



THE MSU BILLINGS POLL:

***NATIONAL, STATE,
AND
LOCAL ISSUES***

NOVEMBER 2009



”DAY 1 RELEASE”

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The “MSU-Billings Poll” is available on our website at:

<http://www.msubillings.edu/CAS/NAMS/polls.htm>

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INTRODUCTION

The “MSU-Billings Poll” began in 1989. This year is the twenty-first year the survey has been conducted. During this time twenty-four surveys have been completed. The Co-Directors of the Poll are Dr. Craig Wilson (Political Science), Dr. Scott Rickard (Director of the Center for Applied Economic Research) and Dr. Dan Lennon (Sociology).

This report summarizes the results of a statewide random sample telephone survey of adult Montanans. The poll was conducted November 5-8. Students enrolled in Political Science 342, Media, Public Opinion, Polling and Sociology 318, Sociological Research Methods, completed 414 interviews for this survey. One part-time assistant was employed to supervise/make phone calls. The survey was completed using random digit dial methodology, which selects both the phone numbers and members of a household to interview for the first time a sample of cell phone numbers was included in the sample. The poll was conducted at MSU-Billings’ CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) Laboratory. Up to five attempts were made to reach selected households. The survey results have a +/- 5% margin of error at a confidence level of 95% (95% of the time the results will fall within the +/- 5% margin of error). Factors such as question order and wording can affect survey results. Statistical tests were employed to determine whether statistically significant relationships ($p=.05$) existed between key variables.

I. STATE ISSUES

1. JOB APPROVAL RATING OF ELECTED OFFICIALS

Job approval rating questions were asked regarding Governor Brian Schweitzer, U.S. Senators Jon Tester and Max Baucus and Representative Dennis Rehberg’s performance in office. The last time these questions were asked was in the 2007 “MSU-Billings Poll.” The question for all four officials was phrased: “At this point in time do you approve or disapprove _____ of overall performance in office.”

A. **JOB APPROVAL RATING OF GOVERNOR BRIAN SCHWEITZER**

A majority (62%) of the respondents approved of the job Governor Schweitzer was doing. In the 2007 poll, 62.8% of those interviewed replied “approve”.

GOVERNOR BRIAN SCHWEITZER’S JOB APPROVAL RATING

<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
62%	20%	18%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- Majorities of Democrats (81.7%) and independents (60.4%) felt the governor was doing a good job, while a plurality (49.7%) of Republicans held this same positive opinion.
- While a majority (50.6%) of those feeling the Governor was doing a good job approved of the President’s overall performance, 90.4% of the individuals feeling the Governor was doing a poor job disapproved of President Obama’s overall job performance.
- In terms of their probable individual vote in next year’s races for the Montana House of Representatives 36.1% of those who approved of the Governor’s job performance planned on voting for Republicans, 35.3% Democrats and 28.6% were undecided. Among those who disapproved of the Governor 63.1% said they would vote Republican, 11.9% Democrat and 25% were undecided.
- A majority (53.5%) of those approving of Governor Schweitzer’s performance opposed the proposed Constitutional initiative declaring that life begins at conception, while a majority (59%) of individuals who believed the Governor is doing a bad job supported passage of the initiative’s passage.

B. **JOB APPROVAL OF U. S. SENATOR MAX BAUCUS**

A plurality (44%) of the respondents “approved” of the job Senator Baucus is doing. In reply to this same question in 2007, a majority of those polled

(64.3%) said “approve.” The results for this question fall within the +/- 5% margin of error for this survey.

U. S. SENATOR MAX BAUCUS’ JOB APPROVAL RATING

<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
44%	40%	16%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- On the 1-10 scaled question regarding whether or not healthcare legislation would make U.S. healthcare better or worse, a plurality (19%) of the interviewees who felt the Senator is doing a good job chose “5”. Among individuals who felt the Senator not doing a good job a plurality (49.4%) chose “1”.
- While 63.9% of those interviewed who believed the Senator is doing a good job supported a public healthcare option, 63.5% of the respondents who did not feel he was doing a good job opposed the public option.
- 67.1% of Democrats approved of the Senator’s performance. While a majority (57.1%) of Republicans and plurality (43.8%) of independents disapproved of the job he is doing.
- 59.7% of those approving of Senator Baucus also approved of the job President Obama is doing. In contrast 79.6% of those disapproving of the job the Senator is doing disapproved of the President’s performance.
- In terms of the President’s handling of foreign policy, 61.1% of the interviewees approving of Senator Baucus felt the President was doing a good job in handling U.S. foreign relations. But 68.9% of those feeling the Senator was not doing a good job disapproved of the President’s actions in the area of foreign policy actions.
- 54.7% of those interviewed who approved of the Senator felt the President was doing a good job managing the economy. But 82.5% of the interviewees disapproving of the job the Senator was doing felt the President was doing a bad job managing the economy.
- A plurality (45.9%) of individuals approving of the Senator supported the economic stimulus package. But 83.2% of the respondents who disapproved of the Senator’s job performance opposed the stimulus bill.
- 62.4% of the individuals who approved of the Senator’s performance opposed the Iraq War. In contrast, 51.5% of those who viewed the Senator’s job performance negatively backed the conflict.

- While 49.2% of the interviewees who approved of Senator Baucus supported the war in Afghanistan, 62.3% of those feeling the Senator is doing a bad job also supported the Afghanistan conflict.
- A plurality (45.3%) of the respondents approving of Senator Baucus opposed sending more troops to Afghanistan, while 60.5% of the individuals disapproving of the Senator avored sending more troops.
- 62.5% of the interviewees who regarded Senator Baucus as performing well in office supported more wilderness area for Montana. A plurality (49.1%) of those seeing him as not doing a good job opposed new wilderness.

C. JOB APPROVAL RATING OF U.S. SENATOR JON TESTER

A majority (56%) of those interviewed approved to Senator Tester’s job performance. In 2007, a majority of the respondents polled (57.1%) approved of the job the Senator was doing.

U.S. SENATOR JON TESTER’S JOB APPROVAL RATING

<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
56%	25%	19%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- 60.2% of those interviewed who approved of the Senator’s job performance supported more wilderness area for Montana. In contrast, 58.4% of those disapproving of the job he is doing opposed more wilderness areas.
- A majority (81.1%) of Democrats, and pluralities of independents (45.8%) and Republicans (41.8%) gave Senator Tester a positive job approval rating.
- In terms of age cohorts, 50% or more of every group rated the Senator positively. His highest approval rating was found with those aged 18-29 (62.5%) and his highest disapproval evaluation was found among 50-69 (31.6%) year olds.
- Senator Tester had a higher approval rating among women (59%) than men (53.7%).
- Among respondents who approved of Senator Tester’s job performance 52.6% also approved of the overall job performance of President Obama. But of the respondents disapproving of the Senator, 86.1% also held a negative opinion of President Obama’s performance in office.
- A majority of the respondents approving of Senator Tester regarded the President as doing a good job handling foreign policy. But a majority (79.2%) of those feeling the Senator was doing a bad job also did not like the President’s actions in the foreign policy arena.
- A majority (51.3%) of those polled who approved of Senator Tester’s job performance liked how President Obama is handling the economy. But a majority

(88.1%) of those disapproving of the Senator’s job said the President was doing a “bad job” in this area

- A plurality (48.5%) of those approving of the Senator’s job performance opposed the passage of this year’s federal economic stimulus package. In contrast, 91.1% of those interviewed who disapproved of the Senator also disapproved of the stimulus bill.
- Among those approving of the job Senator Tester is doing a majority (73.4%) opposed the war in Iraq, while 59.4% of those disapproving of his performance supported the conflict.
- In terms of the Afghanistan War 51.1% of Tester’s supporters backed the conflict, while 66.3% of those disapproving of the Senator supported it.
- 43.7% of the respondents approving of the Senator favored sending more troops to Afghanistan. In contrast, 66.3% of those disapproving of Senator Tester’s job performance also backed committing more troops.
- 61.9% of the interviewees approving of the Senator supported a public option health plan, but 72% of those disapproving of the job he is doing opposed this proposal.
- On a 1-10 scaled question about whether or not a congressional healthcare plan would make U.S. healthcare better or worse, 53.5% of those disapproving of the Senator strongly felt that a bill would make care worse (“1”). In contrast, among interviewees approving of the Senator the most prevalent response was “5” (19.2%).

D. JOB APPROVAL RATING OF U.S. REPRESENTATIVE DENNIS REHBERG

A majority (54%) of those polled said “approve” when asked the question about the job performance of Representative Rehberg. In 2007, a majority (58.6%) of the respondents surveyed also approved of the job Representative Rehberg was doing, while 24.2% were “undecided.”

U. S. REPRESENTATIVE DENNIS REHBERG’S JOB APPROVAL RATING

<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
54%	24%	23%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- 68.3% of Republicans approved of the job Representative Rehberg is doing, as did 45% of independents. A plurality (39.9%) of Democrats disapproved of his job performance.
- In terms of age cohorts, Representative Rehberg’s greatest approval rating was found among those aged 60+, while his highest disapproval rating was with this same age group (40.4%).

- Among those approving of Representative Rehberg’s job performance 66.2% disapproved of Present Obama’s performance, while 63.9% of those interviewed disapproving of Rehberg approved of the job the President is doing.
- 67.4% of those interviewed approving of Representative Rehberg regarded President Obama as doing a “bad job” managing the economy. While 59.8% of the individuals disapproving of his job performance felt the President was doing a “good job” handling the economy.
- In terms of the economic stimulus package passed by Congress, 73.9% of the individuals approving of Representative Rehberg opposed the plan, while a plurality (26.1%) disapproving of the job he is doing to supported the stimulus plan.
- A majority (59.8%) of those polled who approved of the job performance of Representative Rehberg felt the President was doing a “bad job” managing U.S. foreign policy. In contrast, a majority (68%) giving the Representative a negative approval rating felt the President had done a good job in the international arena.
- 50.9% of the individuals approving of Representative Rehberg supported the Iraq war. Among those disapproving of his job performance 73.2% opposed the War.
- In terms of the Afghanistan war, 63.2% of those interviewed who approved of Representative Rehberg backed the war. Of those expressing disapproval of Rehberg’s job 50.5% were against this conflict.
- 56.3% of the interviewees approving of the Representative favored increasing troop levels in Afghanistan. In contrast, 54.6% of those disapproving of Representative Rehberg’s job performance opposed the increase.
- In terms of the scaled question about whether a healthcare plan passed by Congress would make healthcare better or worse, among those approving of Representative Rehberg (38.6%) chose “1” (much worse). Of those disapproving of Rehberg a plurality (56.3%) of these respondents chose “6”.
- 48.9% of the individuals who felt Representative Rehberg was doing a good job opposed a public option health plan. In contrast 69.1 of those disapproving his job performance supported the public option.
- In terms of additional Montana wilderness, 45.7% of the respondents approving of Rehberg supported more wilderness while 65.3% of those disapproving of Representative’s also supported more wilderness areas.

2. 2010 MONTANA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ELECTION

A question about next year’s elections for the Montana House of Representatives was worded: “In terms of electing a representative to the Montana House of Representatives, if the 2010 general election were held today do you think you would vote for the Republican or the Democratic candidate in your district?”

A plurality (43%) of those polled replied “Republican”. Last year, in response to this same question, 42.6% of likely voters answered Democrat and 40.6% Republican.

MONTANA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ELECTION

<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
42%	28%	30%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- 82% of Republicans planned on voting for their parties' candidates as did 72.7% of Democrats. While 77.1% of independents were undecided about their vote, more planned on voting for Republicans (14.6%) than Democrats (8.3%).
- In terms of income categories, Republican candidates found the most support among those living in households making \$20,001 - \$30,000 (24.3%), while Democrats found their strongest backing in households earning from \$10,000 - \$20,000 (19.6%) a year.
- A majority (61.7%) of those planning on voting for Republicans supported the proposed initiative dealing with the beginning of life. A majority of likely Democratic (67.5%) and independent (45.2%) voters in the legislative races opposed the initiative.

3. PROPOSED VOTER INITIATIVE ON WHEN LIFE BEGINS

A proposed voter initiative dealing with when life begins has been proposed. The question regarding this issue was worded: "A Montana voter initiative petition has been proposed which, if it qualifies for the 2010 ballot, would amend the Montana Constitution to define person, to include every human being from the beginning of the human being's biological development." A plurality (45%) of the interviewees said they opposed this initiative, while 44% answered "support." The results for this question fall within the +/- 5% margin of error for this survey.

PROPOSED VOTER INITIATIVE ON WHEN LIFE BEGINS

<u>Support</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
44%	45%	11%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- A majority (67.8%) of Democrats and plurality (41.7%) of independents opposed the proposed initiative, while a majority (62.2%) of Republicans supported it.
- On the 1-5 scaled question on religion where "5" represented religion being "very important" in a respondents life a majority (68.2%) of those answering "5" planned on voting for the initiative. In comparison a plurality (36.4%) of the opponents of the initiative chose this same answer.

- A plurality (49.7%) of those opposing the initiative had some college, or a college degree. In comparison, a majority (51.1%) of the initiatives opponents held this same level of education.
- Gender was not related to opinions about this issue.

4. EXPANDED CASINO GAMBLING ON NATIVE AMERICAN RESERVATIONS

A majority (61%) of those responding to a question about Native American gaming said “oppose” when asked: “Do you support or oppose gambling on Native American reservations in Montana which would include types of gambling such as slot machines and live blackjack, not permitted in casinos not located on reservations?”

EXPANDED CASINO GAMBLING ON NATIVE AMERICAN RESERVATIONS

<u>Support</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
24%	61%	15%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- A larger majority of independents (70.9%) than Republicans (65.1%) or Democrats (53.1%) opposed expanded Native American gaming.
- A majority (57.3%) of males backed expanded gambling; a majority (50.6%) of females opposed it.

5. LEGALITY OF CELL PHONE TEXTING IN MONTANA

A question about cell phone texting while driving was worded: “Do you feel that it should be legal or illegal in Montana to text on a cell phone while driving.” A majority 90% of those interviewed replied “illegal.”

LEGALITY OF CELL PHONE TEXTING IN MONTANA

<u>Legal</u>	<u>Illegal</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
3%	90%	7%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- A larger majority of Democrats (93%) than independents (90.2%) or Republicans (87.8%) favored a texting ban.
- Age, education and gender were not related to opinions about texting.

6. OPINION ON LAW BANNING SMOKING IN MANY ESTABLISHMENTS

The interviewees were asked a question regarding smoking which was worded: “On October 1, 2009, Montana adopted the Clean Air Act, which bans smoking in all restaurants, bars and casinos. Has your attendance at these establishments increased, decreased, or remained the same since the ban was put into effect.” A majority (64%) of the respondents answered “remained the same.”

OPINION ON LAW BANNING SMOKING IN MANY ESTABLISHMENTS

<u>Increased</u>	<u>Decreased</u>	<u>Remained the Same</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
20%	10%	64%	6%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- Somewhat more Republicans (67.2%) than Democrats (63.6%) or independents (60.4%) said that they had not changed how often they visited establishments where smoking is now banned.

II. ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTIONS

1. STATUS OF GRIZZLY BEARS

A question about the status of Grizzly bears was worded: “Do you feel that grizzly bears found in Yellowstone Park and the surrounding area should be protected under the federal government’s endangered-species list, or should they be removed from this list?” A majority (54%) of those interviewed replied “should be protected.”

STATUS OF GRIZZLY BEARS

<u>Protected</u>	<u>Removed from List</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
54%	30%	16%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- A majority of Democrats (70.6%) and pluralities of independents (47.9%) and Republicans (42.3%) felt Grizzly bears should be protected.
- Majorities of both those who wanted Grizzly bears removed from protective status (95.1%), as well as those who did not want them removed (63.3%) from the list believed that Montana wolves should be hunted.

- A majority (63.9%) of individuals who believed Grizzly bears should be removed from the list opposed new wilderness areas. In contrast, a plurality (40%) of individuals believing Grizzlies should remain on the listed supported expanded wilderness areas.
- Age was not related to opinions on this question.
- A majority (50.5%) of women wanted Grizzlies to remain on the list, a majority (56.9%) of males felt they should be removed.

2. HUNTING GRAY WOLVES IN MONTANA

A majority (75%) of the respondents replied “yes” when asked a question phrased: “This year gray wolves in Montana were removed from the federal endangered-species and hunters are permitted to take 75 of the animals. Do you feel that wolf hunting should be permitted in Montana?”

HUNTING GRAY WOLVES IN MONTANA

<u>Permit Hunting</u>	<u>Do Not Permit Hunting</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
75%	17%	8%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- Majorities of Republicans (85.2%), independents (70.8%) and Democrats (65.5%) backed the wolf hunt.
- Age was not related to opinions about this question.

3. MORE WILDERNESS AREA FOR MONTANA

A question about the respondents opinion on expanding Montana’s wilderness area was worded: “A proposed piece of Congressional legislation would designate 600,000 additional acres of federally owned land in Montana as wilderness area. Do you support or oppose designating this land as wilderness area?” Half (50%) of the interviewees replied “support” when asked this question.

MORE WILDERNESS AREA FOR MONTANA

<u>Support</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
50%	36%	14%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- A majority of Democrats (73.9%) supported new wilderness areas, while pluralities of Republicans (46.5%) and independents (41.7%) opposed the idea.
- Age was not related to opinions about the question.
- A majority (54.5%) of women favored more wilderness, a majority (57.9%) of men opposed the proposal.

III. OTHER QUESTIONS

1. LEGALIZATION OF MARIJUANA FOR PERSONAL USE

A majority (68%) of those interviewed replied “oppose” when asked the question: “Do you support or oppose the legalization of marijuana for personal use by adults?”

LEGALIZATION OF MARIJUANA FOR PERSONAL USE

<u>Support</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
25%	68%	7%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- A majority of Republicans (76%) and a plurality (48.2%) of Democrats opposed legislation.
- A majority of those opposing legalization (60.6%) rated religion at a “5” in their life on a 1-5 scale, while a plurality of those supporting legalization (37.9%) also rated religion “5.”
- Age, education and gender were not related to opinions on this issue.
- A majority (65%) of individuals supporting the legalization of marijuana opposed amending the Montana Constitution to define life as beginning at conception. In contrast, a majority (52.6%) of those opposing legalization supported the proposed initiative.
- A plurality (48.4%) of individuals opposing legalization planned on voting for Republican Montana House candidates next year. In contrast, a plurality (45.6%) of respondents supporting legalization said they would vote for Democratic candidates.

2. HOW OFTEN RESPONDENTS READ DAILY NEWSPAPER

A majority (64%) of the interviewees replied “everyday” when answering a question phrased: “How often do you read a daily newspaper, either by purchase, subscription or online.” The possible responses were read to the interviewees.

HOW OFTEN RESPONDENTS READ DAILY NEWSPAPER

	%
Every Day	64%
Two to three times a week	13%
Weekly	8%
Biweekly	2%
Monthly	2%
Less often than monthly	7%
Undecided	<u>4%</u>
Total	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- A greater majority of Democrats (73.4%) than independents (64.6%) or Republicans (58.8%) said they read a daily newspaper “every day.” Independents were most likely to read a newspaper less than monthly (12.5%).
- Individuals aged 60+ (79.2%) were most likely to be daily newspaper readers, while those age 30-39 were most likely (65.9%) to read a paper on less than a daily basis.
- Education, gender and age were not related to readership.