



CBS NEWS POLL  
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**THE POLITICS OF HEALTH CARE REFORM**  
March 18-21, 2010

As the health care reform bill headed to a final vote in the House of Representatives Sunday after nearly a year of discussion, Americans continue to criticize how both parties in Congress have handled the debate - a debate that most think has not resulted in a better bill. In a CBS News Poll conducted before the House voted on the health care reform bill, majorities disapprove of how both Congressional Democrats and Republicans handled health care, and see each Congressional party as motivated mostly by political considerations.

Before last night's House passage of the bill, 48% disapproved and just 37% approved of the health care reform bill. About half found the bill confusing, and a minority of Americans thinks it would help them personally or improve the country's health care system.

**CONGRESS AND HEALTH CARE REFORM**

Americans continue to disapprove of the way both Democrats and Republicans in Congress handled the health care debate.

<b>HANDLING OF HEALTH CARE</b>			
	Now	1/2010	10/2009
Congressional Democrats			
Approve	32%	29%	25%
Disapprove	60	57	60
Congressional Republicans			
Approve	25%	24%	17%
Disapprove	64	61	67

Even among their own partisans, the parties in Congress inspired only tepid support. Only half the nation's Democrats approve of Congressional Democrats' handling of health care; just half of Republicans approve of how Congressional Republicans have handled it. Independents give low marks to both.

Americans take a cynical view of each party's motivations in the health care debate. Most see politics trumping policy on both sides of the aisle. A majority says the Democrats' attempts to pass the reform bill are driven by politics, not because the bill is good policy.

**WHY ARE DEMS TRYING TO PASS HEALTHCARE BILL?**

They think it's good policy	35%
Mostly political reasons	57

And similarly, a majority believes Republican opposition is due to political calculations, not policy differences.

**WHY ARE REPS TRYING TO STOP HEALTHCARE BILL?**

They think it's bad policy	29%
Mostly political reasons	61

Republicans and Democrats each think policy views are behind their own party's behavior, but independents overwhelmingly see politics behind both. And many are critical of the lengthy debate over health care reform. At a time when Americans are overwhelmingly concerned about the economy and jobs, nearly half think Congress has spent too much time discussing health care - a debate that has spanned the better part of the last twelve months.

**DID CONGRESS SPEND...?**

Too much time on health care	46%
Not enough time on health care	28
About the right amount of time	19

Most Americans do not think that long political debate has made the current health care bill any better - just 15% think so. 27% think it has made the bill worse, while 52% think the debate has made little difference.

**HOW HAS DEBATE OVER HEALTH CARE AFFECTED THE BILL?**

Made it better	15%
Made it worse	27
No difference	52

The health care debate has not helped the overall image of Congress. Congress's job approval rating remains dismally low - only 14% of Americans approve of the way Congress is doing its job, near the all-time low of 12% just before the 2008 election. More than three in four Americans disapprove - more than ever before. Approval of Congress has dropped sixteen points over the past year.

	<b>CONGRESS APPROVAL</b>				
	Now	2/2010	1/2010	3/2009	10/2008
Approve	14%	15%	23%	30%	12%
Disapprove	76	75	63	56	74

And what Americans think of the Congressional health care debate has affected their feelings about Washington as a whole. 54% say the efforts to pass health care reform have made them more pessimistic about the way things work in Washington; only 14% say it has made them more optimistic. 28% say it has made no difference.

**HAVE THE EFFORTS TO PASS HEALTH CARE REFORM MADE YOU...?**

More optimistic about Washington	14%
More pessimistic about Washington	54
No difference	28

## IMPACT ON THE PRESIDENT

Before the vote on Sunday, 55% of Americans say passing the legislation will be an accomplishment for President Obama, including 45% who say it will be a major accomplishment. 10% say it will be only a minor accomplishment, and a third does not view it as an accomplishment at all.

### PASSING HEALTH CARE REFORM WOULD BE ... FOR PRES. OBAMA

	Total	Dems	Reps	Ind
A major accomplishment	45%	60%	30%	40%
A minor accomplishment	10	14	5	10
Not an accomplishment	35	13	59	42

Partisanship colors how Americans look at the passage of the bill - most Democrats see it as a major accomplishment, while most Republicans do not. Independents are more divided.

Overall, Americans are critical of the President's handling of health care, but his approval rating on this issue has risen in the last month. Now, 41% approve, up from 35% in February; but still more, 51%, disapprove. More people have disapproved than approved of the President's handling of health care since November.

### OBAMA HEALTH CARE APPROVAL

	Now	2/2010	1/2010	11/2009	7/2009
Approve	41%	35%	40%	44%	49%
Disapprove	51	55	54	48	37

Americans' rating of the overall job President Obama is up slightly from last month: 49% now approve, compared to 46% last month. President Obama's approval rating has hovered at or slightly below 50% since December. Americans are divided over his handling of the other major domestic concern, the economy.

### OBAMA JOB APPROVAL RATINGS

	Approve	Disapprove
Overall	49%	41
Economy	45%	45
Health Care	41%	51

Opinion of the President remains highly partisan, with eight in 10 Democrats approving of the job he is doing and 8 in 10 Republicans disapproving.

## VIEWS OF THE BILL: BEFORE THE HOUSE VOTE

As the health care bill headed to its Sunday night vote in the House of Representatives, nearly half of Americans said they disapproved of

it, while 37% approved. Among those opposed to the bill, a third strongly disapproved.

<b>HEALTH CARE BILL</b>				
	All	Reps	Dems	Inds
<u>Approve:</u>	37%	13%	60%	30%
Strongly approve	13%	3%	24%	9%
Somewhat approve	24	10	36	21
<u>Disapprove:</u>	48%	80%	24%	54%
Somewhat disapprove	15	15	14	17
Strongly disapprove	33	65	10	37
Don't know	15	7	16	16

Most Democrats support the health care bill, while majorities of independents and Republicans are opposed, including two in three Republicans who strongly disapprove of the bill.

Few Americans are convinced the bill's reforms will improve the country's health care system. In fact, 34% think the reforms will make things worse, while slightly fewer, 29%, think reforms will make it better. More than a quarter don't know enough yet to say what the impact will be.

**WILL REFORMS MAKE THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM...?**

Better	29%
Worse	34
No change	8
Don't know enough	28

53% believe, like the bill's Congressional supporters, the bill will ensure that health insurance companies provide coverage to people with pre-existing conditions, but only a minority - 37% - is confident the reforms will help control the costs of health care premiums.

**WILL HEALTH CARE REFORMS ...?**

	Yes	No	Don't know
Make sure insurance cos provide coverage to those with pre-existing conditions	53%	31	16
Help control cost of health care premiums	37%	50	13

There are concerns about the level of government involvement in health care, especially among Republicans. Half of Americans think the bill's reforms will lead to too much government involvement in the health care system. Most Republicans and independents hold that view, while Democrats think the bill has the right amount of government involvement (48%) or not enough (19%).

**THE BILL AND GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT IN HEALTH CARE**

	All	Reps	Dems	Inds
Too much	51%	83%	24%	59%
Not enough	14	8	19	12
Right amount	28	6	48	20

As past CBS News Polls have shown, few Americans see health care reform as personally beneficial. Just 20% think the current reform bill will help them personally, while more - 35% -- think it will hurt them.

**HOW WILL REFORMS AFFECT YOU PERSONALLY?**

Help	20%
Hurt	35
No effect	38

The uninsured, younger Americans, those with lower incomes and Democrats are most likely to think the reforms will help them.

But many Americans also aren't clear what the bill will mean to them. Just 42% say they have a good understanding of how the current bill would affect them and their families, while 54% find it confusing.

**UNDERSTAND HOW REFORMS WILL AFFECT YOUR FAMILY?**

Understand	42%
No, it's confusing	54

Still, most Americans say they have been paying attention to the health care legislation being debated in Congress. 74% say they have been following it at least somewhat closely, but that includes just 28% who have been following it very closely.

And Republicans, who mostly oppose the bill, have been more likely than Democrats to say they have been following the debate very closely.

**HOW CLOSELY HAVE YOU BEEN FOLLOWING THE HEALTH CARE DEBATE?**

	All	Reps	Dems	Inds
Very	28%	41%	22%	26%
Somewhat	46	45	48	45
Not very	18	9	22	19
Not at all	8	5	8	10

Consequently, a majority of those closely following the debate disapproves of the bill, thinks it will hurt them personally, and says the reforms will make the health care system worse.

**LOCAL POLITICS AND THE NOVEMBER ELECTIONS**

Most Americans still aren't sure where their own Congressional Representative stands on the health care reform bill, leaving the

immediate impact of the health care vote on the 2010 campaign still uncertain.

54% of Americans still aren't sure whether their own Representative's position on the bill is in line with their own views. Republicans, Democrats, and independents are equally unsure.

**DOES YOUR OWN MEMBER OF CONGRESS  
REFLECT YOUR VIEWS ON HEALTH CARE BILL?**

Yes	18%
No	24
Not sure	54

Looking ahead to the November elections, nearly four in ten Americans say their Representative's health care vote will not make much difference to their vote. Another three in ten say their Representative's support for the bill would be a strike against them, while 25% say support for the bill would make them more likely to vote for their Representative.

**IMPACT ON YOUR 2010 VOTE IF YOUR OWN REPRESENTATIVE  
SUPPORTS HEALTH CARE BILL:**

	All	Dems	Reps	Inds
More likely	25%	44%	8%	17%
No impact	39	40	23	46
Less likely	31	10	68	31

**VIEWS OF CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS**

The two Congressional leaders who have been at the center of the health care storm for the past year, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, remain unknown to many Americans. But among those who do know them, views of each are more negative than positive.

**VIEWS OF NANCY PELOSI**

	All	Dems	Reps	Inds
Favorable	11%	21%	1%	8%
Unfavorable	37	21	72	34
Not sure/ Haven't heard	51	58	27	58

**VIEWS OF HARRY REID**

	All	Dems	Reps	Inds
Favorable	8%	14%	1%	6%
Unfavorable	23	12	43	23
Not sure/ Haven't heard	68	73	54	69

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This poll was conducted among a random sample of 1059 adults nationwide, interviewed by telephone March 18-21, 2010. Interviewing was continued Sunday until the House of Representatives voted on the legislation. 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.

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**The Politics of Health Care Reform**  
**March 18-21, 2010**

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

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **				Feb10a
	Total	*** Party ID ***			
	%	Rep	Dem	Ind	%
Approve	49	11	83	40	46
Disapprove	41	81	11	47	45
DK/NA	10	8	6	13	9

q2 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling the economy?

Approve	45	10	77	35	42
Disapprove	45	81	17	52	52
DK/NA	10	9	6	13	6

q3 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling health care?

Approve	41	8	71	31	35
Disapprove	51	87	21	58	55
DK/NA	8	5	8	11	10

q4 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Congress is handling its job?

					Jan10b
Approve	14	9	19	12	15
Disapprove	76	79	73	77	75
DK/NA	10	12	8	11	10

q5 blank

q6 Is your opinion of Nancy Pelosi favorable, not favorable, undecided or haven't you heard enough about Nancy Pelosi yet to have an opinion?

					Mar09a
Favorable	11	1	21	8	18
Not favorable	37	72	21	34	35
Undecided	15	11	16	16	19
Haven't heard enough	36	16	42	42	28
Refused	1	0	0	0	0

q7 Is your opinion of Harry Reid favorable, not favorable, undecided or haven't you heard enough about Harry Reid yet to have an opinion?

					Jan07a
Favorable	8	1	14	6	5
Not favorable	23	43	12	23	8
Undecided	18	17	19	17	16
Haven't heard enough	50	37	54	52	70
Refused	1	2	1	2	1

q8-11 blank

q12 How closely have you been following the current health care legislation being debated in Congress -- very closely, somewhat closely, not very closely, or not at all closely?

\*\* TOTAL RESPONDENTS \*\*

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

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
Very closely	28	41	22	26
Somewhat closely	46	45	48	45
Not very closely	18	9	22	19
Not at all closely	8	5	8	10

q13 From what you've heard or read, do you approve or disapprove of the current health care reform bill?

IF APPROVE, ASK: Do you strongly approve or somewhat approve?

IF DISAPPROVE, ASK: Do you somewhat disapprove or strongly disapprove?

Strongly approve	13	3	24	9
Somewhat approve	24	10	36	21
Somewhat disapprove	15	15	14	17
Strongly disapprove	33	65	10	37
DK/NA	15	7	16	16

q14 From what you've heard or read, do you think the current health care reform bill will mostly help you personally, will mostly hurt you personally, or don't you think it will have much of an effect on you personally?

Help	20	8	35	13
Hurt	35	67	13	37
No effect	38	21	43	42
DK/NA	7	4	9	8

q15 blank

q16 Regardless of your view of health care reform, do you think passage of the current health care reform bill would represent an accomplishment for Barack Obama's presidency, or not?

IF ACCOMPLISHMENT, ASK: Would it be a major accomplishment or a minor accomplishment?

Major accomplishment	45	30	60	40
Minor accomplishment	10	5	14	10
Not an accomplishment	35	59	13	42
DK/NA	10	6	13	8

q17 Do you feel you have a good understanding of how the current health care reform bill would affect you and your family, or is it confusing to you?

Understand	42	47	37	44
Confusing	54	52	56	52
DK/NA	4	1	7	4

Note: q17 was asked from March 19-21 among 793 respondents.

q18 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Democrats in Congress are handling health care?

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **				
	*** Party ID ***				
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Jan10a
	%	%	%	%	%
Approve	32	9	52	26	29
Disapprove	60	86	38	65	57
DK/NA	8	5	10	9	14

q19 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Republicans in Congress are handling health care?

Approve	25	52	8	26	24
Disapprove	64	37	83	62	61
DK/NA	11	11	9	12	15

q20 Do you think your own Representative in Congress does or does not represent your views on health care reform, or haven't you heard enough yet to say?

Does	18	21	19	15
Does not	24	26	21	25
Haven't heard enough	54	51	52	57
DK/NA	4	2	8	3

q21 In the next few years, do you think the reforms in the current health care bill will make the health care system better, make it worse, not change the health care system one way or the other, or don't know you know enough about the reforms yet to say?

Better	29	7	50	21
Worse	34	65	12	38
No change	8	5	8	11
Don't know enough	28	21	29	30
DK/NA	1	2	1	0

q22 Do you think the current health care reform bill will make sure health insurance companies provide health care coverage to people with pre-existing medical conditions, or not?

Will make sure	53	41	70	45
Will not	31	46	15	37
DK/NA	16	13	15	18

q23 Do you think the current health care reform bill will help control the cost of health care premiums, or not?

Control costs	37	15	58	30
Will not	50	79	25	56
DK/NA	13	6	17	14

q24-27 blank

q28 Do you think the current health care reform bill will lead to too much government involvement in the health care system, not enough government involvement in the health care system, or about the right amount of government involvement in the health care system?

\*\* TOTAL RESPONDENTS \*\*

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

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
Too much	51	83	24	59
Not enough	14	8	19	12
Right amount	28	6	48	20
Don't know/No answer	7	3	9	9

q29-31 blank

q32 Looking back over the past few months, do you think the political debate about health care reform has made the current health care reform bill better, worse, or hasn't it made much difference?

Made it better	15	10	23	10
Made it worse	27	26	26	28
No difference	52	58	44	57
DK/NA	6	6	7	5

q33 Looking back over the past few months, have the efforts to pass health care reform made you more optimistic about the way things work in Washington, more pessimistic, or have they made no difference?

Optimistic	14	5	24	9
Pessimistic	54	75	40	54
No difference	28	18	30	32
DK/NA	4	2	6	5

q34 Do you think Congress has spent too much time dealing with health care reform, not enough time dealing with health care reform, or about the right amount of time dealing with health care reform?

Too much	46	57	39	46
Not enough	28	25	27	32
About right	19	11	28	16
DK/NA	7	7	6	6

q35 If your own Representative in Congress supports the current health care reform bill, 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 current health care reform bill not make much difference in your 2010 vote?

More likely	25	8	44	17
Less likely	31	68	10	31
No difference	39	23	40	46
DK/NA	5	1	6	6

q36 Do you think Democrats who have been trying to pass the current health care bill have done so mainly because they believe it is good policy for the country, or mainly for political reasons?

\*\* TOTAL RESPONDENTS \*\*

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

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
Good policy	35	14	60	23
Political reasons	57	77	32	68
DK/NA	8	9	8	9

q37 Do you think Republicans who have been trying to defeat the current health care bill have done so mainly because they believe it is bad policy for the country, or mainly for political reasons?

Bad policy	29	65	12	26
Political reasons	61	27	77	66
DK/NA	10	8	11	8

q38 Do you think the rules and procedures used in Congress to get the current health care reform bill passed have been mostly fair or mostly unfair?

Mostly fair	33	9	51	29
Mostly unfair	49	76	29	51
DK/NA	18	15	20	20

	<u>UNWEIGHTED</u>	<u>WEIGHTED</u>
Total Respondents	1059	
Total Republicans	272	235
Total Democrats	355	396
Total Independents	432	428