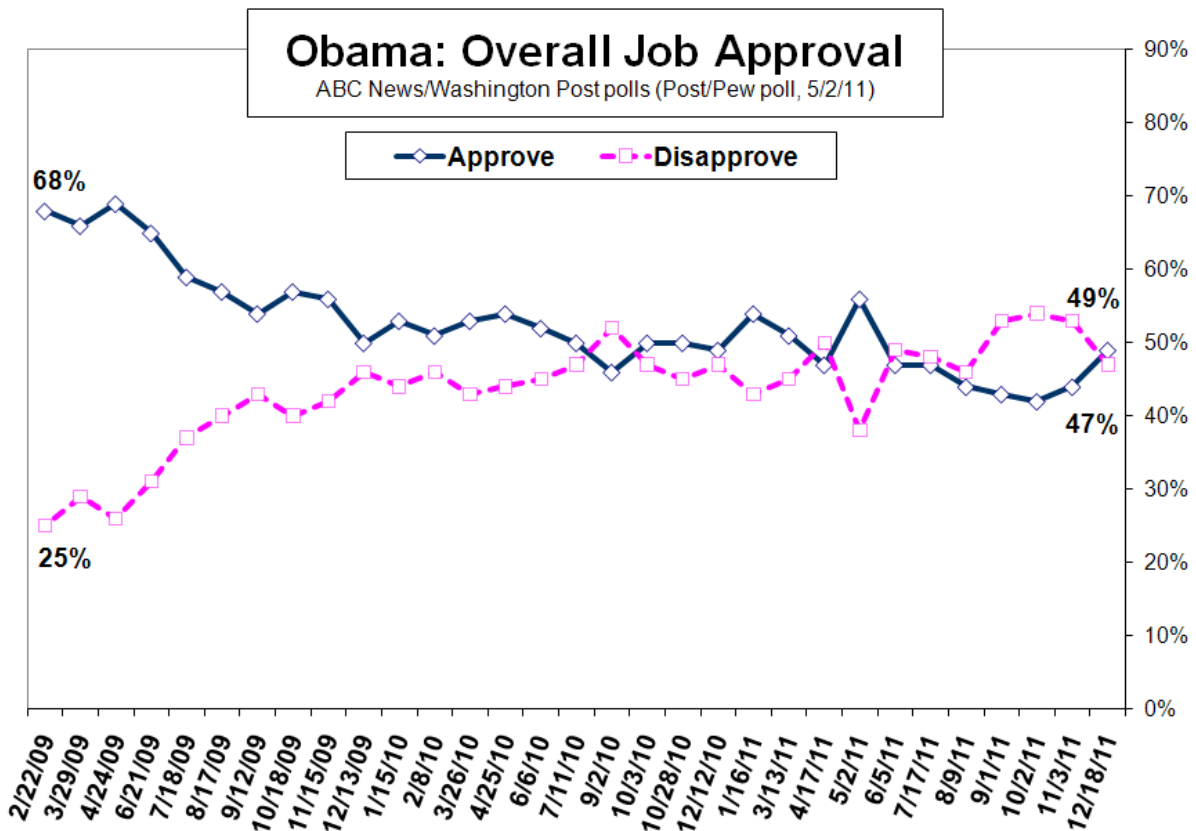


Obama Advances as Congress Tanks

Aided by comparison to the vastly unpopular Congress, Barack Obama has advanced to a 49 percent job approval rating in the latest ABC News/Washington Post poll – his best showing since spring, and one, if it holds, that may put his re-election prospects back within reach.

The result continues an improving trend for the president amid some signs of economic gains. And it contrasts with both parties in Congress, embroiled in their latest game of political chicken. A mere 27 percent of Americans now approve of the Democrats in Congress, and just 20 percent approve of the Republicans – both new lows in ABC/Post polling back to 1994.

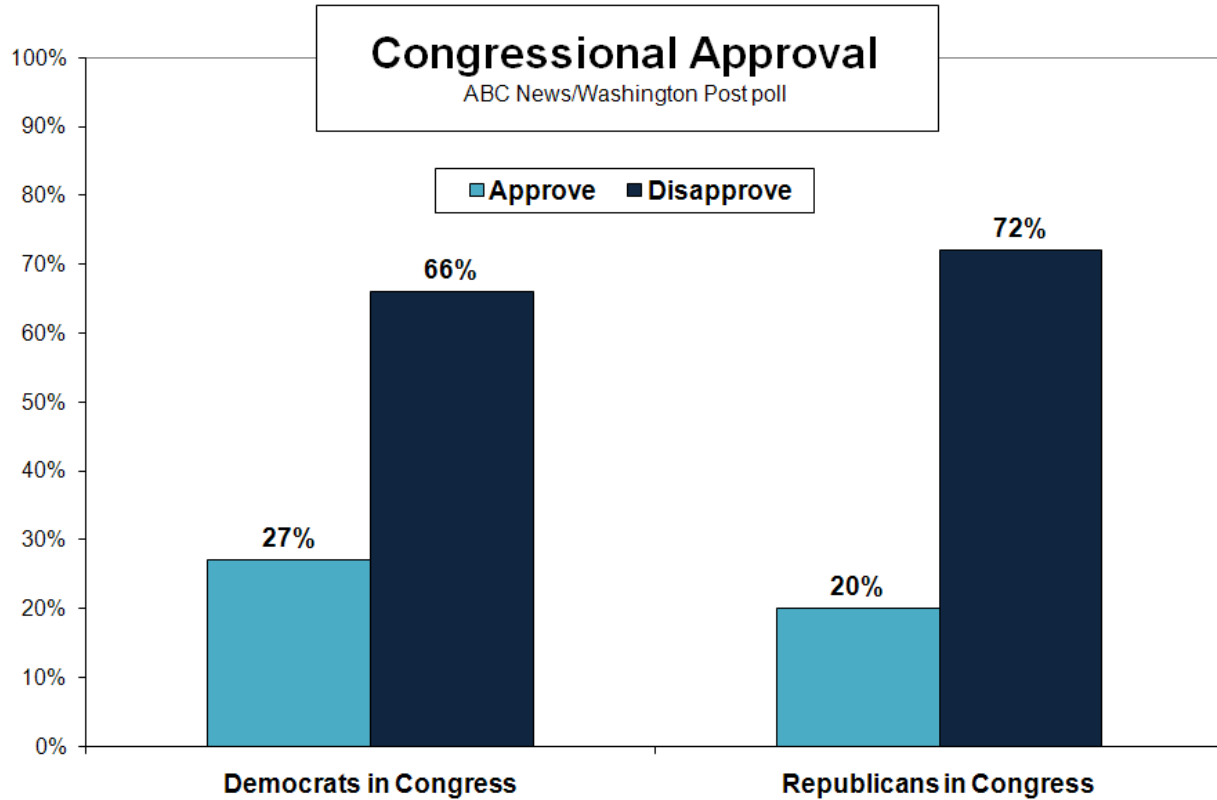
Obama’s rating, while still (barely) under 50 percent, is up from his career-low 42 percent in October, and back at the level at which he could run competitively for a second term. George W. Bush had 47 percent approval as close as three months before he won re-election in 2004.



The question in this poll, produced for ABC by [Langer Research Associates](#), is whether Obama’s rating merely reflects blowback against the machinations of Congress. Its latest budget brouhaha

put a possible government shutdown back on the table until Saturday, and still threatens extension of the current payroll tax cut. As much as he might like to run against Congress, Obama's actual opponent – the eventual GOP nominee – may be less of an easy mark.

As things stand, Obama's regained a substantial (now 15-point) advantage over the Republicans in Congress in trust to protect the middle class, 50-35 percent, after seeing his edge on the issue shrink to just 4 points last month. He's also moved ahead in trust to handle taxes, 46-41 percent, after trailing in October; and runs about evenly in trust to handle the economy and job creation.



ECONOMY – While Obama gets just a 41 percent approval rating for handling the economy, that's numerically his best on the issue since April and 6 points above his career low in October. However, far more still "strongly" disapprove than strongly approve, by 43 to 17 percent, a negative intensity that puts him at risk. (He's also got an intensity deficit on overall approval, albeit at 9 points, a less garish one.)

Similar to the economy number, just 39 percent approve specifically of Obama's performance creating jobs, with 55 percent disapproving. Again, though, it's been worse, with disapproval having peaked at 62 percent in September. Unemployment slipped under 9 percent in November, and last week's Bloomberg Consumer Comfort Index, while still deeply depressed, reached its best since July among Americans who hold full-time jobs.

Just over half of Americans, 52 percent, are pessimistic about the economy overall. But 61 percent are optimistic about their personal financial prospects in the year ahead. And it makes a difference: The president's approval rating among people who are optimistic about their personal finances is 18 points higher than it is among pessimists, 55 percent vs. 37 percent.

The difference is even wider based on views of the future of the national economy more broadly. Among those who are optimistic about the economy in the year ahead, (disproportionately Democrats, it should be noted), 67 percent approve of Obama's performance as president. Among economic pessimists, that dives to 33 percent.

GROUPS – Obama continues to hang tough in his own party; 82 percent of Democrats approve of his job performance overall, compared with a mere 19 percent of Republicans. In the middle are independents, who've outnumbered both Democrats and Republicans continuously for the past two and a half years, an unprecedented period since ABC/Post polls began in 1981.

Forty-four percent of independents now approve of Obama's work, while 51 percent disapprove. That's a highly cautionary note for his re-election prospects, whatever his overall rating, given independents' customary role as the quintessential swing voters in presidential elections. Still, he's up by 10 points from a career-low 34 percent approval from independents in October. They've also fueled his advance in trust to protect the middle class.

While the focus is on the top race, there also are challenging results for both parties – especially the GOP – in terms of congressional sentiment. Fifty-one percent of Democrats approve of their own party's performance in Congress; while hardly good, that's better than the GOP's rating, 38 percent approval, among its party's faithful.

Independents, meanwhile, scorch both parties, offering just 20 and 17 percent approval of the Democrats and Republicans in Congress, respectively. That could make it a hot political year ahead not just in the presidential race, but for incumbents of all stripes.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone Dec. 15-18, 2011, among a random national sample of 1,005 adults, including landline and cell-phone-only respondents. Results have a margin of [sampling error](#) of 3.5 points for the full sample. The survey was produced for ABC News by [Langer Research Associates](#) of New York, N.Y., with sampling, data collection and tabulation by Abt-SRBI of New York, N.Y.

Analysis by Gary Langer.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com at <http://abcnews.com/pollingunit>.

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Full results follow.

*= less than 0.5 percent

1. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as president? Do you approve/disapprove strongly or somewhat?

	----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
12/18/11	49	25	24	47	13	34	4
11/3/11	44	22	22	53	15	37	3
10/2/11	42	21	21	54	14	40	4
9/1/11	43	21	22	53	16	38	3
8/9/11*	44	18	26	46	9	37	10
7/17/11	47	25	22	48	14	35	5
6/5/11	47	27	20	49	13	37	4
5/2/11**	56	29	27	38	14	24	6
4/17/11	47	27	21	50	12	37	3
3/13/11	51	27	24	45	12	33	4
1/16/11	54	30	23	43	15	28	3
12/12/10	49	24	25	47	15	32	4
10/28/10	50	27	23	45	11	34	5
10/3/10	50	26	24	47	13	34	3
9/2/10	46	24	22	52	14	38	3
7/11/10	50	28	22	47	12	35	3
6/6/10	52	30	22	45	12	33	4
4/25/10	54	31	23	44	11	33	3
3/26/10	53	34	20	43	8	35	3
2/8/10	51	29	22	46	12	33	3
1/15/10	53	30	24	44	13	32	2
12/13/09	50	31	18	46	13	33	4
11/15/09	56	32	23	42	13	29	2
10/18/09	57	33	23	40	11	29	3
9/12/09	54	35	19	43	12	31	3
8/17/09	57	35	21	40	11	29	3
7/18/09	59	38	22	37	9	28	4
6/21/09	65	36	29	31	10	22	4
4/24/09	69	42	27	26	8	18	4
3/29/09	66	40	26	29	9	20	5
2/22/09	68	43	25	25	8	17	7

*Washington Post

**Washington Post/Pew Research Center

2. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Obama is handling [ITEM]? Do you approve/disapprove strongly or somewhat?

12/18/11 - Summary Table

	----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
a. The economy	41	17	24	56	13	43	2
b. Creating jobs	39	17	22	55	13	43	5

Trend:

a. The economy

----- Approve -----	----- Disapprove -----	No
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	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
12/18/11	41	17	24	56	13	43	2
11/3/11	38	18	20	61	13	48	2
10/2/11	35	17	19	61	13	48	4
9/1/11	36	15	21	62	15	47	2
7/17/11	39	18	22	57	15	43	3
6/5/11	40	20	20	59	10	49	2
5/2/11*	40	18	22	55	16	39	4
4/17/11	42	23	19	57	11	46	2
3/13/11	43	22	21	55	13	41	2
1/16/11	46	22	24	51	13	38	2
12/12/10	43	21	22	54	15	39	3
10/28/10 RV	44	21	23	54	15	39	3
10/3/10	45	22	23	53	13	41	2
9/2/10	41	20	21	57	13	44	2
7/11/10	43	20	23	54	13	41	4
6/6/10	50	26	24	49	12	37	2
4/25/10	49	24	25	49	10	39	2
3/26/10	45	23	22	52	12	40	3
2/8/10	45	22	23	53	15	38	2
1/15/10	47	22	24	52	13	39	1
12/13/09	46	23	24	52	12	40	2
11/15/09	51	26	25	47	12	36	2
10/18/09	50	29	22	48	13	35	1
9/12/09	51	28	24	46	13	33	2
8/17/09	52	27	25	46	13	33	2
7/18/09	52	29	23	46	10	35	3
6/21/09	56	28	28	41	13	27	3
4/24/09	58	31	28	38	13	25	4
3/29/09	60	34	25	38	12	26	3
2/22/09	60	NA	NA	34	NA	NA	6

*Washington Post/Pew Research Center

b. Creating jobs

	----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
12/18/11	39	17	22	55	13	43	5
11/3/11	40	20	20	57	13	44	3
10/2/11	35	17	18	60	14	47	4
9/1/11	36	15	21	62	18	45	2
7/17/11	41	16	25	52	13	39	7
2/8/10	47	25	22	51	15	35	3

3. Do you approve or disapprove of the way [ITEM] are doing their job?

12/18/11 - Summary Table

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
a. The Democrats in Congress	27	66	7
b. The Republicans in Congress	20	72	7

Trend:

a. The Democrats in Congress

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
12/18/11	27	66	7
4/17/11	36	60	4
10/3/10	36	61	3
7/18/09	47	48	5
4/24/09	45	49	6
2/22/09	50	44	6
7/13/08	35	57	8
2/1/08	39	54	7
12/9/07	40	53	6
11/1/07	36	58	6
9/30/07	38	57	5
7/21/07	46	51	2
6/1/07	44	49	6
4/15/07	54	44	2
10/8/06	48	50	3
5/15/06	39	58	4
11/2/05	41	54	5
6/5/05	42	56	3
6/6/99	51	42	7
3/14/99	51	42	7
7/8/97	45	49	6
4/5/95	36	60	4
10/31/94	39	53	8
10/23/94	36	59	5
9/11/94	41	53	6

b. The Republicans in Congress

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
12/18/11	20	72	7
9/1/11	28	68	3
4/17/11	34	63	3
10/3/10	30	67	3
7/18/09	36	58	6
4/24/09	30	64	6
2/22/09	38	56	6
7/13/08	25	69	6
2/1/08	30	63	7
12/9/07	32	63	5
11/1/07	32	63	6
9/30/07	29	67	4
7/21/07	34	64	2
6/1/07	36	58	6
4/15/07	39	59	2
10/8/06	35	63	2
5/15/06	33	64	3
11/2/05	35	61	4
6/5/05	42	56	2
6/6/99	41	52	7
3/14/99	40	56	4
7/8/97	40	54	6
9/15/96 RV	46	48	6

6/30/96	38	56	6
4/5/95	45	50	5
10/31/94	33	59	7
10/23/94	31	64	5
9/11/94	35	59	6

4. Who do you trust to do a better job [ITEM] - (Obama) or (the Republicans in Congress)?

12/18/11 - Summary Table

	Obama	Reps	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
a. Handling the economy	44	40	1	13	2
b. Creating jobs	44	41	1	12	2
c. Protecting the middle class	50	35	1	10	3
d. Handling taxes	46	41	1	10	2

Trend:

a. Handling the economy

	Obama	Reps	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
12/18/11	44	40	1	13	2
11/3/11	42	42	1	12	2
10/2/11	43	42	1	11	2
9/1/11	42	39	1	16	2
6/5/11	42	45	2	9	2
3/13/11	46	34	2	15	4
1/16/11	46	41	3	7	3
12/12/10	44	45	2	7	2
4/25/10	49	38	1	9	2
2/8/10	47	42	1	7	2
12/13/09	48	36	1	12	3
11/15/09	52	37	1	8	1
9/12/09	48	37	1	12	2
7/18/09	56	33	1	9	2
6/21/09	55	31	2	9	2
4/24/09	61	24	2	11	2
3/29/09	58	25	1	14	2
2/22/09	61	26	1	9	3

b. Creating jobs

	Obama	Reps	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
12/18/11	44	41	1	12	2
11/3/11	40	40	1	16	4
10/2/11	49	34	1	14	3
9/1/11	40	40	1	17	2
6/5/11	43	42	2	11	2
2/8/10	48	41	2	8	2

c. Protecting the middle class

	Obama	Reps	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
12/18/11	50	35	1	10	3
11/3/11	45	41	1	11	2
4/17/11	51	39	1	8	1
1/16/11*	51	37	1	8	3
12/12/10	53	38	1	6	2

*1/16/11 and previous: "Helping the middle class"

d. Handling taxes

	Obama	Reps	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
12/18/11	46	41	1	10	2
10/2/11	39	46	1	11	2
4/17/11	47	42	1	8	2
1/16/11	44	42	2	9	4
12/12/10	43	44	1	7	5

5. Thinking about the next 12 months, would you say you feel (optimistic) or (pessimistic) about (ITEM)? Is that very optimistic/pessimistic or somewhat optimistic/pessimistic?

12/18/11 - Summary Table

	----- Optimistic ----			---- Pessimistic ----			No opinion
	NET	Very	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Very	
a. The state of the national economy	44	14	30	52	25	27	5
b. Your own family's financial situation	61	23	38	35	19	16	4

Trend:

a. The state of the national economy

	---- Optimistic ----			---- Pessimistic ----			No opinion
	NET	Very	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Very	
12/18/11	44	14	30	52	25	27	5
4/24/09	55	NA	NA	42	NA	NA	3
2/22/09	48			50			2
12/14/08	48			50			3
9/29/08	43			53			4
4/13/08	40			58			2
2/1/08	45			51			4
12/9/07	45			52			3
12/11/06	64			33			3
5/15/06	52			46			1
12/18/05	55			44			1
9/11/05	51			46			2
6/5/05	59			40			1
12/19/04	58			40			2
6/20/04	64			34			2

1/18/04 63 " " 35 " " 2

b. Your own family's financial situation

	---- Optimistic ----			---- Pessimistic ----			No
	NET	Very	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Very	opinion
12/18/11	61	23	38	35	19	16	4
4/24/09	66	NA	NA	31	NA	NA	3
2/22/09	66			31			3
12/14/08	68			29			2
9/29/08	61			34			5
4/13/08	66			31			3
2/1/08	67			30			3
12/9/07	72			25			3
12/11/06	82			16			2
5/15/06	79			20			1
12/18/05	73			26			1
12/19/04	75	"	"	23	"	"	2

6-25 held for release.

END