



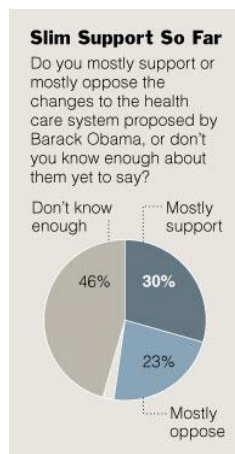
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In Poll, Public Wary of Obama on War and Health

President Obama is confronting declining support for his handling of the war in Afghanistan and an electorate confused and anxious about a health care overhaul as he prepares for pivotal battles over both issues, according to the latest New York Times/CBS News poll.

But Mr. Obama is going into the fall having retained considerable political strength. At 56 percent, his approval rating is down from earlier in the year but still reasonably strong at this point compared with recent presidents.



More Americans are starting to credit his stimulus package with having helped to revive the economy. And Mr. Obama retains a decided advantage with the American public over Republicans on prominent issues, starting with health care.

The poll found that an intense campaign by Mr. Obama to rally support behind his health care plan — including an address to Congress, a run of television interviews and rallies across the country — appears to have done little to allay concerns.

Majorities of respondents said that they were confused about the health care argument and that Mr. Obama had not done a good job in explaining what he was trying to accomplish.

“The Obama administration seems to have a plan, but I’m not understanding the exact details,” Paul Corkery, 59, a Democrat from Somerset, N.J., said in a follow-up interview.

But the poll suggests that Mr. Obama is in a decidedly more commanding position than Republicans on this issue as Congressional negotiations move into final stages. Most Americans trust Mr. Obama more than Republicans to make the right decisions on the issue; 76 percent said Republicans had not even laid out a clear health care plan.

And by a lopsided margin, respondents said that Mr. Obama and not Republicans had made an effort to cross party lines and strike a deal that has the support of both parties. Two-thirds of respondents said they wanted Congress to come up with a bill supported by both sides.

At the same time, there has been a slip in confidence in Mr. Obama's handling of the war in Afghanistan. There is tepid support for maintaining troop strength there, much less increasing it, as his top commander in Afghanistan prepares to submit a request for additional forces. A majority of Americans do not want troops there for more than two years.

Taken together, the poll reflects the crosscurrents buffeting the president on every major issue. Americans still trust Mr. Obama and seem willing to follow him, particularly in contrast to Republicans. But he is not quite the commanding figure he was in the spring, and his policies do not enjoy the support they once did.

At 56 percent, Mr. Obama's job approval rating is similar to what President Ronald Reagan's was at this point in his first term (53 percent); President Bill Clinton's was at 43 percent. Still, Mr. Obama's approval is down from 68 percent in the spring.

The percentage of people who approve of the way he has dealt with Afghanistan has dropped to 44 percent from 56 percent in April. The percentage of Americans who approve of his handling of the economy, at 50 percent, has dropped from 61 percent since April. In April, Mr. Obama had a 43-point advantage over Republicans in terms of who would make the right decisions on the economy; that has dropped to a 26-point advantage.

Americans think the economy is on the mend, and there has been a 15-point increase, to 36 percent, in the percentage of Americans who said Mr. Obama's stimulus package has improved the economy.

The poll of 1,042 adults was conducted by telephone from Saturday through Wednesday. It has a margin of sampling error of plus or minus three percentage points.

There is evidence of public distaste with Washington that washes across both parties. Nearly two-thirds of respondents said they believed that Republicans in Congress were opposing Mr. Obama's bill only for political gain; just over half said Democrats in Congress backed the bill for political reasons.

Just 30 percent said they had a favorable view of Republicans in Congress. By contrast, 47 percent said they had a favorable view of Congressional Democrats.

“What I hear from the Republicans is that they’re just against anything the president has to say,” said Matt Lee, 48, a Republican from Kona, Hawaii. “There is just too much division along party lines right now. I don’t think the president wants to hear anything the Republicans want to say, but I trust him more because we need change.”

Mr. Obama was not spared from this sense of jadedness; 56 percent of respondents said they did not expect Mr. Obama to be able to keep his promise not to raise taxes on households making less than \$250,000.



The poll reflects the challenges facing the White House as it is consumed by two issues, Afghanistan and health care. By a margin of 52 percent to 27 percent, Americans said Mr. Obama has better ideas about overhauling health care than Republicans. And the percentage of Americans who approve of how Mr. Obama has handled health care has gone from 40 percent in August to 47 percent, about equal to where it was earlier in the summer.

On one of the most contentious issues in the health care debate — whether to establish a government-run health insurance plan as an alternative to private insurers — nearly two-thirds of the country continues to favor the proposal, which is backed by Mr. Obama but has drawn intense fire from most Republicans and some moderate Democrats.

The poll suggested that Mr. Obama’s effort to deal with concerns about the health plan has enjoyed, at best, mixed success. In the poll, 55 percent said Mr. Obama had not clearly explained his plans for changing the health care system, and 59 percent said they thought the health care changes under consideration in Congress were confusing.

The fact that so many Americans say they do not know enough about the plan to offer an opinion — 46 percent — shows the risk of the White House’s strategy of not putting forward its own specific bill.

And there is abundant evidence that critics of the bill made progress over the summer while the White House stayed largely silent: about one in four respondents said they believed that health care legislation would create organizations to decide when to stop providing medical care to the elderly — so-called death panels — despite an all-out effort by Mr. Obama to debunk the claim, which is false. Three in 10 say the bill would use taxpayer money to provide health care benefits to illegal immigrants. In fact, Mr. Obama has specifically rejected any effort to have the bill cover health insurance for illegal immigrants.

On Afghanistan, more than 50 percent said the war was going somewhat or very badly.

Adam Nagourney and Dalia Sussman
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Union News



AFL-CIO News service, graphic(s) added

Air Traffic Controllers Ratify Contract after Three-Year Battle with Bush FAA: A three-year battle for workplace justice came to a successful conclusion yesterday when the National Air Traffic Controllers Association (NATCA) announced controllers had ratified a new three-year contract with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). NATCA says the new pact throws out the Bush-era FAA's 2006 imposed work and pay rules and restores fairness and stability to the collective bargaining process. The overwhelmingly approved contract takes effect Oct. 1. The contract covers a set of new work rules that both NATCA and the FAA agreed to at the negotiating table earlier this year. Other contract articles, including pay, were decided through a binding arbitration this summer. NATCA President Patrick Forrey calls the new agreement: *a testament to our membership that they have endured the worst time in our union's history, working towards and holding out for a contract that was negotiated in a fair process and agreed to by the parties.*



Are Industry Lobbyists Raising Our Health Care Premiums: While the Senate Finance Committee is slogging through more than 530 amendments to Sen. Max Baucus' flawed health care reform bill, more than 2,700 lobbyists are working overtime to protect the private health insurance industry and other health care corporations. Protecting their health industry clients means blocking a public health insurance plan option, derailing strong health care cost controls and gutting tough new health care rules that would put people before

profits. In trying to kill the public option, insurance industry lobbyists are thumbing their nose at the American public, who strongly support a public option. A New York Times/CBS poll released today found that 65 percent of respondents want a public health care option, while only 26 percent oppose such a plan.

Kirk Succeeds Kennedy in U.S. Senate: Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick on Thursday, named Paul Kirk to serve as interim U.S. senator, filling the open seat left by the passing of Sen. Edward Kennedy. Kirk, who served as an adviser to Sen. Kennedy as well as a chairman of the Democratic National Committee, is expected to be sworn in tomorrow afternoon. He will serve until a permanent replacement is elected in a special election, set for Jan. 19. The state legislature approved a bill allowing for the appointment of an interim senator this week, ensuring that Massachusetts will have its full congressional delegation during these critical months.



the union's bargaining power: *"I campaigned on the promise that I'd do everything in my power to strengthen our position at the bargaining table by building a greater unity with*



[American Federation of Television and Radio Artists] AFTRA and the other entertainment unions, and that's exactly what I intend to do. Despite the sharp differences that those of us active in Guild affairs sometimes have over strategy and tactics, we need to continually remind ourselves that we're all on the same team, fighting for the same thing—and by pulling together, we'll only grow stronger."

who has served as NATCA's executive vice president since 2006, will take office on October 17th to begin his three-year term. He will succeed Patrick Forrey. The runoff election was held because no candidate won the required 50 percent-plus one majority in the first balloting, which was announced on July 31. NATCA Executive Vice President Patricia Gilbert won a clear majority and took office September 1st. Rinaldi said he plans to make sure the nation's air traffic controllers have a voice in the workplace: *Throughout my career, I've made it my mission to further the goals of this union and I'm not stopping now. We've had a difficult last three years, but we've persevered. I look forward to ensuring that our members*



always have a voice and, just as important, that the FAA [Federal Aviation Administration] always listens.



A Little 'Buy American' Goes a Long Way:

Gee what a concept: When U.S. taxpayer money is spent on economic stimulus programs that channel the funds into U.S. jobs, America's communities, workers and, yes, the nation benefit. Case in point: a stimulus-funded bridge project in Hubbard County, Minn., whose construction is based on the "Buy America" provision of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. From the Alliance for American Manufacturing: *According to a Hubbard County engineer who is overseeing the*

project, domestically sourced inputs, including cement, plywood, and 55,000 pounds of reinforced steel, are being used because of the Buy America requirement. Instead of using foreign inputs, which are less stimulative for job creation, domestic steel is being used to create 30-foot I-beams to support the bridge deck. Steel rebar is also used in the project. The local engineer also reports that the Buy America requirements are not burdensome and are not an impediment to the project. The project came in under budget with \$600,000 allotted, but only \$430,000 needed to complete the project. The bridge construction is moving quickly and is expected to be completed shortly.



Don't let the corporate criminals steal our future!

were bailed out with taxpayer dollars have lined their pockets with stock options that guarantee them huge windfalls for years. While they get richer, they have laid off more than 160,000 employees since Jan. 1, 2008. To top it all off, Bank of America, which received \$45 billion in taxpayer-funded bailout support, has spent more than \$1.5 million lobbying on Capitol Hill against the reforms that would protect consumers from a future financial crisis, such as restrictions on executive compensation, home mortgage lending and credit card fees. The bank also is lobbying on a consumer rights bill, on student lending issues, on a bill that would've allowed bankruptcy judges to alter mortgages and on a proposed federal regulatory oversight agency.

Jobs with Justice Week of Action:

Demanding Real Economic Recovery: Last week marks the one-year anniversary of the Wall Street bailout, and Jobs with Justice (JwJ) is launching a Week of Action to demand that the banks use our taxpayer dollars to finance the recovery and not their own corporate agenda. During the September 24th-October 1st week of action, working people will join with students, activists, community leaders and others across the country to highlight Big Banks' misuse of tax dollars. So far, few of the billions in taxpayer money that went to Big Banks have reached Main Street. Instead, executives of banks that



USW Joins Paper Industry in Major Trade Cases against China, Indonesia

Leo W. Gerard, International President of the United Steelworkers (USW) confirmed trade case petitions were jointly filed with three domestic companies today for antidumping and anti-subsidy duties against Chinese and Indonesian imports of certain types of coated paper that have eliminated thousands of domestic jobs.

“America’s working families see their jobs and future threatened by the predatory practices and unfair trade policies of China and Indonesia,” he said. “Neither the companies nor the union will tolerate being obliterated without asking our government to investigate and enforce the rules of fair trade.”

The companies involved are NewPage Corp., Miamisburg, OH; Appleton Coated LLC, Kimberly, WI; and Sappi Fine Paper North America, Boston, MA. The USW represents about 6,000 production workers at paper mills operated by all three companies in nine states.

According to the trade case filing, thousands of jobs have been cut in the past five years as imports from China and Indonesia flooded into the U.S. market. The petitions estimate an increase of 40 percent from total imports of coated paper have flooded into the U.S. market -- jumping from 131,687 tons in the first six months of 2008 to 185,422 tons in the first six months of 2009. Imports from the two countries together account for nearly 30 percent of the domestic market.

Jon Geenen, USW International Vice President who handles the union’s paper industry, says, “We have watched as paper machines at each of the companies shutdown from surging China and Indonesian imports. In the past year we’ve suffered closure of entire paper mills that sustained communities employing hundreds in Muskegon, MI and Kimberly, WI. Our nation’s paper workers and their families deserve better.”

The petitions were filed at the U.S. Department of Commerce and the U.S. International Trade Commission (ITC) in Washington, DC. The paper products covered by the petitions include coated paper used in high-quality writing, printing, and other applications. The cases are expected to take about a year to complete, with an ITC preliminary determination by mid-November.

About 130,000 workers are represented by the USW in the paper and forestry products industry, a loss of more than 60,000 jobs since 2002. For more information: www.usw.org/.