



# **THE MSU BILLINGS POLL**

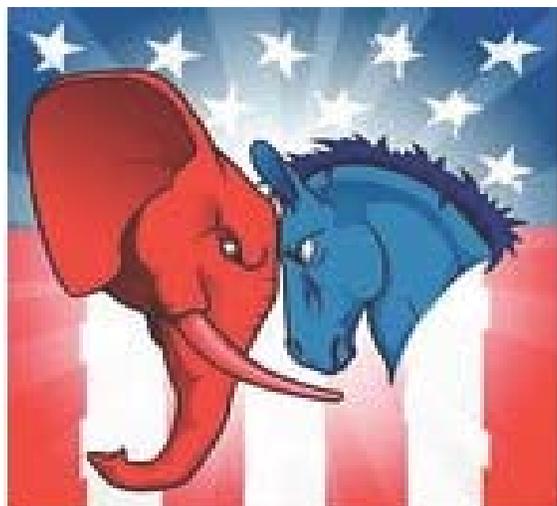
**NATIONAL, STATE,  
AND  
LOCAL ISSUES**

**OCTOBER 2012**

**Day 1**

**26TH POLL**

**24th YEAR**



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MS. JENNIFER POPE, CO-DIRECTORS***

**The “MSU Billings Poll” is available on our website  
[www.msubillings.edu/urelations](http://www.msubillings.edu/urelations)**



**The following students participated in the survey project:**

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## INTRODUCTION

The “MSU Billings Poll” began in 1989. This is the twenty-fourth year the survey has been conducted and during this time twenty-six 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 Ms. Jennifer Pope (Sociology). We would like to thank Ms. Brenda Dockery for serving as the supervisor for this research project, Ms. Jessica Ridgway for also assisting us and Ms. Sandra Haley for coming out of retirement to again word process the survey results.

This report summarizes the results of a statewide random sample telephone survey of adult Montanans who said they were both registered and likely to vote. The poll was conducted September 27-30. Students enrolled in the course Political Science 342, Media, Public Opinion, Polling completed 477 interviews for this survey. The survey was completed using random digit dial methodology, which selects both the phone numbers and members of a household to interview. Land line and cell phone numbers were included in the sample. 43.3% of the sample was reached through cell phone. The poll was conducted using MSU Billings’ CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) software. Multiple attempts were made to reach selected households.

The survey results have a +/- 4.6% margin of error at a confidence level of 95% (95% of the time the results will fall within the +/- 4.6% 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.

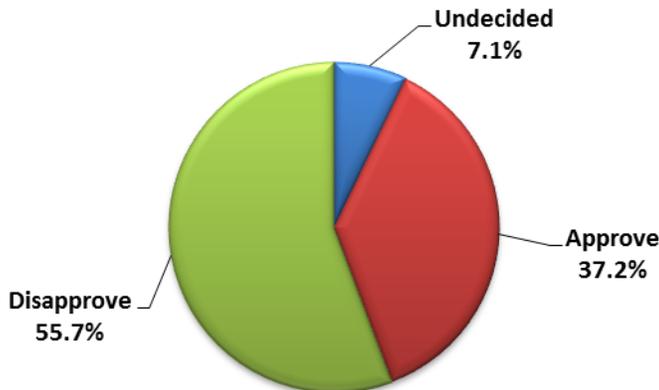
## I. NATIONAL ISSUES

### 1. PRESIDENT OBAMA'S OVERALL PERFORMANCE IN OFFICE

This is the fourth year the “MSU Billings Poll” asked respondents, “At this point in time do you approve or disapprove of President Barack Obama’s overall performance in office?” A majority of those polled (55.7%), answered “disapprove.”

In comparison, in 2011, 57.5% of those questioned replied “disapprove”, in 2010, 52.9% said “disapprove” and in 2009, 53% also replied “disapprove.”

#### 2011 President Obama's Overall Job Performance



#### Statistically Significant Relationships:

- A majority (92.4%) of Democrats approved of the President’s performance, a majority of Republicans (93.6%) and independents (52.7%) disapproved of the chief executive’s performance.
- Majorities of those who “disapproved” (89.1%), “approved” (73.4%) or were “undecided” (73.5%) about the President’s overall performance supported freedom of speech over offending non-American.
- A majority (87.2%) of respondents economically “worse off” than four years ago disapproved of the President’s behavior in office as did a majority of undecided (57.1%) voters. Pluralities of those “better off” (43.5%) or “about the same” (44.6%) as four years ago approved of the President.
- A majority of respondents (70.1%) who said they were "very religious" disapproved of the president, while a majority (68.2%) who said "not at all religious" approved of him.
- A majority (94.4%) of those supporting the Affordable Care Act liked the

President's job performance, while a majority (90.1%) of Republicans and undecided (46.4%) respondents opposed the act and disapproved of the President's performance.

- Gender was not related to responses to this question.
- Age was not related to responses to this question.

**2. FREEDOM OF SPEECH VS. OFFENDING NON-AMERICANS**

When asked the question, “Do you believe or not believe that it is more important in the U.S. to guarantee freedom of speech than it is to make sure nothing is done to offend people living in other nation/states,” a majority of 82.3% of the respondents said “believe” (guarantee freedom of speech).

**FREEDOM OF SPEECH VS. OFFENDING NON-AMERICANS**

<u>Believe</u>	<u>Not Believe</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
<b>82.3%</b>	<b>5.7%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Statistically Significant Relationship:

- Majorities of Republicans (89.5%), Democrats (77.1%) and independents (80.4%) backed free speech over offending foreign nationals.
- Responses to this question were not related to income.
- Responses to this question were not related to gender.
- Responses to this question were not related to age.

**3. REMOVE U. S. COMBAT TROOPS FROM AFGHANISTAN**

Those polled were queried regarding whether or not they would “support or oppose” the removal of all U.S. combat troops from Afghanistan prior to the end of 2014. A majority (59.7%) of those interviewed said “support.”

Last year a plurality of 46.2% of those surveyed opposed the war.

**REMOVE U. S. COMBAT TROOPS FROM AFGHANISTAN**

<u>Support</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
<b>59.7%</b>	<b>19.8%</b>	<b>20.5%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- Majorities of Democrats (82.9%) and independents (57.4%) supported removing the troops early, as did a plurality (45.9%) of Republicans.
- A majority (85.1%) of those opposed to leaving Afghanistan backed using military force against Iran. A majority (57.4%) of individuals supporting leaving Afghanistan early backed using force against Iran.
- 49.4% of the “very religious” respondents supported an early withdrawal. A plurality (60.5%) of those who were “somewhat religious” also supported the early withdrawal, as did 79.5% of the “not at all religious.”
- Gender was not significant to answers on this question.
- Age was not significant to answers on this question.
- Income was not significant to answers on this question.

**4. USE MILITARY FORCE AGAINST IRAN**

With regard to Iran a question was phrased: “If the U.S. finds evidence that Iran is building a nuclear weapon, would you support or oppose the use of U.S. military force to prevent the development of a weapon?” A majority (64.3%) of the interviewees replied “support.”

**USE MILITARY FORCE AGAINST IRAN**

<u>Support</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
<b>64.3%</b>	<b>21.7%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- A majority (84.9%) of Republicans, a majority (58.6%) of independents, and a plurality (42.9%) of Democrats and a plurality (40%) of undecided supported military action.
- A majority (84.9%) of Republicans backed military action, a plurality (42.9%) of Democrats opposed it and a plurality of undecided were undecided about the issue.
- While a majority (75.3%) of those who were “very religious” backed military action, a plurality (40.9%) of those “not at all religious” also supported the use of force.
- Majorities of males (65.5%) and females (63.5%) supported using force.
- Those who supported using force the most were aged 18-35 (70.5%), while the age cohorts most opposed to military action were aged 50-61 and 62+ (24.4%).

**5. AFFORDABLE CARE ACT MEDICAL LEGISLATION**

A question about the Affordable Care Act was worded: “Based upon what you know, do you support or oppose the 2010 passage of the Affordable Care Act medical legislation?” A majority of 51.6% of those surveyed answered “oppose”.

In the 2010 survey, 60.8% of those polled opposed the measure.

**AFFORDABLE CARE ACT MEDICAL LEGISLATION**

<u>Support</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Partially Support/Oppose</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
26.4%	51.6%	7.4%	14.6%	100%

**Statistically Significant Relationships:**

- Majorities of those opposed (80.3%), undecided (67.2%), or supportive (50.8%) of the legislation also supported R-120 which would restrict some abortions.
- Majorities of individuals opposed (87.4%) supportive (54.1%), or undecided (80.6%) about the act favored drug testing for individuals receiving social service benefits.
- A majority (71.4%) of Democrats backed the legislation. A majority (82%) of Republicans opposed it and a plurality (97.9%) of independents and undecided (40%) voter opposed it.
- A majority (55.4%) of individuals saying they were economically better off than four years ago backed the act. In contrast, a majority (77.6%) of interviewees saying they were worse off than four years ago opposed the legislation.
- Income was not related to opinion about the legislation.
- Gender was not related to opinions about the legislation.
- A majority of every age cohort opposed the law. The greatest opposition was found among those aged 50-61 (58%).

## II. THE 2012 MONTANA PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

### VOTE INTENT IN 2012 MONTANA PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

The question regarding voting in the 2012 presidential election was phrased: “If this year’s presidential election were being held today, whom do you think you would vote for?” A plurality (49%) of those interviewed replied Romney.

<u>Democrat</u> <u>Barack Obama</u>	<u>Republican</u> <u>Mitt Romney</u>	<u>Libertarian</u> <u>Garv Johnson</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
34.5%	49%	2.7%	3.4%	10.4%	100%

#### Statistically Significant Relationships:

- Among Democrats, 91.4% planned on voting for Obama, 2.9% for Romney and 3.8% were undecided.
  1. Among Republicans 89% were Romney voters, 1.7% backed Obama and 5.8% were undecided.
  2. In terms of independents, 40.2% backed Romney, 33.1% Obama and 16% were undecided.
- Majorities of Mitt Romney’s (90.1%) and Barack Obama’s (75.3%) supporters supported free speech over offending foreign nationals.
- A majority (73.4%) of those opposed to leaving Afghanistan backed Romney, while a plurality (45%) of Obama voters supported leaving Afghanistan early
- Majorities of Romney (85.8%) and undecided (44.9%) voters opposed the Affordable Care Act. In contrast, a majority (69.9%) of Obama voters back the legislation.
- The use of social media and support for presidential candidates was not significant.
- Majorities of Romney (90.4%), Obama (51.4%) and undecided (67.4%) voters backed building the XL pipeline.
- Majorities of Romney (80.3%), undecided (56.5%) and Obama (50.9%) voters backed trapping wolves.
- In terms of religion, a majority (66.5%) of those saying they were “very religious” supported Romney. On the other hand, a majority (72.7%) of respondents claiming they were “not religious at all” were Obama voters.

- In terms of their economic situation compared to 4 years ago, 67.3% of those feeling they were “better off” backed Obama, while 76% of those responding “worse off” supported Romney.
- Income was not related to presidential vote intent.
- Gender was not related to vote intent.
- Age was not related to vote intent.

Next a series of four questions was asked about the competency/personal opinion of the candidates in various areas.

**A. Best at Reducing the Deficit**

The first question asked the respondents which of the candidates would be “best at reducing the deficit?” A majority (52%) of those responding said “Romney.”

**BEST AT REDUCING THE DEFICIT**

<u>Democrat</u> <u>Barack Obama</u>	<u>Republican</u> <u>Mitt Romney</u>	<u>Libertarian</u> <u>Gary Johnson</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
<b>28.7%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>1.7%</b>	<b>17.6%</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Statistically Significant Relationships:**

- A majority (80%) of Democrats felt Obama would be best at reducing the deficit. A majority (91.3%) of Republicans, and plurality of independents (43.5%) favored Romney.
- A majority (56.4%) saying they were “better off than four years ago backed Obama, while a majority (79.6%) saying “worse off” liked Romney. Those replying “about the same” divided about equally between favoring Romney (39%) or Obama (37.7%).
- Those earning less than \$20,000 a year were the only cohort in which a plurality (39.2%) of the respondents favored Obama over Romney in handling the deficit. The income group most supportive of Romney (54%) on this issue earned \$50,000-75,000 a year.
- Gender was not significant in responses to this question.
- Age was not significant in responses to this question.

## **B. Candidate Best at Dealing with International Relations**

The next question asked was which candidate would be, “best at dealing with international relations?” A plurality (42.7%) of those polled replied “Romney.” The result for this question falls within the margin of error for this poll.

### **CANDIDATE BEST AT DEALING WITH INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

<b><u>Democrat</u> <u>Barack Obama</u></b>	<b><u>Republican</u> <u>Mitt Romney</u></b>	<b><u>Libertarian</u> <u>Gary Johnson</u></b>	<b><u>Undecided</u></b>	<b><u>Total</u></b>
<b>40.3%</b>	<b>42.7%</b>	<b>2.1%</b>	<b>14.9%</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### **Statistically Significant Relationships:**

- A majority of 92.4% of Democrats and plurality (43.2%) of independents felt Obama could best handle international relations issues, while 77.8% of Republicans favored Romney in this policy area.
- Majorities of Romney (90.1%) and Obama (75.3%) supporters backed free speech over offending foreign nationals.
- A majority (51.8%) of those supporting leaving Afghanistan early felt Obama would do the best job at handling international relations. A majority (70.2%) of individuals opposed to an early pullout said Romney could best handle international relations.
- A majority of those (68%) opposing military action against Iran felt Obama would best deal with international issues. In contrast, a majority (55.6%) who backed military action against Iran think Romney would best deal with international affairs.
- Gender was not related to opinions on this issue.
- Age was not related to opinions on this issue.
- Income was not related to opinions on this issue.

### C. Best at Dealing with the Economy

A majority of the interviewees (54.3 %) thought Mitt Romney would be best at “dealing with the economy.”

#### BEST AT DEALING WITH THE ECONOMY

<u>Democrat</u> <u>Barack Obama</u>	<u>Republican</u> <u>Mitt Romney</u>	<u>Libertarian</u> <u>Gary Johnson</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
32.1%	54.3%	1.3%	12.3%	100%

#### Statistically Significant Relationships:

- A majority (85.7%) of Democrats favored Obama in dealing with the economy. A majority (91.9%) of Republicans favored Romney. A plurality (47.9%) of independents also favored Romney in this policy area.
- 59.4% of individuals saying they were “better off” economically than four years ago supported Obama in this area. A majority (80.1%) of those feeling “worse off” supported Romney.
- Income was not related to responses to this question.
- Gender was not related to responses to this question.
- Age was not related to responses to this question.

### D. Is the Most Likeable

A plurality (46.2%) of the interviewees said that “Barack Obama” was the “most likeable candidate.”

#### THE MOST LIKEABLE CANDIDATE

<u>Democrat</u> <u>Barack Obama</u>	<u>Republican</u> <u>Mitt Romney</u>	<u>Libertarian</u> <u>Gary Johnson</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
46.2%	32.8%	2.3%	18.7%	100%

#### Statistically Significant Relationships:

- A majority (87.6%) of Democrats and plurality (46.7%) of independents said Obama was most likeable. A majority (59.3%) of Republicans felt Romney was most likeable.

- Income was not related to responses on this question.
- Age was not related to responses on this question.
- Gender was not related to responses on this question.

### III. 2012 MONTANA CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS

#### 3. MONTANA’S 2012 U. S. HOUSE CONTEST

When asked, “if this year’s U. S. House race were being held today, whom would you vote for, a plurality (37.7%) of the interviewees replied “undecided.” The results for this question fall within the margin of error for this poll.

#### VOTE INTENT IN MONTANA’S 2012 U. S. HOUSE RACE

<u>Democrat</u> <u>Kim Gillan</u>	<u>Republican</u> <u>Steve Daines</u>	<u>Libertarian</u> <u>David Kaiser</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
22.6%	36.3%	3.4%	37.7%	100%

#### Statistically Significant Relationships:

- Among Democratic voters 64.8% backed Gillan, 4.8% Daines, 1.9% Kaiser and 28.6% were undecided.
  1. Among Republicans 2.9% supported Gillan, 61.6% Daines, 1.2% Kaiser and 34.3% were undecided.
  2. In terms of independent voters, 18.8% backed Gillan, 32% Daines, 7.1% Kaiser and 42.6% were undecided.
- 63.6% of Romney voters said they would vote for Daines, while 31.2% of Romney’s undecided supporters remained undecided about this race. 57.1% of Obama voters backed Gillan, while 34.8% of his undecided voters remained undecided about the House contest. Among independents in the presidential race, a majority (74.5%) remained undecided about their U. S. House race vote.
- In terms of voters in the U.S. Senate race, 64.8% of Denny Rehberg supporters planned on voting for Steve Daines. In Terms of Jon Tester voters 53% planned on voting for Gillan, and 71.4% of undecided voters in the Senate contest remained undecided about this race.
- A majority (66%) of Gillan voters supported the Affordable Care Act. A majority (78.8%) of Daines voters and 50% of undecided opposed it.
- Majorities of Daines (81.5%) undecided (69.4%) and Gillan (52.9%) voters backed Referendum 120 which would place some new restrictions on abortion.
- Majorities of Daines (70.8%), Gillan (53.8%) and undecided (51.4%) supporters also backed Referendum 124 which would restrict marijuana use.

- Pluralities of Daines (42.2%) voters backed drug testing to receive social services. Pluralities of Gillan (42.6%) and undecided (38.2%) voters opposed this proposal.
- Use of social media was not related to vote intent.
- Majorities of Daines (89.3%), undecided (69.4%) and Gillan (58.7%) voters in the House race backed building the XL pipeline.
- Majorities of Daines (80.4%), undecided (61.8%) and Gillan (52.9%) U. S. House voters supported wolves trapping.
- A plurality (48.5%) of Gillan backers were “somewhat religious” and a plurality (48.2%) of Daines voters “very religious.”
- Income was not related to vote intent.
- Gender was not related to vote intent.

## V. 2012 STATE OF MONTANA ELECTION CONTESTS

### 1. 2012 MONTANA ELECTION FOR GOVERNOR

The question regarding the contest for Governor was worded, “if Montana’s gubernatorial election were being held today, for whom do you think you would vote?” A plurality (40.3%) of those polled replied “Rick Hill.” The results for this question fall within the margin of error for this poll.

#### 2012 MONTANA ELECTION FOR GOVERNOR

<u>Republican</u> <u>Rick Hill</u>	<u>Democrat</u> <u>Steve Bullock</u>	<u>Libertarian</u> <u>Ron Vandevender</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
40.3%	38.1%	1.5%	20.1%	100%

#### Statistically Significant Relationship:

- Among Democrats 89.5% said they would vote for Bullock, 1.9% Hill and 8.6% were undecided.
  1. In terms of Republicans, 75% were Hill voters, 4.1% supported Bullock,. 6% Vandevender and 20.3% were undecided.
  2. Among independents, 42% liked Bullock, 29.6% Hill, 3% Vandevender and 25.4% were undecided.
- 71.4% of Romney voters said they would support Rick Hill. In terms of Obama voters, 82% would vote for Bullock. A majority (55.3%) of the undecided voters in the presidential race also remained undecided about the gubernatorial contest.
- 77.4% of Dennis Rehberg voters in the U.S. Senate race backed Hill, 7% Bullock, 1% Vandevender and 14.6% were undecided. 76.8% of Tester voters backed Bullock, 5.9% Hill and 16.8% were undecided. Among undecided U.S. Senate

voters, 18.2% liked Bullock, 20% Hill, 1.8% Vandevender and 60% remained undecided about their vote for Governor.

- 88.7% of Kim Gillan voters in the race for the U. S. House said they would vote for Bullock, 2.8% Hill, .9% Vandevender and 7.5% were undecided. 71.8% of Steve Daines voters supported Hill, 17.1% Bullock, 1.2% Vandevender and 10% were undecided. Among undecided House voters 33.1% liked Hill, 28% Bullock and 38.3% were undecided about their vote for Governor.
- In terms of voting for Montana House of Representative candidates, 84.6% of Democrats House voters supported Bullock, 2.8% Hill and 11.2% were undecided. Among Republican Montana House voters, 68.4% were voting for Hill, 9.7% Bullock and 20.3% were undecided. Of the undecided voters, 37.5% liked Bullock, 25% Hill and 36.2% remained undecided about their Montana House of Representatives vote.
- A majority (55.6%) of Bullock backers supported the Affordable Care Act. A majority (85.1%) of Hill and plurality (48.9%) of undecided voters opposed the bill.
- Majorities of Hill (82.3%) and Bullock (60%) voters supported the abortion referendum.
- A plurality (46.7%) of Hill voters backed the marijuana ballot issue, while a plurality (48.9%) of Bullock voters opposed it.
- Majorities of Hill (89.2%) and Bullock (61.7%) voters favored building the XL pipeline.
- Majorities of Hill (81.7%) and Bullock (58.9%) voters backed trapping wolves.
- While a majority (60.7%) of voters feeling “worse off” economically than four years ago backed Hill, a majority of voters who felt “better off” (63.4%) backed Bullock.
- Income was not related to vote intention.
- Gender was not related to vote intention.
- Age was not related to vote intention.