ABOUT REFORMING THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM?**

	Democrats in Congress	Republicans in Congress
Yes	52%	24%
No	43	69

Views of the Republicans in Congress are even more negative than they were when this question was asked in 1994, during the debate over President Bill Clinton's health care reform proposals. In 1994, 38% thought Republicans in Congress were seriously trying to reform health care, and 53% thought they were not.

Many see the current debate as less civil than earlier confrontations. Compared to past debates on major issues, 45% of Americans view the current debate on health care as more negative -- four times as many as say it has been more positive (11%). 36% say the debate is similar in tone to past debates on major issues.

**COMPARED TO PAST ISSUE DEBATES, HEALTH CARE DEBATE HAS BEEN:**

More positive	11%
More negative	45
About the same	36

Despite the alarms raised by some Republicans about the impact health care reform could have on Medicare recipients, Americans give Democrats the edge (42%) over the Republicans (31%) when it comes to caring for senior citizens. Among those ages 65 and over, more say the Democratic Party cares more about them when it comes to health care.

Opinions are more one-sided when it comes to young people. 52% say the Democrats care more about people under age 30, compared to 18% who say the Republicans do.

**ON HEALTH CARE, WHICH PARTY CARES ABOUT NEEDS AND PROBLEMS OF...?**

	Democrats	Republicans
Seniors	42%	31
Young people	52%	18

**THE ODDS OF REFORM - AND WHAT HAPPENS IF IT FAILS**

Half of Americans think it is likely that a health care reform bill will pass by the end of year, but only 14% think it is very likely to happen. People were a bit more likely to think reform would pass back in July.

**WILL A HEALTH CARE REFORM BILL PASS IN 2009?**

	Now	7/2009
Very likely	14%	16%
Somewhat likely	36	43
Not likely	47	40

Most Americans (61%) would be disappointed if Congress doesn't pass health care reform this year and the system continues as it is. Less than a third would be pleased if reforms do not pass. Views in September 1994 were similar: 68% said they would be disappointed if Congress did not pass health care reform by the end of that year.

**HOW WOULD YOU FEEL IF HEALTH CARE REFORM DOES NOT PASS?**

	All	Dem	Rep	Ind
Pleased	29%	11%	59%	28%
Disappointed	61	79	36	60

There's a partisan divide on this question: most Democrats would be disappointed if reform does not pass, while most Republicans would be pleased.

**HEALTH CARE REFORM AND THE MID-TERM ELECTIONS**

Looking ahead, the potential impact of health care on the 2010 mid-term elections appears to be mixed -- at this point.

30% of registered voters say they would be less likely to vote for their member of Congress if he or she supported the health care reforms now being proposed, but the same percentage would be more likely to vote for their representative. More than a third says the issue of health care would have no effect.

**VOTE FOR YOUR REPRESENTATIVE IF THEY SUPPORTED HEALTH CARE REFORMS**

(among registered voters)

	Now	8/2009
More likely	30%	29%
Less likely	30	33
No effect	35	29

With the mid-term elections more than a year away, more voters say they will vote for the Democratic candidate over the Republican, but one in five says it depends or they don't know at this early stage. Of course, polls taken a year before a Congressional election can differ (sometimes dramatically) from the actual election results.

**HEALTH CARE POLICIES**

Much of the public remains unconvinced that the reform proposals would benefit them personally - just 18% think they would. In fact, 31% believe reforms would hurt them and another 45% think they would have no effect.

Republicans (5%), seniors (7%) and those with insurance (14%) are some of the least likely groups to say they would be helped by the current reform proposals. Democrats (26%) and those earning less than \$50K (25%) are most likely to say they would be helped.

**WOULD CONGRESS' CURRENT HEALTH REFORMS HELP OR HURT YOU PERSONALLY?**

	Now	9/2009	8/2009
Help	18%	23%	18%
Hurt	31	26	31
Have no effect	45	44	46

Even though many Americans may not see any personal benefit in the proposed reforms, eight in 10 continue to see the need for at least fundamental changes in the U.S. health care system. This has been the case for many years.

**U.S. HEALTH CARE SYSTEM NEEDS...**

	Now	9/2009	8/2009	7/2009	4/2009
Minor changes	15%	19%	17%	16%	12%
Fundamental changes	53	51	55	49	49
To be rebuilt	31	27	27	33	38

The much-debated "public option" --a health insurance plan like Medicare administered by the government -- still gets majority support.

**GOV'T HEALTH INSURANCE PLAN**

	Now	9/2009	8/2009	7/2009	6/2009
Favor	62%	65%	60%	66%	72%
Oppose	31	26	34	27	20

When asked to choose between providing coverage to the uninsured and keeping down costs as the more serious problem right now, 59% of Americans choose expanding coverage. 35% select keeping costs down.

**THE PRESIDENT**

The President's overall job approval rating is 56% in this poll, the same as it was in late September. Just 20% of Republicans approve, as do 52% of independents and 87% of Democrats.

**PRESIDENT OBAMA'S JOB APPROVAL RATING**

	Now	9/2009
Approve	56%	56%
Disapprove	34	33

Approval of the President's handling of Afghanistan has been dropping over the past few months, and is now 42%, while 34% disapprove. His approval rating on handling the economy has risen four points, to 54%.

**PRESIDENT OBAMA'S APPROVAL RATINGS**

	Now	9/2009	8/2009	7/2009	4/2009
Overall	56%	56%	56%	58%	68%
Economy	54%	50%	53%	51%	61%
Health Care	47%	47%	40%	46%	--
Foreign policy	48%	--	--	54%	59%
Iran	43%	--	--	--	--
Afghanistan	42%	44%	48%	--	58%

58% of the public thinks the President shares their priorities for the country -- that number has fallen four points since July. However, that drop occurred almost solely among Republicans; the percentages of Democrats and independents that say the President shares their priorities have not changed much.

**DOES PRES. OBAMA SHARE YOUR PRIORITIES FOR THE COUNTRY?**

	Now	7/2009
Yes	58%	62%
No	38	31

About seven in ten Americans say Barack Obama has strong qualities of leadership, unchanged since August.

**DOES BARACK OBAMA HAVE STRONG QUALITIES OF LEADERSHIP?**

	Now	8/2009	2/2009
Yes	72%	73%	85%
No	24	25	10

**VIEWS OF THE ECONOMY**

The unemployment rate reached a 26 year high last month, and the economy lost more jobs in September than anticipated. Americans continue to see economic problems. In this poll, 84% of Americans say the economy is in bad shape, and just 16% say it is good.

**CONDITION OF THE ECONOMY**

	10/2009	9/2009	8/2009	7/2009	6/2009
Good	16%	22%	20%	14%	15%
Bad	84	77	79	86	84

Americans' outlook for the national economy has not changed since last month; the good news may be that most don't think it's getting worse. Just under a third think it is getting better, and 18% say it is getting worse. About half think it is staying the same.

But the public's outlook for the economy in their area is much gloomier. Just 14% say their local economy is getting better, and twice as many, 30%, think it is getting worse.

**THE ECONOMY IS GETTING...**

	<b>Nationally</b>	<b>Locally</b>
Better	31%	14%
Worse	18	30
Staying same	50	54

Pessimism about the local economy is reflected in Americans' views of their own finances. 30% say their household financial situation is getting worse; just 10% say their own finances are improving.

**HOUSEHOLD FINANCES ARE...**

	Now	9/2009	7/2009
Getting better	10%	12%	8%
Getting worse	30	28	35
Staying the same	60	60	57

More than half of Americans are concerned about someone in their household losing a job, including 28% who are very concerned about this.

Americans continue to volunteer the economy and jobs as the nation's top problem, but the percentage that mention health care has crept up in recent months.

**COUNTRY'S MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM**

	Now	9/2009	7/2009
Economy & jobs	45%	41%	56%
Health care/health insurance	20	19	12

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This poll was conducted among a random sample of 829 adults nationwide, interviewed by telephone October 5-8, 2009. Phone numbers were dialed from random digit dial samples of both standard land-line and cell phones. The error due to sampling for results based on the entire sample could be plus or minus three percentage points. The error for subgroups is higher.

This poll release conforms to the Standards of Disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

**CBS NEWS POLL**  
**Domestic Issues: Health Care Reform and the Economy**  
**October 5-8, 2009**

q1 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as President?

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **				
	*** Party ID ***				
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Sep09b
	%	%	%	%	%
Approve	56	20	87	52	56
Disapprove	34	69	8	35	33
DK/NA	10	11	5	13	11

q2 What do you think is the most important problem facing this country today?

Economy/Jobs	45	53	40	44	41
Health Care	20	13	29	18	19
War/Peace(General)	7	2	9	8	2
War in Afghanistan	3	5	2	4	1
Budget Deficit /Nat'l Debt	3	2	3	3	3
Iraq	2	1	4	0	2
Other	17	22	10	20	28
DK/NA	3	2	3	3	4

q3 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling foreign policy?

					Jul09b
Approve	48	20	72	45	54
Disapprove	28	60	11	24	24
DK/NA	24	20	17	31	22

q4 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling the economy?

					Sep09b
Approve	54	21	85	47	50
Disapprove	38	76	10	41	40
DK/NA	8	3	5	12	10

q5 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling the situation with Afghanistan?

Approve	42	20	54	44	44
Disapprove	34	58	16	36	35
DK/NA	24	22	30	20	21

q6 BLANK

q7 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling health care?

Approve	47	13	75	44	47
Disapprove	42	75	19	43	45
DK/NA	11	12	6	13	8

q8 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling Iran?

\*\* TOTAL RESPONDENTS \*\*

\*\*\* Party ID \*\*\*

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
Approve	43	25	63	37
Disapprove	35	54	14	41
DK/NA	22	21	23	22

q9 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Congress is handling its job?

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Aug09a
	%	%	%	%	%
Approve	22	20	29	19	26
Disapprove	65	72	59	66	58
DK/NA	13	8	12	15	16

q10 How would you rate the condition of the national economy these days? Is it very good, fairly good, fairly bad, or very bad?

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Sep09b
Very good	1	1	0	1	1
Fairly good	15	11	19	15	21
Fairly bad	49	51	53	44	49
Very bad	35	37	28	39	28
DK/NA	0	0	0	1	1

q11 Do you think the economy is getting better, getting worse, or staying about the same?

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	
Better	31	25	44	25	36
Worse	18	26	10	21	17
Same	50	49	46	53	46
DK/NA	1	0	0	1	1

q12 Based on what you've seen, do you think the economy in your local community is getting better, getting worse, or staying about the same?

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Aug09a
Better	14	14	17	13	18
Worse	30	29	21	37	28
Same	54	57	60	49	53
DK/NA	2	0	2	1	1

q13 Which of these comes closest to your view? Abortion should be generally available to those who want it. Abortion should be available but under stricter limits than it is now. Abortion should not be permitted.

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Jun09a
Generally available	41	19	55	43	36
Available but limits	35	49	31	31	41
Should not be permitted	20	29	10	23	21
Don't know/No answer	4	3	4	3	2

q14-q15 BLANK



q16 Do you think Barack Obama has strong qualities of leadership, or not?

\*\* TOTAL RESPONDENTS \*\*

\*\*\* Party ID \*\*\*

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Aug09a
	%	%	%	%	%
Has	72	46	92	69	73
Does not have	24	48	6	25	25
DK/NA	4	6	2	6	2

q17 Do you think Barack Obama has the same priorities for the country as you have, or doesn't he?

					Jul09b
Yes	58	26	85	54	62
No	38	70	11	42	31
DK/NA	4	4	4	4	7

q18-q19 BLANK

q20 Which of the following three statements comes closest to expressing your overall view of the health care system in the United States? 1. On the whole, the healthcare system works pretty well and only minor changes are necessary to make it work better, 2. There are some good things in our health care system, but fundamental changes are needed, 3. Our healthcare system has so much wrong with it that we need to completely rebuild it.

					Sep09b
Minor changes	15	18	6	19	19
Fundamental changes	53	66	52	47	51
Rebuild	31	16	42	31	27
DK/NA	1	0	0	3	3

q21-q22 BLANK

q23 If you had to say, which do you think is a more serious problem right now -- keeping health care costs down for average Americans, OR providing health insurance for Americans who do not have any insurance?

Keeping down costs	35	57	22	34	35
Providing for the uninsured	59	36	73	60	59
DK/NA	6	7	5	6	6

q24 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Democrats in Congress are handling health care?

Approve	25	7	46	18
Disapprove	60	85	43	60
DK/NA	15	8	11	22

q25 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Republicans in Congress are handling health care?

Approve	17	31	11	14
Disapprove	67	54	81	63
DK/NA	16	15	8	23

q26 BLANK

q27 Compared to past debates on major issues, do you think the overall tone of the health care debate has been more positive, more negative, or about the same as past debates on major issues?

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **			
	*** Party ID ***			
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
More positive	11	5	17	10
More negative	45	52	45	42
About the same	36	38	34	37
DK/NA	8	5	4	11

q28 From what you've heard or read, do you think the health care reforms under consideration in Congress will mostly help you personally, will mostly hurt you personally, or don't you think they will have much of an effect on you personally?

					Sep09b
					%
Help	18	5	26	18	23
Hurt	31	49	19	32	26
No effect	45	39	52	42	44
DK/NA	6	7	3	8	7

q29 How likely do you think it is that Congress will pass and President Obama will sign into law a health care reform bill by the end of the year--very likely, somewhat likely, not very likely, or not at all likely?

					Jul09b
Very likely	14	8	22	11	16
Somewhat likely	36	36	39	34	43
Not very likely	33	39	31	32	30
Not at all likely	14	16	8	17	10
Don't know/No answer	3	1	0	6	1

q30 If your own Representative in Congress supported the health care reforms that are now being proposed, would that make you more likely to vote for him or her in the next election in 2010, would it make you less likely, or would your representative's stance on the health care reforms not make much difference in your 2010 vote?

	** REGISTERED VOTERS **				Aug09a
More likely	30	12	52	23	29
Less likely	30	54	9	32	33
No difference	35	29	36	37	29
DK/NA	5	5	3	8	9

q31 If Congress doesn't pass any health care reform by the end of the year, and the current system continues as it is, would you be pleased or disappointed?

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **			
Pleased	29	59	11	28
Disappointed	61	36	79	60
DK/NA	10	5	10	12

q32 Would you favor or oppose the government offering everyone a government administered health insurance plan -- something like the Medicare coverage that people 65 and older get -- that would compete with private health insurance plans?

\*\* TOTAL RESPONDENTS \*\*

\*\*\* Party ID \*\*\*

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Sep09b
	%	%	%	%	%
Favor	62	34	83	61	65
Oppose	31	57	14	30	26
DK/NA	7	9	3	9	9

q33 Do you think most Democrats in Congress are really serious about reforming the health care system, or don't you think so?

					Sep94a
Serious	52	58	66	38	55
Not serious	43	36	31	55	38
DK/NA	5	6	3	7	7

q34 Do you think most Republicans in Congress are really serious about reforming the health care system, or don't you think so?

Serious	24	47	17	17	38
Not serious	69	44	81	74	53
DK/NA	7	9	2	9	9

q35 In their proposals for health care reform, who do you think the Democrats in Congress are trying to help more -- the people who DON'T have health insurance, the people who already have health insurance, both, or neither?

People without insurance	34	49	34	27
People with insurance	6	3	5	8
Both	34	20	48	31
Neither	20	24	7	28
DK/NA	6	4	6	6

q36 In their proposals for health care reform, who do you think the Republicans in Congress are trying to help more -- the people who DON'T have health insurance, the people who already have health insurance, both, or neither?

People without insurance	11	11	7	14
People with insurance	24	19	35	18
Both	27	42	14	28
Neither	32	23	37	34
DK/NA	6	5	7	6

q37 On the issue of health care, who do you think cares more about the needs and problems of people 65 and older, the Democratic Party or the Republican Party?

Democrat	42	11	74	33
Republican	31	63	10	31
Both (Vol.)	6	10	6	4
Neither (Vol.)	8	9	2	13
No opinion	13	7	8	19

q38 On the issue of health care, who do you think cares more about the needs and problems of people under 30, the Democratic Party or the Republican Party?

\*\* TOTAL RESPONDENTS \*\*

\*\*\* Party ID \*\*\*

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
Democrat	52	24	82	44
Republican	18	43	4	15
Both (Vol.)	4	7	3	3
Neither (Vol.)	9	11	2	14
No opinion	17	15	9	24

q78 Do you think your household's financial situation is getting better, getting worse or staying about the same?

					Sep09b
					%
Getting better	10	13	10	9	12
Getting worse	30	27	23	36	28
Same	60	60	68	54	60
DK/NA	0	0	0	1	0

q79 How concerned are you that in the next 12 months you or someone else in your household might be out of work and looking for a job -- very concerned, somewhat concerned, or not concerned at all?

Very concerned	28	28	24	31	30
Somewhat concerned	28	25	31	27	28
Not at all concerned	44	47	45	42	42
DK/NA	0	0	0	0	0

q82 If the 2010 election for U.S. House of Representatives were being held today, would you vote for the Republican candidate or the Democratic candidate in your district?

\*\* REGISTERED VOTERS \*\*

Republican	33	80	4	28
Democratic	46	3	87	37
Other (Vol.)	1	1	0	2
Won't vote (Vol.)	1	1	0	1
Depends (Vol.)	14	12	6	22
Don't know/No answer	5	3	3	10

	<u>UNWEIGHTED</u>	<u>WEIGHTED</u>
Total Respondents	829	
Total Republicans	227	184 (22%)
Total Democrats	265	273 (33%)
Total Independents	337	372 (45%)