The Political Environment for Health Care Reform

Scott Keeter
Director of Survey Research
Pew Research Center
skeeter@pewresearch.org
Political climate for reform has gotten worse in recent weeks

- Obama’s approval rating has fallen
- Democratic Party favorability has fallen
- Impossible to disentangle cause-and-effect with health care reform debate and Obama & party ratings
- But the slide in ratings complicates the chances for an ambitious bill
Democratic Party Favorability Falls Sharply

Democratic Party Favorability
- Feb 2006: 48
- Jan 2007: 47
- Sept 2008: 54
- Jan 2009: 51
- Aug 2009: 55

Republican Party Favorability
- Feb 2006: 44
- Jan 2007: 40
- Sept 2008: 39
- Jan 2009: 40
- Aug 2009: 40
Economic anxieties show no sign of lessening

- Ratings of the national economy remain dismal
- Ratings of personal finances are somewhat better, but are not improving
- And optimism about personal finances has declined since June
- Obama and the Democrats are increasingly having to “own” the economy
Little Movement in Economic Ratings

Dec-08: 59 (Only fair) 33 (Poor)
Feb-09: 71 (Poor) 24 (Only fair)
Jun-09: 52 (Poor) 39 (Only fair)
Aug-09: 52 (Poor) 38 (Only fair)
Optimism about Economy Sags

- Nation's economy
- Personal finances

Oct-08: 46, 59
Feb-09: 40, 54
Jun-09: 48, 63
Sep-09: 45, 55
Ambivalence about government makes reform a harder sell

• Still a lot of support for fixing health care
• But skepticism about whether government can do a good job with reform
• Pew Values Survey in late spring found no growth in appetite for activist government
• And no growth in anti-business attitudes
The government needs to do more to make **health care** affordable and accessible

I am concerned about the government becoming too involved in **health care**

**Agree** | **Disagree**
--- | ---
86 | 12

**Agree** | **Disagree**
--- | ---
46 | 50
The Largest Partisan Divide in the Values Survey

I am concerned about the government becoming too involved in health care

- **39-pt gap**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

39-pt gap
Obama is getting worse marks on health care than he is overall

• He’s also getting lower marks on handling the economy than handling his overall job

• But his ratings on health care are still much higher than those of the Republicans
Handling of Health Care
(NBC/WSJ)

![Bar chart showing approval and disapproval of health care handling by Obama and GOP in Congress.]

- **Obama**: 41% Approve, 47% Disapprove
- **GOP in Congress**: 21% Approve, 62% Disapprove
Opponents of reform have the advantage of greater intensity

- A higher percentage of conservative Republicans than other groups have heard a lot about the proposed reforms.
- More people say they would be angry at the passage of health care reform than would be angry at the failure to pass reform.
Heard “a lot” about health care bills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservative Reps</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal/Mod Reps</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cons/Mod Dems</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Dems</td>
<td>49</td>
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Republicans Have Stronger Reactions to Health Care Outcomes

If bills proposed by Obama and Congress pass would you be…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Rep</th>
<th>Dem</th>
<th>Ind</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very happy</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pleased</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disappointed</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angry</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N 1011 253 356 343
And Failure to Pass Would Elicit Less Intense Reaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If bills <strong>fail</strong>, would you be…</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Rep</th>
<th>Dem</th>
<th>Ind</th>
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<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>999</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>363</td>
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A few final observations

• Reform’s prospects are hurt by the fact that only a minority of Americans think the system needs a complete overhaul
• Many people who have health coverage have anxieties about the effect of reform on their health care
• Still, there is broad support for many of the principles in most of the reform bills
• And Obama still has a lot of personal political capital