

# THE FIELD POLL

THE INDEPENDENT AND NON-PARTISAN SURVEY  
OF PUBLIC OPINION ESTABLISHED IN 1947 AS  
THE CALIFORNIA POLL BY MERVIN FIELD

## Field Research Corporation

601 California Street, Suite 900  
San Francisco, CA 94108-2814  
(415) 392-5763 FAX: (415) 434-2541  
EMAIL: [fieldpoll@field.com](mailto:fieldpoll@field.com)  
[www.field.com/fieldpollonline](http://www.field.com/fieldpollonline)

COPYRIGHT 2010 BY FIELD RESEARCH CORPORATION.

Release #2332

Release Date and Time: **6:00 a.m., Friday, March 19, 2010**

---

**DECLINING MAJORITY OF CALIFORNIANS APPROVE OF OBAMA'S PERFORMANCE. MIXED APPRAISAL OF HIS HANDLING OF HEALTH CARE. JUST 12% APPROVE OF THE JOB CONGRESS IS DOING, A RECORD LOW. DIM VIEW OF ITS HANDLING OF HEALTH CARE.**

IMPORTANT: Contract for this service is subject to revocation if publication or broadcast takes place before release date or if contents are divulged to persons outside of subscriber staff prior to release time. (ISSN 0195-4520)

---

By Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

Slightly more than half of California voters (52%) approves of President Barack Obama's overall job performance. This represents a continuing slide in the President's ratings from the 65% high mark he received one year ago, shortly after taking office.

Voters are now evenly split in their assessment of Obama's handling of the issue of health care, with 45% approving and 45% disapproving. This however is an improvement from January when more voters disapproved by a 53% to 39% margin. Most of the improvement comes from Democrats, who are now more than three times as likely to approve as disapprove of the President's performance on health care.

Nearly eight in ten Californians (79%) now disapprove of the job the U.S. Congress is doing, while just 12% approve. These are the lowest assessments that Californians have ever given that body in *Field Poll* measurements dating back nearly twenty years. The recent decline in voters' overall appraisal of the Congress' performance coincides with voters' very negative appraisal of the way Congress is handling the issue of health care. The current poll finds 80% of voters disapproving of Congress' performance in this area.

These are the findings from the latest *Field Poll* conducted March 9-15 among a random sample of the state's registered voters.

### **Obama's overall job rating continues to slide**

A small majority (52%) of California voters now approves of the job that Obama is doing, while 37% disapprove. This represents a continuing slide in the President's ratings. In March 2009 a very large majority of this state's voters (65%) gave Obama a positive job rating and just 21% rated him negatively. However, in each of three subsequent measures there has been a steady erosion in his job approval ratings.

---

**Table 1**  
**Trend of Californians' views about the job Barack Obama**  
**is doing as President**  
**(among registered voters)**

---

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
<b>March 2010</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>11</b>
January 2010	56%	34	10
October 2009	60%	31	9
March 2009	65%	21	14

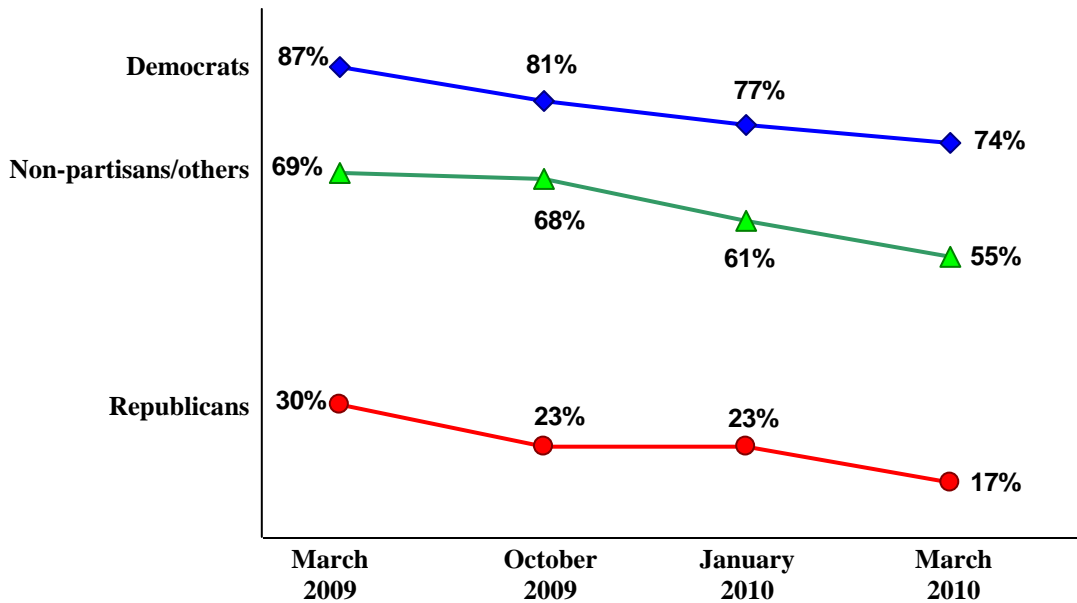
---

### **Huge partisan differences**

There is a huge partisan gap in voter perceptions of the job performance of the President. While nearly three in four Democrats (74%) and a majority of non-partisans (55%) approve of Obama, among Republicans just 17% approve.

Obama's continuing decline in approval is occurring among voters in all parties. One year ago 87% of Democrats approved of his performance overall. Now approval is 74%. Among non-partisans voter assessments have declined from 69% in March 2009 to 55% at present. Among Republicans the President's 17% approval rating is about half what it was one year ago (30%).

**Table 2**  
**Trend of Obama's job approval by party registration**  
**(among California registered voters)**



### **Obama's rating on health care issue**

Californians are now evenly divided – 45% approving and 45% disapproving – in their appraisal of the job the President is doing in handling the issue of health care. This is an improvement over what it was two months ago. At that time just 39% approved of his performance on this issue, while 53% disapproved.

All of this improvement comes from the state's Democratic voters. Democrats now rate the President's handling of health care in a positive light by more than a three to one margin (70% to 21%).

By contrast, Republicans continue to have a very negative view of Obama's handling of this issue. Among GOPers 80% disapprove while just 14% approve.

Non-partisans are more negative than positive in their assessments, with 38% approving of the President and 45% disapproving, similar to what was found two months ago.

**Table 3**  
**Trend of California voter opinions about President Obama's  
handling of the issue of health care  
(among registered voters)**

	March 2010			January 2010		
	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
<b>Total statewide</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>10</b>	39%	53	8
<u>Party registration</u>						
Democrats	70%	21	9	59%	33	8
Republicans	14%	80	6	16%	80	4
Non-partisans/others	38%	45	17	41%	44	15

**Record low appraisal of the Congress**

Just 12% of this state's voters now approve of the job the Congress is doing, while 79% disapprove. This is by far the most negative assessment of that body ever found by *The Field Poll* during its nearly twenty years of tracking congressional job performance in California.

Voters' very negative appraisal of the Congress spans all partisan subgroups, with 14% of Democrats, 6% of Republicans and 15% of non-partisans approving.

**Table 4**  
**Trend of Californians' views of the job performance**  
**of the U.S. Congress**  
**(among registered voters)**

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
<b>March 2010</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>9</b>
January 2010	24%	66	10
October 2009	23%	66	11
March 2009	34%	53	13
December 2007	20%	66	14
October 2007	22%	64	14
August 2007	20%	66	14
March 2007	35%	50	15
May 2006	23%	64	13
April 2006	24%	66	10
August 2004	33%	52	15
April 2003	50%	39	11
April 2002	48%	39	13
January 2002	54%	33	13
December 2001	57%	32	11
May 2001	51%	38	11
January 2001	53%	35	12
August 2000	54%	34	12
June 2000	40%	48	12
February 2000	42%	42	16
October 1999	30%	60	10
March 1999	37%	54	9
August 1998	57%	33	10
August 1997	38%	51	11
February 1997	36%	46	18
June 1996	38%	59	3
February 1996	25%	68	7
September 1995	36%	58	6
May 1995	44%	51	5
September 1994	33%	62	5
July 1992	24%	71	5
January 1992	32%	67	1
<b>Party (March 2010)</b>			
Democrats	14%	77	9
Republicans	6%	86	8
Non-partisans/others	15%	75	10

*Note: For measures conducted prior to 1997, original surveys used a five-point response scale, which has been converted to a two-point approve/disapprove scale for comparative purposes. In addition, surveys conducted prior to 1997 were completed among a cross-section of all California adults, not just registered voters.*

**Dismal view of Congress’ handling of health care**

Last January just about one in four (23%) voters in this state gave Congress a positive evaluation of the way it was handling the issue of health care, while 69% disapproved.

That poor assessment, however, has gotten even worse over the past two months. Now, four out of five California voters (80%) disapprove of the way federal lawmakers are dealing with health care, while only 12% approve.

**Table 5**  
**Trend of California voter opinions about the U.S. Congress’**  
**handling of the issue of health care**  
**(among registered voters)**

	March 2010			January 2010		
	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
<b>Total statewide</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>8</b>	23%	69	8
<b><u>Party registration</u></b>						
Democrats	15%	79	6	33%	61	6
Republicans	9%	82	9	10%	85	5
Non-partisans/others	12%	80	8	23%	64	13

**Very partisan appraisals of the job each party is doing in addressing health care**

By a 58% to 31% margin voters have taken a negative view of the job congressional Democrats are doing in addressing health care. However, voter appraisals of congressional Republicans’ performance is even worse – 66% disapproving and 22% approving.

Views of the way each party is handling the issue are highly partisan. For example, this state’s rank-and-file Democrats give their party’s congressional Democrats a slightly more positive than negative rating in their handling of health care, while very large majorities of Republicans and non-partisans disapprove. Similarly, while Republicans have a slightly more positive than negative view of the way congressional Republicans are handling the issue, greater than seven in ten Democrats and non-partisans disapprove.

**Table 6**  
**Californians' views of the job the Democrats in Congress / the job**  
**the Republicans in Congress are doing in handling health care**  
**(among registered voters)**

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
<b>Job the Democrats in Congress</b>			
<b>are doing on health care</b>			
<b>Total voters</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>11</b>
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	49%	41	10
Republicans	9%	80	11
Non-partisans	24%	64	12
<b>Job the Republicans in Congress</b>			
<b>are doing on health care</b>			
<b>Total voters</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>12</b>
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	10%	82	8
Republicans	48%	36	16
Non-partisans	13%	72	15

## **Information About This Survey**

### **Sample Details**

The findings in this report are based on a *Field Poll* survey completed March 9-15, 2010 among a random sample of 503 registered voters statewide. Interviewing was conducted by telephone in English and Spanish with live interviewers working from Field Research's central location telephone interviewing facility.

Up to eight attempts were made to reach and interview each randomly selected voter on different days and times of day during the interviewing period. Interviewing was completed either a voter's landline phone or a cell phone depending on the source of the telephone listing from the voter file. In this survey approximately 17% of all interviews were completed through a cell phone contact. After the completion of interviewing, the overall sample was weighted to align it to its proper statewide proportions by party registration, region, and other demographic characteristics of the registered voter population.

Sampling error estimates applicable to the results of any probability-based survey depend on sample size as well as the percentage distribution being examined. The maximum sampling error estimates for results based on the overall sample is +/- 4.5 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. The maximum sampling error is based on results in the middle of the sampling distribution (i.e., percentages at or near 50%). Percentages at either end of the distribution (those closer to 10% or 90%) have a smaller margin of error. Findings from subgroups of the overall sample have somewhat larger sampling error levels. There are other potential sources of error in surveys besides sampling error. However, the overall design and execution of the survey sought to minimize these other sources of error.

### **Questions Asked**

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as President?

Do you approve or disapprove of the way President Obama is handling health care?

Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way Congress is doing its job?

Do you approve or disapprove of the way the Congress is handling health care?

What about the Democrats in Congress? Do you approve or disapprove of the way the Democrats in Congress are handling health care?

What about the Republicans in Congress? Do you approve or disapprove of the way the Republicans in Congress are handling health care?