



**President Obama's Approval Rating,
His Handling of the Economy,
& the War in Afghanistan**

*** Complete Tables for Poll Appended ***

For Immediate Release: Tuesday, December 8, 2009

Contact: Lee M. Miringoff
Barbara L. Carvalho
Mary E. Azzoli
Marist College
845.575.5050

This Marist Poll Reports:

Obama's Hope to Unite Falls Short

Registered voters nationally are divided about President Barack Obama's job approval rating. 46% approve of his job performance while 44% disapprove. One in ten voters is unsure. This is the first time the president has lost majority support on this question since taking office. When Marist last asked this question in October, 53% of voters gave the president high marks.

Partisanship is alive and well here, but Mr. Obama has slipped slightly among voters in *both* parties. 77% of Democrats approve of the president's job performance compared with 12% of Republicans. Two months ago, 84% of Democrats and 21% of Republicans gave him a thumbs-up. Independents remain divided, 41% approve while 44% disapprove.

"As 2009 comes to a close, President Obama's goal of unifying the nation and reducing the partisan divide is coming up short," says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist College Poll.

Great Expectations...More Than Four In Ten Say Obama Is Missing the Mark

The national electorate also divides about whether the president is meeting their expectations. 44% say Obama has while 42% report he has fallen short. Just 9% believe the president has exceeded their expectations. 5% are unsure.

Looking at party, a majority of Democrats -- 58% -- say the president has met their expectations. However, a notable proportion within Obama's own party -- 20% -- reports he has missed the mark. 17% think he has gone above and beyond. On the Republican side, 67% believe Obama has fallen short while 26% report he has met their expectations. 2% think he's exceeded their expectations. Independent voters closely reflect the overall electorate.

Obama on Course?

More than four in ten registered voters -- 44% -- think President Obama is changing the country for the better while 35% say he is making the nation worse. 18% believe he has made no impact on the country at all. Little has changed on this issue since Marist last asked this question in October.

A Fork in the Road...Americans Divide Over Direction of Country

When it comes to the overall direction of the nation, there is a split decision. 46% of residents say the nation is moving in the wrong direction while 46% say it's headed on the right path. This is relatively unchanged from two months ago when similar proportions of residents viewed the trajectory of the nation in this regard.

But, Voters Still Like Obama

Although President Obama's approval rating has slipped, and he has lost some ground with voters on the handling of the economy, the electorate still views the president favorably. A majority of voters -- 55% -- have a positive impression of Mr. Obama compared with 41% who have an unfavorable view of him. 4% are unsure how to rate him.

Not surprisingly, there is a partisan divide on this question. Most Democrats -- 85% -- have a favorable impression of the president while 75% of Republicans view him unfavorably. Nearly half of Independent voters -- 49% -- think well of the president.

Economic Tides Turn for Obama

For the first time since President Barack Obama took office, a majority of registered voters nationwide -- 51% -- disapprove of the way the president is handling the economy. 45%, on the other hand, approve of his financial management. When Marist last asked about Obama's handling of the economy in October, the electorate was divided. 48% thought the president's management was on track while 47% believed he was off the mark. The perception of Mr. Obama's economic prowess has been on the decline. In August, a slim majority -- 52% -- thought he was handling the economy well. Prior to that time, the president received majority support for his dealing with the economy.

Partisanship is in play on this issue. 75% of Democrats say the president is managing the economy well while 84% of Republicans report he is dropping the ball. When it comes to Independent voters, 55% disapprove of Obama's economic vision while 40% approve.

Unemployment Picture Bleak

President Obama is making unemployment a top priority in his administration, and his actions couldn't come at a better time. More than three-quarters of Americans -- 77% -- continue to report that they know someone who has lost a job during the last six months.

Economic Future Status Quo?

Most U.S. residents do not think their own economic situation will improve in the near future. 45% of Americans think that in the upcoming year, economically, they will be about the same as they are now. 26% report they will be worse off, and 29% say they will be better

off. When Marist last asked this question at this time last year, half of Americans thought their economic circumstances would stay the same, 24% believed they would be worse off, and 26% said they would be better off.

Economic Conditions Still Inherited, But Is There a Crack in Obama's Armor?

Although 65% of registered voters say that the President has inherited the nation's current economic conditions, that silver lining for Mr. Obama may be tarnishing. In October, 70% reported that the troubled economy was dumped in the president's lap. Republicans account for the change here. Currently, the GOP divides with 45% saying the nation's troubled economy is a result of the president's own policies. 42%, however, report he inherited them from his predecessor. Two months ago, a slim majority of Republicans -- 51% -- thought the president inherited the country's economic situation while 41% said it was a result of the president's own policies.

"The issue of whether the economic problems are President Obama's doing or still a carryover from President Bush will be critical in how voters approach the 2010 midterm elections," says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist College Poll.

Slight Bounce in Obama's Policy in Afghanistan

47% of registered voters nationwide approve of how President Barack Obama is handling the war in Afghanistan while 43% disapprove. There has been a slight improvement for the president on this question since Marist last asked it October. At that time, 43% approved while 45% disapproved.

There has also been a slight change in support among the parties. More Republican voters currently support the president's actions in Afghanistan compared with Marist's October survey. 32% say they approve of his management while 24% thought this way two months ago. Mr. Obama has also received greater backing from Independent voters. Independents currently divide with 46% saying they agree with the president and 47% reporting they disagree. In October, 39% approved of how the president was dealing with the war while 51% disapproved.

However, the president's base is eroding. Although a majority of Democrats still approve of how the President Obama is managing the conflict, fewer voters in this group view his handling of the war positively. 58% support the president's plan today compared with 62% two months ago.

Nature of the Sample: 1034 U.S. Residents

This survey of 1034 United States residents was conducted on December 2nd, 3rd, and 7th, 2009. Residents 18 years of age and older were interviewed by telephone. Telephone numbers were selected based upon a list of telephone exchanges from throughout the nation. The exchanges were selected to ensure that each region was represented in proportion to its population. To increase coverage, this land-line sample was supplemented by respondents reached through random dialing of cell phone numbers. The two samples were then combined. Results are statistically significant at $\pm 3.0\%$. There are 858 registered voters. The results for this subset are statistically significant at $\pm 3.5\%$. The error margin increases for cross-tabulations.

Marist Poll December 2009 National Survey Tables

		Registered Voters		
		Do you approve or disapprove of the job Barack Obama is doing as president?		
		Approve	Disapprove	Unsure
		Row %	Row %	Row %
Registered Voters		46%	44%	10%
Party ID	Democrat	77%	16%	7%
	Republican	12%	81%	8%
	Independent	41%	44%	15%
Party ID by Gender	Democrat men	74%	21%	5%
	Democrat women	80%	12%	8%
	Republican men	10%	82%	8%
	Republican women	13%	79%	7%
	Independent men	45%	43%	12%
	Independent women	36%	46%	18%
	Ideology	Liberal	85%	13%
Moderate		48%	37%	14%
Conservative		23%	68%	8%
Region	Northeast	48%	45%	7%
	Midwest	49%	39%	12%
	South	41%	50%	9%
	West	52%	40%	9%
Household Income	Less than \$50,000	50%	37%	13%
	\$50,000 or more	45%	49%	6%
Education	Not college graduate	48%	41%	12%
	College graduate	44%	50%	6%
Age	18 to 29	57%	28%	14%
	30 to 44	46%	45%	8%
	45 to 59	47%	46%	7%
	60 or older	41%	49%	10%
Gender	Men	45%	47%	8%
	Women	47%	42%	11%
Marist Poll National Registered Voters December 2009 "N=858 MOE +/- 3.5%" Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.				

		Registered Voters			
		Overall, has Barack Obama met your expectations, exceeded your expectations, or fallen below your expectations as president?			
		Met your expectations	Exceeded your expectations	Fallen below your expectations	Unsure
		Row %	Row %	Row %	Row %
Registered Voters		44%	9%	42%	5%
Party ID	Democrat	58%	17%	20%	5%
	Republican	26%	2%	67%	5%
	Independent	45%	6%	43%	6%
Party ID by Gender	Democrat men	56%	19%	21%	4%
	Democrat women	60%	16%	19%	6%
	Republican men	27%	1%	67%	5%
	Republican women	25%	4%	67%	4%
	Independent men	47%	6%	42%	5%
	Independent women	42%	6%	44%	8%
Ideology	Liberal	65%	12%	21%	2%
	Moderate	47%	13%	34%	6%
	Conservative	30%	4%	59%	6%
Region	Northeast	50%	7%	38%	5%
	Midwest	42%	11%	43%	4%
	South	39%	10%	44%	6%
	West	48%	8%	40%	5%
Household Income	Less than \$50,000	46%	12%	38%	4%
	\$50,000 or more	44%	6%	44%	5%
Education	Not college graduate	40%	10%	45%	5%
	College graduate	49%	8%	38%	5%
Age	18 to 29	45%	20%	31%	3%
	30 to 44	43%	8%	46%	4%
	45 to 59	49%	5%	41%	5%
	60 or older	40%	9%	45%	6%
Gender	Men	44%	9%	42%	4%
	Women	44%	9%	42%	6%

Marist Poll National Registered Voters December 2009 "N=858 MOE +/- 3.5%" Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

		Registered Voters			
		Overall, would you describe the direction in which President Barack Obama is moving the country as:			
		Change for the better	Change for the worse	No change at all	Unsure
		Row %	Row %	Row %	Row %
Registered Voters		44%	35%	18%	3%
Party ID	Democrat	76%	9%	13%	2%
	Republican	10%	68%	18%	3%
	Independent	36%	36%	24%	5%
Party ID by Gender	Democrat men	77%	10%	12%	1%
	Democrat women	75%	9%	13%	3%
	Republican men	6%	72%	20%	2%
	Republican women	15%	65%	16%	4%
	Independent men	40%	34%	22%	3%
	Independent women	31%	37%	26%	6%
Ideology	Liberal	81%	5%	14%	0%
	Moderate	47%	27%	22%	4%
	Conservative	20%	60%	17%	3%
Region	Northeast	46%	34%	18%	2%
	Midwest	49%	27%	21%	3%
	South	38%	43%	16%	3%
	West	46%	32%	17%	5%
Household Income	Less than \$50,000	51%	28%	18%	3%
	\$50,000 or more	39%	41%	17%	2%
Education	Not college graduate	43%	34%	19%	4%
	College graduate	45%	37%	16%	1%
Age	18 to 29	61%	17%	18%	4%
	30 to 44	40%	34%	23%	3%
	45 to 59	43%	38%	18%	2%
	60 or older	40%	42%	15%	4%
Gender	Men	43%	37%	18%	2%
	Women	44%	34%	18%	4%

Marist Poll National Registered Voters December 2009 "N=858 MOE +/- 3.5%" Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

		USA Residents		
		In general, thinking about the way things are going in the country, do you feel things are going in the right direction or that things are going in the wrong direction?		
		Right direction	Wrong direction	Unsure
		Row %	Row %	Row %
USA Residents		46%	46%	8%
Registered Voters		48%	47%	5%
Party ID	Democrat	77%	18%	5%
	Republican	13%	82%	5%
	Independent	44%	51%	5%
Ideology	Liberal	81%	15%	4%
	Moderate	55%	38%	6%
	Conservative	23%	73%	5%
Region	Northeast	50%	43%	7%
	Midwest	50%	37%	13%
	South	39%	55%	6%
	West	51%	43%	7%
Household Income	Less than \$50,000	51%	41%	8%
	\$50,000 or more	42%	53%	6%
Education	Not college graduate	46%	45%	9%
	College graduate	46%	49%	5%
Age	18 to 29	61%	31%	9%
	30 to 44	43%	47%	10%
	45 to 59	45%	50%	4%
	60 or older	40%	51%	9%
Gender	Men	47%	46%	7%
	Women	45%	46%	9%

Marist Poll National Residents December 2009 "N=1034 MOE +/- 3%" Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

		Registered Voters		
		Overall, do you have a favorable or an unfavorable impression of Barack Obama?		
		Favorable	Unfavorable	Unsure-Never Heard
		Row %	Row %	Row %
Registered Voters		55%	41%	4%
Party ID	Democrat	85%	13%	3%
	Republican	22%	75%	3%
	Independent	49%	43%	8%
Party ID by Gender	Democrat men	84%	15%	1%
	Democrat women	85%	11%	4%
	Republican men	22%	77%	1%
	Republican women	23%	73%	4%
	Independent men	52%	39%	8%
	Independent women	45%	47%	8%
Ideology	Liberal	89%	11%	0%
	Moderate	66%	28%	6%
	Conservative	27%	67%	5%
Region	Northeast	56%	41%	3%
	Midwest	61%	35%	4%
	South	47%	47%	6%
	West	60%	37%	3%
Household Income	Less than \$50,000	59%	36%	5%
	\$50,000 or more	52%	43%	4%
Education	Not college graduate	54%	41%	5%
	College graduate	56%	41%	3%
Age	18 to 29	66%	25%	9%
	30 to 44	50%	48%	2%
	45 to 59	56%	40%	4%
	60 or older	52%	44%	4%
Gender	Men	55%	42%	4%
	Women	55%	40%	5%

Marist Poll National Registered Voters December 2009 "N=858 MOE +/- 3.5%" Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

		Registered Voters		
		Do you approve or disapprove of how President Barack Obama is handling the economy?		
		Approve	Disapprove	Unsure
		Row %	Row %	Row %
Registered Voters		45%	51%	4%
Party ID	Democrat	75%	22%	3%
	Republican	12%	84%	4%
	Independent	40%	55%	6%
Party ID by Gender	Democrat men	78%	20%	1%
	Democrat women	72%	23%	5%
	Republican men	7%	90%	4%
	Republican women	16%	79%	5%
	Independent men	42%	53%	5%
	Independent women	38%	56%	7%
Ideology	Liberal	80%	18%	2%
	Moderate	51%	45%	5%
	Conservative	20%	74%	5%
Region	Northeast	52%	45%	4%
	Midwest	48%	47%	5%
	South	37%	58%	5%
	West	49%	48%	3%
Household Income	Less than \$50,000	51%	44%	5%
	\$50,000 or more	42%	55%	3%
Education	Not college graduate	44%	51%	5%
	College graduate	47%	50%	3%
Age	18 to 29	64%	33%	3%
	30 to 44	39%	57%	4%
	45 to 59	45%	53%	2%
	60 or older	41%	53%	6%
Gender	Men	45%	52%	3%
	Women	45%	49%	6%

Marist Poll National Registered Voters December 2009 "N=858 MOE +/- 3.5%" Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

		USA Residents	
		Do you personally know someone who has lost their job in the last 6 months?	
		Yes	No
		Row %	Row %
USA Residents		77%	23%
Registered Voters		78%	22%
Party ID	Democrat	74%	26%
	Republican	81%	19%
	Independent	79%	21%
Ideology	Liberal	76%	24%
	Moderate	77%	23%
	Conservative	80%	20%
Region	Northeast	75%	25%
	Midwest	81%	19%
	South	75%	25%
	West	78%	22%
Household Income	Less than \$50,000	77%	23%
	\$50,000 or more	78%	22%
Education	Not college graduate	76%	24%
	College graduate	78%	22%
Age	18 to 29	77%	23%
	30 to 44	83%	17%
	45 to 59	79%	21%
	60 or older	70%	30%
Gender	Men	76%	24%
	Women	78%	22%

Marist Poll National Residents December 2009 "N=1034 MOE +/- 3%"
Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

		USA Residents		
		In the coming year, do you feel you will be economically:		
		Better off	Worse off	About the same as you are now
		Row %	Row %	Row %
USA Residents		29%	26%	45%
Registered Voters		26%	27%	47%
Party ID	Democrat	36%	14%	50%
	Republican	13%	39%	48%
	Independent	24%	31%	46%
Ideology	Liberal	38%	13%	48%
	Moderate	25%	23%	52%
	Conservative	18%	39%	44%
Region	Northeast	31%	26%	44%
	Midwest	32%	22%	46%
	South	26%	30%	44%
	West	30%	24%	47%
Household Income	Less than \$50,000	34%	25%	41%
	\$50,000 or more	25%	26%	49%
Education	Not college graduate	32%	27%	42%
	College graduate	24%	23%	52%
Age	18 to 29	54%	12%	34%
	30 to 44	34%	18%	48%
	45 to 59	23%	30%	47%
	60 or older	15%	36%	49%
Gender	Men	34%	25%	41%
	Women	23%	27%	50%

Marist Poll National Residents December 2009 "N=1034 MOE +/- 3%" Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

		Registered Voters		
		Do you think the current economic conditions are mostly something President Obama inherited or are they mostly a result of his own policies?		
		Economic conditions mostly inherited	Economic conditions mostly result of his own policies	Unsure
		Row %	Row %	Row %
Registered Voters		65%	27%	8%
Party ID	Democrat	84%	12%	4%
	Republican	42%	45%	13%
	Independent	63%	29%	8%
Party ID by Gender	Democrat men	84%	12%	3%
	Democrat women	84%	12%	4%
	Republican men	40%	47%	13%
	Republican women	43%	43%	13%
	Independent men	67%	24%	9%
	Independent women	59%	33%	7%
Ideology	Liberal	92%	5%	3%
	Moderate	73%	21%	7%
	Conservative	41%	45%	14%
Region	Northeast	75%	19%	6%
	Midwest	71%	24%	5%
	South	56%	34%	10%
	West	64%	23%	13%
Household Income	Less than \$50,000	61%	30%	9%
	\$50,000 or more	69%	24%	7%
Education	Not college graduate	61%	29%	10%
	College graduate	71%	24%	6%
Age	18 to 29	66%	29%	6%
	30 to 44	68%	22%	11%
	45 to 59	67%	26%	8%
	60 or older	60%	30%	9%
Gender	Men	65%	26%	9%
	Women	64%	28%	9%

Marist Poll National Registered Voters December 2009 "N=858 MOE +/- 3.5%" Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

		Registered Voters		
		Do you approve or disapprove of how President Barack Obama is handling the war in Afghanistan?		
		Approve	Disapprove	Unsure
		Row %	Row %	Row %
Registered Voters		47%	43%	10%
Party ID	Democrat	58%	32%	9%
	Republican	32%	54%	13%
	Independent	46%	47%	7%
Party ID by Gender	Democrat men	66%	28%	6%
	Democrat women	52%	37%	12%
	Republican men	33%	55%	12%
	Republican women	32%	53%	14%
	Independent men	49%	46%	5%
	Independent women	42%	48%	10%
	Ideology	Liberal	58%	37%
Moderate		53%	35%	12%
Conservative		35%	53%	12%
Region	Northeast	55%	38%	7%
	Midwest	45%	42%	12%
	South	45%	46%	9%
	West	44%	44%	12%
Household Income	Less than \$50,000	48%	42%	10%
	\$50,000 or more	46%	45%	9%
Education	Not college graduate	48%	42%	10%
	College graduate	45%	45%	10%
Age	18 to 29	55%	33%	12%
	30 to 44	48%	43%	9%
	45 to 59	43%	48%	8%
	60 or older	46%	42%	12%
Gender	Men	50%	42%	8%
	Women	43%	45%	12%

Marist Poll National Registered Voters December 2009 "N=858 MOE +/- 3.5%" Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.