

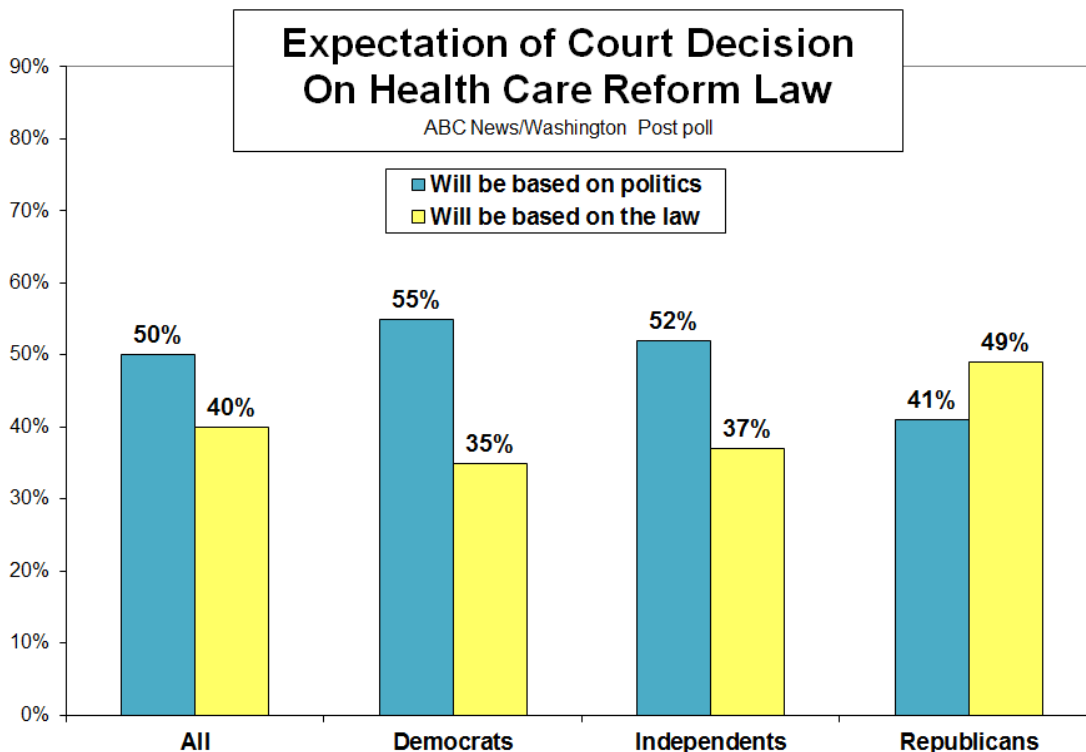
## **New Low in Support for Health Law; Half Expect Justices to Go Political**

Last month's hearings on the constitutionality of health care reform didn't help its popularity: Public support for Barack Obama's signature domestic legislation has hit a new low in the latest ABC News/Washington Post poll, with criticism of the individual mandate as high as ever.

Half the public, moreover, thinks the U.S. Supreme Court will rule on the legislation on the basis of the justices' partisan political views rather than the law. Fewer, 40 percent, think impartial legal analysis will carry the day, with the rest unsure.

Fifty-three percent of Americans now oppose the law overall, while just 39 percent support it – the latter the lowest in more than a dozen ABC/Post polls since August 2009. “Strong” critics, at 40 percent, outnumber strong supporters by nearly a 2-1 margin in this poll, produced for ABC by [Langer Research Associates](#).

Two-thirds continue to say the high court should throw out either the entire law (38 percent) or at least the part that requires most individuals to obtain coverage (29 percent) or face a penalty; just a quarter want the court to uphold the law as is. Those numbers, like views on the law overall, are essentially unchanged from a month ago.



There are political differences: Republicans, who are most likely to oppose the law, are less apt to think the justices will rule on the basis of politics; 41 percent say so, still a not-insubstantial number when it comes to a basic assessment of independent jurisprudence. More Democrats and independents, 55 and 52 percent, respectively, suspect the justices will go political.

As to election politics, the potential repercussions are unclear. Obama's approval rating for handling health care has been more negative than positive steadily since he signed the Affordable Care Act (ACA) into law in March 2010. And the intensity of sentiment has been especially negative, with strong critics exceeding strong supporters by an average of 13 percentage points.

But the president looks better on the issue when compared to the presumptive GOP nominee, Mitt Romney. As noted Tuesday, Obama leads Romney by 10 points (48-38 percent) in trust to handle health care policy. And Romney may have trouble challenging Obama on the individual mandate, given its similarity to provisions in the Massachusetts health care law Romney signed as governor in 2006.

Indeed, among people who oppose the ACA, a relatively tepid 58 percent trust Romney over Obama to handle health care policy. Among ACA supporters, by contrast, 81 percent prefer Obama on the issue.

**PARTY and SUPPORT** – Given that the debate over the law largely revolves around the extent to which government should be involved in health care, partisanship and associated views on government regulation also play a large role in support for the law.

Seventy-nine percent of Republicans oppose the law in general and nearly two-thirds would like the Supreme Court to throw out the law entirely, for instance, while 63 percent of Democrats support it and nearly half want the court to keep it intact.

Those numbers among Democrats, while sharply different from views among Republicans, underscore the law's weak support. Further, more independents oppose it than support it – 56-35 percent – and 73 percent would like it rejected entirely (41 percent) or insofar as the individual mandate (32 percent), much more in line with Republicans than Democrats.

Similarly, Americans who see over-regulation of the free market as a greater problem than “unfairness in the economic system that favors the wealthy” are nearly twice as likely as their counterparts to oppose the law overall, and nearly three times as apt to want the high court to axe it entirely.

**GROUPS** – Among other groups, apart from Democrats, support for the law peaks at 65 percent among African-Americans, 64 percent among liberals and 54 percent among the most-educated adults, those who've done postgraduate work; it's also 49 percent among people who identify themselves in the top socioeconomic echelon, upper-middle class or better off than that.

Beyond Republicans, meanwhile, opposition to the ACA peaks at 79 percent among conservatives, 69 percent among evangelical white Protestants and 67 percent of those who say they're in the middle class, but struggling to stay there.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone April 5-8, 2012, among a random national sample of 1,003 adults, including landline and cell-phone-only respondents. Results have a margin of [sampling error](#) of 4 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 Gregory Holyk.

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

1-10, 14-40 previously released or held for release.

11. On another subject, overall, do you support or oppose the federal law making changes to the health care system? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

	----- Support -----			----- Oppose -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
4/8/12	39	23	17	53	13	40	8
3/10/12	41	24	17	52	11	41	7

Compare to: Overall, given what you know about them, would you say you support or oppose the changes to the health care system that have been enacted by (Congress) and (the Obama administration)?

	----- Support -----			----- Oppose -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
1/16/11	45	25	20	50	14	36	5
12/12/10	43	22	21	52	14	37	6
10/3/10	47	26	21	48	13	35	5
3/26/10	46	32	13	50	10	40	4
2/8/10*	46	22	25	49	11	38	5
1/15/10	44	22	22	51	12	39	5
12/13/09	44	25	19	51	11	40	5
11/15/09	48	30	18	49	10	39	3
10/18/09	45	26	19	48	12	36	7
9/12/09	46	30	16	48	12	36	6
8/17/09	45	27	18	50	10	40	5

\*2/8/10 and prior: "proposed changes...that are being developed by"

12. The U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments about the health care law last month. Of these three options, which would you prefer to have the Supreme Court do: 1) (uphold the entire law), 2) throw out the part of the law that requires individuals to have coverage and keep the rest of the law, or 3) (throw out the entire law)?

	Uphold	Throw out	Throw out	No
	entire law	part of the law	entire law	opinion
4/8/12	25	29	38	8
3/10/12*	26	25	42	7

\*"Will hear arguments about the health care law later this month"

13. Do you think the Supreme Court justices will rule on this case mainly (on the basis of the law) or mainly (on the basis of their partisan political views)?

	Rule on the basis of the law	Rule on partisan political views	Both (vol.)	No opinion
4/8/12	40	50	1	9

\*\*\* END \*\*\*