



THE MSU-BILLINGS POLL:

NATIONAL, STATE, AND LOCAL ISSUES

OCTOBER 2010



***DR. CRAIG WILSON, DR. SCOTT RICKARD
DR. DAN LENNON
CO-DIRECTORS***

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

The following students participated in the survey project:

Adam Frickel
Amanda Moats
Ashley Wagner
Autumn Bergen
Brian Anton
Carly Knight
Casey Smart
Casinda Elder
Chris Hurt
Chris Lindgren
Corinna Waters
Cory Keltner
Dani Elliot
Derek Morris
Dylan German
Emily Herrick
Erik Rathie
Heather Ledger
Heather Schwindt
Heidi Graves
James Catlin
James Henry
Joel Grinder
Josie Greene
Katalin Walker
Kathy Lindell

Katie Jaworski
Kayla Stieg
Kristen Olson
Lauren Anderson
Lisa Butler
Mike Ellinghouse
Natasha Jespersen
Nolan Wahl
Paula Syring
ReAnna Kero
Rebecca Samoville
Rhea Gaurneau
Richard Hurlocker
Roger Madriz
Sam Brauer
Sarah Mollett
Stephanie Pendergrass
Stephen Tanner
Steve Grinder
Sydni Roma
Tarn Potter
Taylor Cook
Teah Watson
Travis Noonkester
Tyler Gilder
Whitney Mickelsen

INTRODUCTION

The “MSU-Billings Poll” began in 1989. This is the twenty-second year the survey has been conducted. During this period twenty-five 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). We would like to thank Ms. Brenda Dockery for serving as the supervisor for this research project, Ms. Jonna Jones for also assisting us and Ms. Sandra Haley for again word processing the survey results.

This report summarizes the results of a statewide random sample telephone survey of adult Montanans who were registered to vote. No questions were asked about Montana’s U. S. House of Representative race because Craig Wilson’s son is working in Dennis Rehberg’s campaign. The poll was conducted October 19-22. Students enrolled in Political Science 342, Media, Public Opinion, Polling and Sociology 318, Sociological Research Methods, completed 416 interviews for this survey. These included 88 cell phone completions. 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 using MSU-Billings’ CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) software. This year the number of calling stations was expanded from 6 to 15. Multiple 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

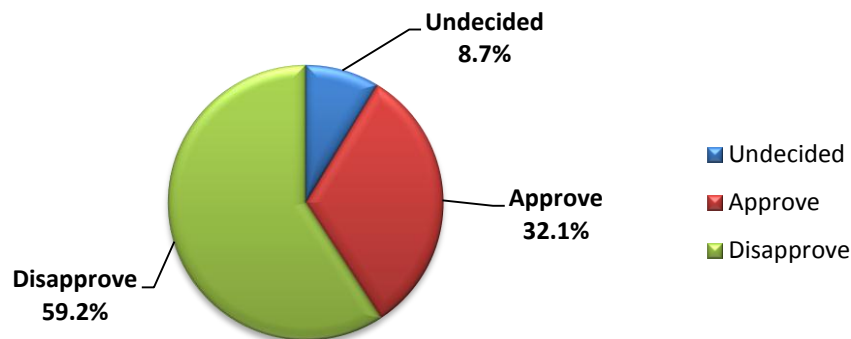
1. PRESIDENT OBAMA'S OVERALL PERFORMANCE IN OFFICE

President Barack Obama's Overall Job Performance

This is the second 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 (59.2%) answered "disapprove."

In comparison, last year 53% of those questioned replied "disapprove" and 37% said "approve."

2009 President Obama's Overall Job Performance



Statistically Significant Relationships:

- A bigger majority of males (68.2%) than females (51.9%) disapproved of his job performance.
- Age was not related to opinions regarding the President's job performance.
- Educational level was not related to opinions about the President's performance.
- While a majority (71.6%) of Democrats approved of his performance, a majority (91.2%) of Republicans and plurality (47.6%) of independents did not.
- A majority (69.8%) of those who felt in an overall sense that Obama was doing a good job approved of his handling of foreign policy. But a majority (96.4%) of those disapproving of his job performance felt he was doing a bad job in the area of foreign affairs.
- A majority (84.4%) who approved of Obama's overall job performance thought he was doing a "good job" handling the economy. But a majority (88.6%) disapproving of his overall performance felt he was doing a "bad job" dealing with the economy.
- A majority (60.3%) of individuals who approved of the job he is doing did not think the U.S. is in a recession. But a majority (67.2%) disapproving of the overall job the President is doing said the U.S. was in a recession.

- A majority (80.7%) of those disapproving of his job performance supported the Iraq war. But a majority (51.5%) of the respondents approving of his conduct opposed the war.
- A majority (69%) of respondents disapproving of the President's performance in office supported the Afghanistan war. A plurality (39.1%) of those approving of the President opposed the war.
- A majority (75.8%) of those disapproving of the President's job performance, opposed abolishing "don't ask, don't tell" policy. An equal plurality of interviewees who both approved (45.2%) and disapproved (45.2%) of his job performance also opposed abolishing the policy.
- A majority (73.7%) of respondents who approved of the job the President had done supported the healthcare reform legislation enacted into law. A majority (82%) disapproving of his performance opposed the legislation.

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

In reply to the question, "At this point in time, do you believe that President Obama is doing a good job, or a bad job, in managing U.S. foreign relations," a plurality (45.4%) of those interviewed said "bad job." Last year, in response to a similarly worded question, 42% of those polled answered both "good job" and "bad job."

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

<u>Good Job</u>	<u>Bad Job</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
40%	45.4%	14.6%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- While a majority (55.9%) of individuals with a post-graduate education said the President was doing a good job in this area, a plurality of respondents with some college/degree (47.3%) and those with a high school degree or less (50%) felt he was doing a bad job in foreign policy.
- A majority (79.7%) of Democrats approved on his performance in this area, while a majority of Republicans (75.1%) and plurality (40.5%) of independents did not.

3. **PRESIDENT OBAMA'S ABILITY TO MANAGE THE U.S. ECONOMY**

A majority (62.7%) of those polled replied "bad job" when asked: "In an overall sense, do you believe that President Obama is doing a good job, or a bad job in managing the U.S. economy?"

Last year in answering a similar question 56% of those polled said "bad job."

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

<u>Good Job</u>	<u>Bad Job</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
29%	62.7%	8.3%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationship:

- A majority (65.5%) of Democrats answered “good job.” Majorities of Republicans (91.7%) and independents (52.4%) replied “bad job.”
- More males (68.7%) than females (57%) disapproved of the President’s handling of the economy.

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

In reply to the query, “did you support or oppose the United States’ decision to go to war against Iraq,” a plurality (47.1%) of the respondents said “oppose.” The results for this question fall within the +/- 5% margin of error for this survey. Last year in response to a similar question a plurality (48%) of those surveyed also replied “oppose.” The results for this question fall within the +/- 5% margin of error for this poll.

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

<u>Support</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
44.5%	47.1%	8.3%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- A majority (55.7%) of males approved of the war, a majority (56.9%) of females disapproved.
- Age was not related to opinions about the war.
- Education was not related to opinions about the war.
- Majorities of Democrats (79.7%) and independents (59.5%) opposed the war. A majority (69.8%) of Republicans backed it.

5. 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 (51.6%) of those replying to this question replied “support.”

When a similar question was asked last year a majority (54%) of individuals said “support.”

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

<u>Support</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
51.6%	37.2%	11.2%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- A majority (59.8%) of males backed the war, a majority (63.6%) of females opposed it.
- Age was not related to opinions about the war.
- A plurality (40.4%) of those with a high school degree or less opposed the war. While majorities of those with some college or a degree (56.4%) and a post-graduate education (56.7%) supported to conflict.
- A majority (59.5%) of independents and plurality (49%) of Democrats opposed the conflict. A majority (65.9%) of Republicans supported it.
- A majority (82.3%) of individuals backing the Afghanistan War also supported the war in Iraq. In contrast, a majority (64.1%) of respondents opposed to the Afghanistan conflict opposed the Iraq war.

6. IS PRESIDENT OBAMA A MUSLIN?

In response the question, “Do you believe that President Obama is a Muslim,” a majority (63.5%) of those surveyed replied “no.”

IS PRESIDENT OBAMA A MUSLIM

<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
17.2%	63.5%	19.3%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationship:

- 28.9% of those with a high school degree or less, 14.1% of individuals with some college/degree and 7.5% of respondents with a post-graduate degree said they believed the President is Muslim.

7. U. S. ECONOMY STILL IN ECONOMIC RECESSION

When asked, “Do you think the U.S. economy is still in a recession,” a majority (80.5%) of those surveyed replied “yes.”

U. S. ECONOMY STILL IN RECESSION

<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
80.5%	13.8%	5.7%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- Larger majorities of respondents with a high school degree or less (84.2%), or some college/degree (83.2%) felt the U.S. was in a recession than was true for those with a post-graduate (67.6%) degree.
- Majorities of Democrats (66.2%), Republicans (90.2%) and independents (78.6%) said the U.S. was in a recession.

8. SUPPORT FOR ABOLISHING “DON’T ASK, DON’T TELL” POLICY

A plurality of the interviewees (47.4%) said “support”, when asked, “Would you support or oppose the U.S. abolishing its don’t ask don’t tell law regarding gays serving in the military.”

Last year when asked about President Obama’s pledge to end “don’t ask don’t tell,” the respondents answering the question were evenly divided (40%-40%) in both supporting and opposing the President’s intention.

SUPPORT FOR ABOLISHING “DON’T ASK, DON’T TELL” POLICY

<u>Support</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
47.4%	29.5%	23.1%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- Gender was not related to opinions on this issue.
- Majorities of Democrats (65.5%) and independents (52.4%) want to change the policy. A plurality (40.5%) of Republicans do not.

9. OPINION ABOUT HEALTHCARE REFORM LEGISLATION

A majority (60.8%) of the interviewees replied “oppose” when asked, “Do you support the healthcare reform legislation enacted into law by the federal government this year?”

OPINION ABOUT HEALTHCARE REFORM LEGISLATION

<u>Support</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
27.1%	60.8%	12.1%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- A larger majority of males (66.2%) than females (55.1%) opposed the legislation.
- Age was not related to opinions about the healthcare law.
- The greatest support for the bill existed among those with a post-graduate education (38.2%). The greatest opposition was found among respondents who had some college/degree (64.5%).
- A majority (59.5%) of Democrats backed the law. Majorities of Republicans (86.8%) and independents (59.5%) did not.

10. MONTANA WOLVES ON FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S LIST OF ENDANGERED SPECIES

A majority (69.2%) of the interviewees replied “no” when asked: “Do you believe that wolves in Montana should be on the federal government’s list of endangered species?”

In last year’s poll those interviewed were asked if they thought that “wolf hunting should be permitted in Montana.” A majority (75%) favored allowing hunting.

MONTANA WOLVES ON FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S LIST OF ENDANGERED SPECIES

<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
22.8%	69.2%	8%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- More males (75.4%) than females (63.7%) said wolves should not be on the list.
- A majority of every age cohort opposed having wolves listed, except for a plurality (41%) of those aged 18-29, who favored listing wolves.
- The greatest support for listing wolves was found among those with a post-graduate education (38.2%), while the greatest opposition to listing them existed among those with a high school degree or less (73.7%).
- Majorities of Republicans (88.8%) and independents (64.3%), as well as a plurality (45.9%) of Democrats, opposed listing wolves.

II. STATE ISSUES AND MONTANA GENERAL ELECTION

1. 2010 MONTANA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ELECTION

A question about this 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 election were held today do you think you would vote for the Republican or the Democratic candidate in your district?" A plurality (49%) of those polled replied "Republican".

Last year, in response to a question worded in terms of this year's election about this year's election, 42% the respondents answered Republican and 28% Democrat.

MONTANA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ELECTION

<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
49%	34.7%	16.3%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- Gender was not related to vote intention.
- Age was not related to vote intent.
- A majority (81.9%) of Democrats supported their parties' candidates and a majority (88.3%) of Republicans back GOP candidates. A majority (52.4%) of independents were undecided about their vote.

2. SUPREME COURT RACE

The question regarding this years' Montana Supreme Court race was worded: "In a non-partisan race for a Justice position on the Montana Supreme Court, Beth Baker and Nels Swandal (alternate names) are the candidates. If the election were held today would you vote for [Swandal or Baker]". A majority (58.4%) of those polled said they were "undecided" whom they would vote for.

SUPREME COURT RACE

<u>Baker</u>	<u>Swandal</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
20.6%	21.1%	58.3%	100%

3. **CI-105 REAL ESTATE TAX INITIATIVE**

A majority (60.6%) of the interviewees replied “support”, when asked: “One ballot issue, CI-105, which will be voted on in this year’s general election would amend the Montana Constitution to prohibit state and local governments from imposing any new tax on real estate sales and trades. Do you support or oppose this measure?”

CI-105 REAL ESTATE TAX INITIATIVE

<u>Support</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
60.6%	29.4%	10%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- A bigger majority of males (64.2%) than females (57.3%) said they supported the initiative.
- Majorities of Republicans (69.3%) and independents (57.1%) back the measure, as did a plurality (49.3%) of Democrats

4. **I-164 INITIATIVE ON LOAN INTEREST RATES**

In reply to the question: “Initiative 164, would cap at 36 percent the annual interest, fees and charges that payday, title and retail installment lenders could charge on loans. Do you favor or opposed this initiative?” A majority (63.3%) of the respondents answered “support.”

I-164 INITIATIVE ON LOAN INTEREST RATES

<u>Support</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
63.3%	21.8%	14.9%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationship:

- Majorities of Democrats (73.5%) and Republicans (60%) backed the proposal, as did half (50%) of independents.

5. **I-161 OUTFITTERS SPONSORED HUNTING LICENSES**

The question on I-161 was phrased: “Initiative 161, would abolish 5,500 outfitter-sponsored non-resident big-game and deer combined hunting licenses. These 5,500 non-resident big game licenses would be made available to hunters not sponsored by outfitters. It would also increase the cost of non-resident big game licenses and provide increased revenue

for hunting access and habitat restoration projects. If voting today, would you support or oppose this measure?” A plurality (49.7%) of the respondents answered “support.”

I-161 OUTFITTER SPONSORED HUNTING LICENSES

<u>Support</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
49.7%	31.9%	18.4%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- A majority or plurality of every age cohort supported the measure, except for those 18-29 years old, a plurality of whom (48.7%) opposed the initiative.
- Majorities of independents (59.5%) and Democrats (53.7%) backed the proposal as did a plurality (45.1%) of Republicans.

6. VOTE ON BALLOT ISSUE ON CALLING A MONTANA CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

The vote required every twenty years regarding the calling of a Constitutional Convention in Montana was worded: “Another ballot issue requires Montanans to vote every 20 years on whether or not they want to hold another state constitutional convention to consider changing that document. Do you favor or oppose holding a new constitutional convention?” A majority (52.7%) of the respondents answered “oppose.”

VOTE ON BALLOT ISSUE ON CALLING A MONTANA CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

<u>Favor</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
31.6%	52.7%	15.7%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- A majority (58%) of males and plurality (47.6%) of females did not want to call a convention.
- A majority or plurality of every age cohort opposed calling a constitutional convention, except for a plurality (41%) of those aged 30-39, who supported the measure.

7. **OPINION REGARDING REPEALING MONTANA’S MEDICAL MARIJUANA LAW**

A plurality (47%) of those interviewed said “support,” when asked: “Do you support or oppose the next legislature repealing Montana’s existing medical marijuana law?”

OPINION REGARDING REPEALING MONTANA’S MEDICAL MARIJUANA LAW

<u>Support</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
47%	37.1%	15.9%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- Age was not related to opinions about this issue.
- A majority of independents (52.4%) and plurality (45.3%) of Democrats opposed repeal. A majority (55.6%) of Republicans supported repeal.
- A majority (53.7%) of individuals supporting the repeal of the law also voiced support for mandatory blood alcohol testing. In contrast, a plurality (45.8%) of those opposed to repealing the law also opposed mandatory blood tests.
- A plurality (47.9%) of respondents opposing repeal of the marijuana law also supported legalizing same sex marriage. But a majority (58.2%) of individuals backing repeal of the law, opposed legalizing same sex marriage.

8. **MANDATORY BLOOD ALCOHOL TEST**

In reply to a question worded: “Would you support or oppose a state law which would allow police officers to obtain a warrant at any time, which would allow them to take a blood alcohol test from individuals suspected of driving while drunk?” A majority (65.7%) of those surveyed answered “support.”

MANDATORY BLOOD ALCOHOL TEST

<u>Support</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
65.7%	28.5%	5.8%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationship:

- Age was not related to opinions on this issue.

9. OPINION ABOUT LEGALIZING SAME SEX MARRIAGE IN MONTANA

A majority (51.6%) of these interviewed responded “oppose” when asked: “Do you support or oppose legalizing same sex marriage in Montana?”

OPINION ABOUT LEGALIZING SAME SEX MARRIAGE IN MONTANA

<u>Support</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
33.9%	51.6%	14.5%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- A majority or plurality of those aged 18-29, 30-39 and 49-49 support legalization. But majorities of respondents aged 50-59 (53.3%) and 60+ (61.3%) opposed it.
- A majority (58.5%) of Democrats and plurality of independents (45.2%) supported repeal. A majority (72.2%) of Republicans backed repeal.
- 50% of those with a post-graduate degree backed legalization, while majorities of respondents with some college/degree (54.2%) and a high school degree or less (60.2%) opposed legalization.

10. INFLUENCE OF TEA PARTY MOVEMENT ON POLITICAL OPINIONS

A question regarding the impact of the Tea Party movement was phrased: “To what extent does the Tea Party movement reflect your political opinions?” A plurality (34.8%) of the respondents replied “not at all.”

INFLUENCE OF TEA PARTY MOVEMENT ON POLITICAL OPINIONS

<u>Great Deal</u>	<u>Moderately</u>	<u>Seldom</u>	<u>Not At All</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
17.1%	23.9%	15.5%	34.8%	8.7%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- Support or opposition to the Tea Party movement was not related to age.
- In terms of partisanship, those with the greatest tendency to say “a great deal” were Republicans (30.2%). Those most likely to answer “not at all” were Democrats (64.9%).

11. MONTANA CLEAN AIR ACT BANNING SMOKING IN SOME ESTABLISHMENTS

The question regarding the Clean Air Act was worded: “On October 1, 2009, Montana adopted the Clean Air Act, which bans smoking in all restaurants, bars, and casinos. Has your attendance to these establishments increased, decreased, or remained the same since the ban was put into effect?” A majority (58%) of those polled answered “remained the same.”

Last year when asked this identical question 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>
28%	11.8%	58%	2.2%	100%

12. 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 (91.8%) of those interviewed replied “illegal.”

In response to an identical question asked in last year’s survey, a majority (90%) of the respondents replied “illegal.”

LEGALITY OF CELL PHONE TEXTING IN MONTANA

<u>Legal</u>	<u>Illegal</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
4.6%	91.8%	3.6%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationship:

- The only age cohort among whom support for cell phone use exceeded 5% was found among the 18-29 (20.5%) cohort.