

Date: October 9, 2009
To: Friends of Democracy Corps
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Voters Tiring of Republican Partisanship on Healthcare

Analysis of Public Polls Shows GOP Obstruction Damaging Republican Brand

Momentum is growing for passage of health care reform, and so is the threat to Republicans because of their continued obstructionism.

In the past week, both the [AP](#) and [Gallup](#)¹ have released surveys showing a significant decline in opposition to President Obama's health care plan, with Gallup showing the plan favored by a 51 to 41 percent majority, and the Congressional Budget Office released its updated analysis of the Finance Committee bill showing it that it will expand coverage while reducing the deficit. Perhaps most important, at least seven prominent outside-the-Beltway Republicans, including former Senate leaders Bob Dole and Bill Frist and Bush HHS Secretary Tommy Thompson,² have expressed the need for congressional Republicans to put partisan politics aside and work with President Obama and Democrats to pass major reform this year. These Republican "wise men" are echoing the sentiments of the nation as a whole. Recent public polls show Americans weary of both the status quo in health care and Republican obstructionism: overwhelming majorities say Republicans lack ideas and put politics ahead of the nation's needs. This extreme partisanship is contributing to the continued stagnant and unimpressive standing of the Republican brand and threatens to further isolate Republican leaders from the American political mainstream.

Country Wants Action on Health Care

In announcing his support for Obama's health care efforts, Dole said, "I want this to pass. I don't agree with everything Obama is presenting, *but we've got to do something*" (emphasis added).³ This latter sentiment is clearly shared by most Americans.

¹ AP [survey](#) of 1,003 adults conducted October 1-5, 2009 and Gallup survey of 1,013 adults, [conducted](#) October 1-4, 2009. Pew and Quinnipiac released surveys this week that did not show the same drop in opposition.

² Along with Frist, Dole and Thompson: California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg, former Bush Medicare head Mark McClellan, and George HW Bush HHS Secretary Louis Williams.

³ [AP](#), 10/8/09.



- The Kaiser Family Foundation [found](#) that 57 percent of Americans say “it is more important than ever to take on health care reform now” versus 39 percent who says “we cannot afford to take on health care right now.”⁴
- A recent NBC/Wall Street Journal [survey](#) found that a 45 to 39 percent plurality think it would be better to “pass Obama’s health care plan” rather than not pass the plan and “keep the current system.”⁵

Republicans Seen as Having No Ideas, Putting Politics Ahead of Solutions

Dole also blamed “partisanship,” particularly among his fellow Republicans, for the slowing reform. “Sometimes people fight you just to fight you ... they don’t want Obama to get it, so we’ve got to kill it.... Health care is one of those things.”⁶ His point was seconded by former Republican Congressman Mickey Edwards, “The goal isn’t to cripple a presidency. The goal is to take care of people’s problems getting health insurance.”⁷ As the debate over health care has raged on, it has become clear to the American people that the Republicans are, in fact, out to “cripple a presidency” rather than working to solve the people’s problems and even opponents of reform want Republicans to compromise instead of blocking legislation:

- A Democracy Corps [survey](#) conducted in early September finds 56 percent agreeing that Republicans are “More interested in partisan politics than solving the country’s problems.”
- The same [poll](#) finds just 29 percent saying that Republicans have “new ideas for addressing the country’s problems,” a lower rating than when we last asked this question in 2005.⁸
- Quinnipiac [finds](#) just 29 percent think that Republicans are “making a good faith effort to cooperate” with Obama on health care, versus 59 percent who say they are not.⁹
- A CBS/New York Times [survey](#) finds that just 27 percent think Republican members of Congress are opposing Obama’s plans because they think they are “bad for the country” while 64 percent say they are doing it for “political reasons.”¹⁰

⁴ Kaiser Family Foundation [survey](#) of 1,203 adults conducted September 11-18, 2009.

⁵ NBC/Wall Street Journal [survey](#) of 1,005 adults conducted September 17-20, 2009.

⁶ [Kansas City Star](#), 10/7/09.

⁷ [USA Today](#), 10/7/09.

⁸ Democracy Corps poll of 1,000 2008 voters nationwide conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner August 30 – September 1, 2009. See our memo, “[Health Care Speech Brings Small Rebound for Democrats.](#)”

⁹ Quinnipiac [survey](#) of 2,630 registered voters conducted September 29–October 5, 2009.

¹⁰ CBS/New York Times [survey](#) of 1,042 adults conducted September 19-23, 2009.



- CNN [finds](#) that 61 percent say Republicans are “being obstructionist for mostly political reasons” versus 35 percent who say they are being “constructive.”¹¹
- A Washington Post/ABC [survey](#) finds 62 percent saying Republicans in Congress are “not making a good faith effort to cooperate” on health care, versus just 31 percent who say they are.¹²
- Pew [finds](#) that 62 percent of *opponents* of health care reform think that “policymakers who oppose the current proposals” should compromise with supporters while only 33 percent think they should try to block passage of legislation.¹³

These sentiments are most vividly illustrated by the words of the participants of several focus groups that Democracy Corps conducted among independents and swing voters in Colorado, Ohio, Florida and Pennsylvania over the last two months:

- *“What I think of the Republican Party right now is the Party of no; everything, no, no, no. No health care, no this, no that, you know; they need help.”* – Non-college man, Cleveland, OH.
- *“I don’t think that the Republicans are ever going to want to ever pass any legislation for reform, because they don’t want Democrats or Obama to get reelected.... I don’t think that Obama is ever going to get support from the Republicans. As much as he tries to give them, they’re still going to vote no.”* – Independent woman after viewing Obama’s speech to a joint session of Congress, Denver, CO.
- *“They seem to be just opposing everything the Democrats bring out at this point... The Republicans totally are no, no, no, no, no, no. They’re against everything. Right now they’re against everything.”* – Non-college woman, Tampa, FL.
- *“It seems like they’re trying to stand up against anything the Democrats want to pass just to be a little smart ass in Congress. Any bill that the Democrats want to propose, it’s like hammer that down, hammer that down.”* – Non-college man, Tampa, FL.
- *“They just haven’t come up with anything. They just ban everything Obama says. I don’t think they’ve come up with an alternative.”* – College woman, Philadelphia, PA.¹⁴

¹¹ CNN/Opinion Research Corporation [survey](#) of 1,012 adults conducted September 11-13, 2009.

¹² Washington Post/ABC News [survey](#) of 1,007 adults conducted September 10-12, 2009.

¹³ Pew Center for People & the Press [survey](#) of 1,500 adults, conducted September 30-October 4, 2009.

¹⁴ From focus groups conducted by Democracy Corps amongst independents and swing voters in Cleveland, Ohio on September 30, 2009; Denver, Colorado on September 9, 2009; Tampa, Florida on August 24, 2009; and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on August 25, 2009.



Republican Brand Extremely Weak

As Bloomberg News put it in their write up of the latest Quinnipiac survey, “Months of Republican attacks on President Barack Obama’s health-care proposals appear to have hurt the party.”¹⁵ A slew of public polls conducted by Democracy Corps and other organizations show the Republican brand in tatters, both generally and on the issue of health care:

- That Quinnipiac [survey](#) finds that just 25 percent approve of the way Republicans in Congress are handling their job, while 64 percent disapprove.
- The latest Democracy Corps [survey](#) finds just 30 percent with a favorable opinion the GOP while 44 have an unfavorable opinion. That -14 point net approval rating is nearly twice as bad as it was on Election Day in 2008. Moreover, the net 17-point favorability gap between the two parties is down only slightly from Election Day 2008 and is still substantially larger than when Democrats secured their first of two successive wave victories on Election Day in 2006.¹⁶
- A similar [analysis](#) of Pew data from Brendan Nyhan at Pollster.com finds that “the Republicans are currently viewed more negatively than any minority party in the previous four midterms in terms of both net favorables and the difference in net favorables between parties.”¹⁷
- The early September Democracy Corps [survey](#) finds that just 35 percent think Republicans are “on your side,” one of the most important traits we measure. This is down 7 points from when we last asked it the summer before the wave election of 2006.
- The NBC/Wall Street Journal poll [finds](#) that just 21 percent approve of the job Republicans are doing on health care while 65 percent disapprove.
- Quinnipiac [finds](#) that 47 percent trust Obama to do a better job on health care versus just 31 percent who trust Republicans more.

¹⁵ [Bloomberg News](#), 10/8/09.

¹⁶ Democracy Corps poll of 1,200 2008 voters nationwide conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner September 12–16, 2009. See our memo, “[Health Care Speech Brings Small Rebound for Democrats.](#)”

¹⁷ See: http://www.pollster.com/blogs/assessing_the_gop_brand.php