



THE MSU BILLINGS POLL:

NATIONAL, STATE, AND LOCAL ISSUES

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“DAY 2 Release”

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**The “MSU-Billings Poll” is available on our website at
www.msubillings.edu/urelations**

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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.

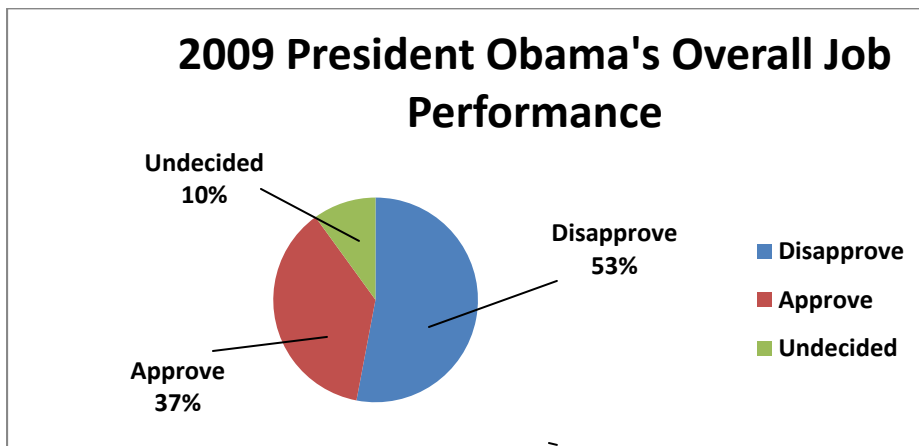
I. NATIONAL ISSUES

1. PRESIDENT OBAMA'S OVERALL PERFORMANCE IN OFFICE

President Barack Obama's Overall Job Performance

This is the first year the “MSU-Billings Poll” asked respondents the question: “At this point in time do you approve or disapprove of President Barack Obama’s overall performance in office?” A majority of those polled (53%) answered “disapprove.”

In comparison, former President George W. Bush’s highest approval rating, 87%, was found in 2001, in the wake of the 9/11 attacks and the invasion of Afghanistan. In the 2008 poll 60% of those surveyed disapproved of his job performance.



Statistically Significant Relationships:

- In terms of his overall job performance, a majority (82.5%) of Democrats approved of the job the president is doing, while majorities of Republicans (87.2%) and independents (53.4%) replied “disapprove” to this question.
- Of those approving of the President a plurality (44.2%) had some college or a degree, while a majority (53%) of individuals disapproving of his performance had this same educational level.
- Age and gender were not related to opinions about Obama’s overall performance.
- On a 1-5 scaled question about religion where “1” represented “very important,” in the respondents’ lives a plurality (40.9%) of those interviewed approving of the President identified religion as being a “5” in their life. In contrast, a majority (61.5%) of those polled who said the President was not doing a good job also said “5”.

2. PRESIDENT OBAMA'S ABILITY TO MANAGE U.S. FOREIGN RELATIONS

In reply to the question, “Overall, do you believe that President Obama is doing a good job, or a bad job, in managing U.S. foreign relations,” identical percentages of those interviewed

answered both “good job” (42%) and “bad job” (42%). The results of this question fall within the +/- 5% margin of error for this survey.

PRESIDENT OBAMA’S ABILITY TO MANAGE U.S. FOREIGN RELATIONS

<u>Good Job</u>	<u>Bad Job</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
42%	42%	17%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- A majority (81.8%) of Democrats regarded the President as doing a good job in foreign policy, while a majority (72.5%) of Republicans and plurality of independents (41.6%) thought he was doing a “bad job” in handling international relations.
- A plurality (44.6%) of respondents approving of the job the President is doing in the area of U.S. foreign policy had some college or a degree. A majority (56.4%) of respondents disapproving of his performance in this area also had some college or a degree.

3. PRESIDENT OBAMA’S ABILITY TO MANAGE THE U.S. ECONOMY

A majority (56%) of those polled replied “bad job” when asked the question: “Overall, do you believe that President Obama is doing a good job, or a bad job in managing the U.S. economy?”

PRESIDENT OBAMA’S ABILITY TO MANAGE U.S. ECONOMY

<u>Good Job</u>	<u>Bad Job</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
35%	56%	9%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- A majority (77.5%) of Democrats felt the President was doing a “good job” managing the U.S. economy, while a majority of Republicans (90.5%) and plurality (47.9%) of independents felt he was performing poorly in this area.
- Opinions about the President’s handling of the economy were not related to household income.

4. SUPPORT FEDERAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE PACKAGE

A majority (61%) of the respondents responded “oppose” when asked: “Did you support or oppose the passage of the almost \$800 billion dollar federal economic Stimulus Package designed to help the U.S. economy recover from its downtown?”

Last year a majority (50.8%) of those interviewed replied “no” when asked whether they supported or opposed “the passage of the federal economic assistance package designed to assist the financial industry in addressing its problems?”

SUPPORT BILLION FEDERAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE PACKAGE

<u>Support</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
28%	61%	11%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- A majority (58%) of Democrats supported the passage of the economic stimulus package. Majorities of Republicans (87.3%) and independents (62.5%) opposed the plan.
- Age, gender and level of household income were not related to opinions about the economic stimulus package.

5. SUPPORT U. S. DECISION TO GO TO WAR IN IRAQ

In reply to the question, “did you support or oppose the United States’ decision to go to war against Iraq,” a plurality (48%) of the respondents said “oppose”. Last year in reply to a similar question a majority (55.8%) of those polled answered “oppose.”

SUPPORT OR OPPOSE U. S. DECISION TO GO TO WAR IN IRAQ

<u>Support</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
42%	48%	10%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- Majorities of Democrats (74.1%) and independents (58.3%) opposed the war, but a majority (63%) of Republicans supported it.
- Age was not related to opinions about the war.
- A majority (59.5%) of individuals backing the war in Iraq and a plurality (45.2%) of those opposing it identified religion as being a “5” in their lives.

6. SUPPORT U. S. DECISION TO GO TO WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

The question regarding the war in Afghanistan was phrased: “Did you support or oppose the United States’ decision to go to war in Afghanistan?” A majority (54%) of those replying to this question replied “support”.

When a similar question was asked in 2007, a plurality (45.5%) of individuals surveyed said “support.”

SUPPORT U. S. DECISION TO GO TO WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

<u>Support</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
54%	35%	11%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- While majorities of Republicans (64.6%) and independents (53.2%) backed the Afghanistan war, a plurality of Democrats (45.8%) opposed it.
- Age was not related to opinions about the conflict.
- A majority (58.1%) of males supported the war; a majority (60.3%) of females opposed it.
- A majority (52.5%) of those supporting the war and a plurality (49.6%) of individuals opposing the conflict identified religion as a “5” in their life.

7. OPINION ON SENDING MORE U.S. COMBAT TROOPS TO AFGHANISTAN

A plurality (48%) of those answering the question said “support” when asked: “Do you favor, or oppose, sending additional U.S. combat troops to serve in Afghanistan?”

OPINION ON SENDING MORE U.S. COMBAT TROOPS TO AFGHANISTAN

<u>Favor</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
48%	37%	15%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- Pluralities of Democrats (49%) and independents (41.7%) opposed sending more troops to Afghanistan, but a majority (64.6%) of Republicans backed the additional forces.
- Age was not related to opinions about sending additional troops.
- A majority (58.7%) of males supported sending more troops, a majority (58.9%) of women opposed this option.

8. ATTITUDE ABOUT “DON’T ASK, DON’T TELL” POLICY

The question regarding the “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy was phrased: “Recently President Barack Obama pledged to end the existing ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ policy regarding gay people serving in the U.S. military and allow gays to openly serve in the military. Do you believe the don’t ask, don’t tell policy should be ended?” An identical percentage of respondents answered “yes” (40%) and “no” (40%). The results of this question fall within the +/- 5% margin of error for this survey.

ATTITUDE ABOUT “DON’T ASK, DON’T TELL” POLICY

<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
40%	40%	20%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- A majority of Democrats (53.8%) and plurality (39.6%) of independents want to end “don’t ask, don’t tell,” where a plurality (49.2%) of Republicans want to keep the policy.
- Level of education, gender and age were not related to opinions regarding this issue.
- A majority (60.2%) of individuals identifying religion as a “5” in their life opposed ending the policy. In contrast, a plurality (44.8%) of those wanting to end the policy also identified their religiosity as “5.”

9. BRINGING GUANTANAMO BAY PRISONERS TO U.S. FOR TRIAL

The question about the Guantanamo Bay detainees was worded: “At the present time, there is a proposal in Congress to allow Guantanamo Bay detainees to be transferred to the U.S. for trial, but not long-term imprisonment. Do you believe detainees should be brought to the U.S. for trial? A majority (52%) of those answering this question said “no”.

BRINGING GUANTANAMO BAY DETAINEES TO U.S. FOR TRIAL

<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
35%	52%	13%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- A majority of Democrats (56.6%) supported bringing the detainees to the U.S. for trial. In contrast, a majority (71.4%) of Republicans and plurality (45.8%) of independents opposed this option.
- 50% of the respondents favoring the transfer had some college or a degree. But a majority (51.9%) of those interviewed opposing this proposal also had some college or a degree.
- A majority (54.9%) of men wanted the detainees sent to the U.S. for trial, while women were evenly divided on this issue.

10. IF HEALTHCARE BILL PASSES WILL CARE IMPROVE?

A 1-10 scaled question where “1” represented “much worse” and “10,” “much better,” was worded, “if a healthcare reform plan is passed by Congress this year do you think the quality of healthcare in the U.S. will get better or worse?” A majority (74%) of the interviewees,

thought that to some extent (1-5) passage of a plan would make healthcare “worse”. A plurality (31%) of the interviewees answered “1,” and 4% replied “10.” The mean response was 3.3.

IF HEALTHCARE BILL PASSES WILL CARE IMPROVE

<u>To Some Extent Worse (1-5)</u>	<u>To Some Extent Better (6-10)</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Mean</u>
74%	26%	100%	3.3

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- On the 1-10 scaled question about whether the passage of Federal healthcare legislation would make U.S. healthcare better or worse a plurality (22.5%) of Democrats chose “7.” Half (50%) of the Republicans chose “1” as did a plurality (29.5%) of independents.
- Opinions about the passage of healthcare legislation were not related to age, level of household income, education, or gender.

11. SHOULD HEALTHCARE PLAN INCLUDE A PUBLIC OPTION

The question about a public option healthcare plan was phrased: “Some members of Congress believe that any healthcare reform plan should include a public option, under which some type of government sponsored insurance program would compete with private insurers. Do you support or oppose having a public option?” A plurality (48%) of those interviewed answered “yes.”

SHOULD HEALTHCARE PLAN INCLUDE A PUBLIC OPTION

<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
48%	42%	10%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- A majority (72.7%) of Democrats backed a public option. In contrast, a majority (60.1%) of Republicans and plurality (47.9%) of independents opposed this policy.
- Age, level of household income and level of education were not related to opinions about a public option.
- A plurality (37.9%) of those supporting a public option were aged 60+. In contrast, a plurality (45.3%) of those opposed to the plan were in this same age cohort.
- More males (48.5%) than females (46.6%) supported a public option. Women (15.5%) were also more undecided (3.5%) regarding this issue than men.

II. OTHER QUESTIONS

1. PERSONAL CONCERN ABOUT CONTRACTING THE H1N1 FLU

A 1-10 scaled question, where “1” represented “not at all” and “10,” “a great deal,” was asked regarding “how concerned” those polled were “about contracting the H1N1 flu. A majority (74%) of those interviewed were to some extent not concerned (answered 1-5) about contracting the flu. A plurality (31%) of the interviewees replied “1”, while 9% answered “10”. The mean response was 3.2.

PERSONAL CONCERN ABOUT CONTRACTING THE H1N1 FLU

<u>To Some Extent Not Concerned (1-5)</u>	<u>To Some Extent Concerned (6-10)</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Mean</u>
74%	26%	100%	3.2

Statistically Significant Relationship:

- Concerns about contracting H1N1 were not related to age, gender or level of education.

2. HOW IMPORTANT IS RELGION IN EVERYDAY LIFE

A 1-5 scaled question about religion, where “1” represented “not important at all” and “5” “very important,” was worded, “how important is religion in your everyday life?” A majority (53%) of those answering this question replied “5.”

HOW IMPORTANT RELGION IS IN EVERYDAY LIFE

<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Mean</u>
11%	10%	18%	8%	53%	100%	3.8

Statistically Significant Relationship:

- Majorities of Republicans (59.8%) and independents (52.1%) identified religion as a “5” in their life. A plurality (42%) of Democrats chose this same answer.
- Age was not related to personal religiosity
- A majority (61.8%) of women and plurality (41.6%) of men identified religion as being a “5” in their lives.