

Date: April 29, 2009
To: Friends of Democracy Corps and Greenberg Quinlan Rosner
From: Greenberg, James Carville and Andrew Baumann

Americans See a Lot to Appreciate in Obama's First 100 Days

National Survey Shows Republicans at New Low

We are not going to try to compete with the superlatives about President Obama's first 100 days. Instead, we simply want to underscore the nuanced but interesting picture people have of his leadership, direction and progress in key areas, as well as concerns about the spending deficits necessary to address the current crisis. As the economy contracts sharply and unemployment rises, the president is gaining voters' confidence. Most striking is the two-thirds who agree with his direction and plans and the 42 percent who agree strongly with them.

What is most interesting about the survey is the cluster of reactions people are having to the president as a leader and in his work. He is seen as strong and on people's side, with good plans and bringing hope to the country. He is seen to be making progress on transparency in government, restoring American respect in the world and dealing with Iraq, and in bringing greater economic fairness with middle class relief. The combination of addressing the economic crisis and the security situation in Afghanistan and Iraq, while displaying a welcome amount of competence and intelligence more generally, is allowing voters to see a little bit of Presidents Kennedy, Clinton, Carter and Roosevelt in Obama.

While Obama continues to strengthen, the Republican Party is reeling. The defection of Pennsylvania Senator Arlen Specter is just the latest sign of a party in crisis, a sign this survey confirms. Republicans continue to lag in partisan self-identification as moderates now associate with the Democratic Party by more than a two-to-one ratio. Meanwhile, the Republican brand remains deeply unpopular, with the party sporting a net favorability rating of -15 points. More troubling for the Republican Party, fully a quarter of voters find nothing encouraging about their actions during Obama's first 100 days.

This memo is based on a national survey of 1,000 2008 voters, including 158 interviewed on cell phones (124 unweighted) and 851 likely 2010 voters (867 unweighted), conducted for Democracy Corps by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner, April 22-26, 2009. Margin of error is 3.1 percent.



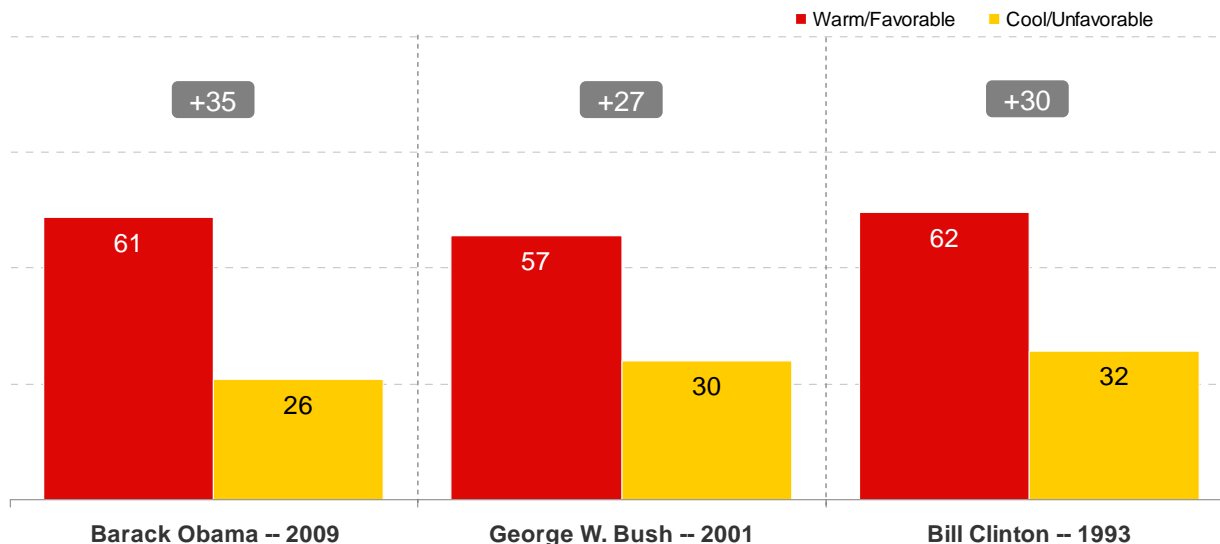
After 100 Days, Obama’s Standing Undiminished

As President Obama ends his first 100 days in office, Americans are increasingly optimistic about the president, his policies and the country. The mood in the country is as positive as it has been since late 2003, with 43 percent now saying the country is going in the right direction, compared to 46 who say things are off on the wrong track. While this is mostly driven by Democrats buoyed by the Obama presidency, optimism is also on the rise among independents and even Republicans, among whom the “right direction” number has more than doubled since early March.

Meanwhile, President Obama’s personal standing remains near his all-time high with 61 percent of voters rating him favorably against just 26 percent who rate him unfavorably. Obama is slightly more popular at this point in his presidency than either of his two immediate predecessors. The president’s job performance also remains stable and strong, with 58 percent approving of the job he has done as president, unchanged from a month ago and matching his all-time high.

Presidential favorability in the first 100 days

I'd like to rate your feelings toward some people and organizations, with 100 meaning a VERY WARM, FAVORABLE feeling; 0 meaning a VERY COLD, UNFAVORABLE feeling; and 50 meaning not particularly warm or cold.



**Note: Bush numbers from Democracy Corpse Survey conducted April 10, 2001. Clinton numbers from Gallup survey conducted April 22-24, 1993. Gallup uses “favorable” and “unfavorable” terminology instead of numerical thermometer scores.*

Perhaps even more important, almost two-thirds say they agree with President Obama’s policies and goals for the country. Despite the increasingly bitter partisan rancor in Washington, this is down just two points since February, and matches the rating President Clinton received at a similar point in 1993. However, the intensity of support for Obama’s goals and policies is much higher: 42 percent, compared to 14 percent at the same point under President Clinton.

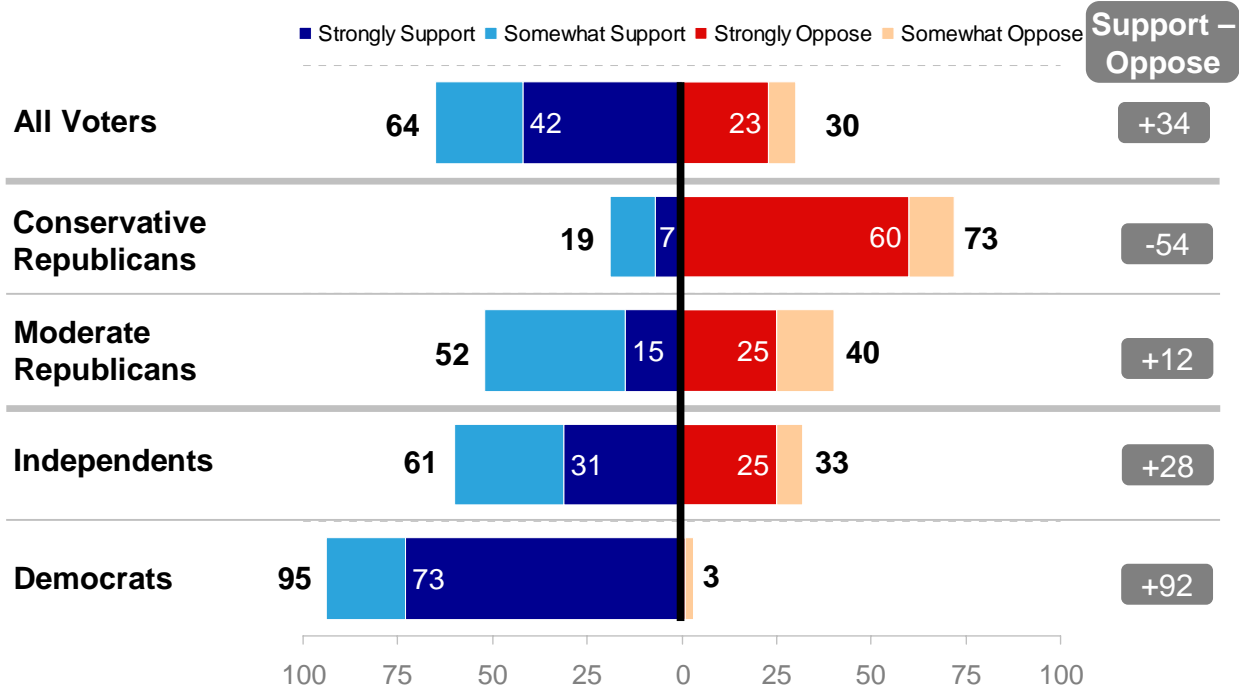


Moreover, Obama receives high marks on this score across the political spectrum, winning 95 percent support from Democrats but also 61 percent support from independents and even the backing of a majority of moderate Republicans.

It is not surprising then that a large majority, 61 percent, of voters want to see their Representative in Congress vote in favor of the president’s effort to get the economy moving again, while just 36 percent would prefer to see their Representative vote against Obama’s agenda in an effort to reduce the size of government and cut taxes.

Only conservative Republicans oppose Obama’s policies and goals

From what you have seen and heard so far about Barack Obama’s policies and goals for the country, would you say that you support or oppose his policies and goals?

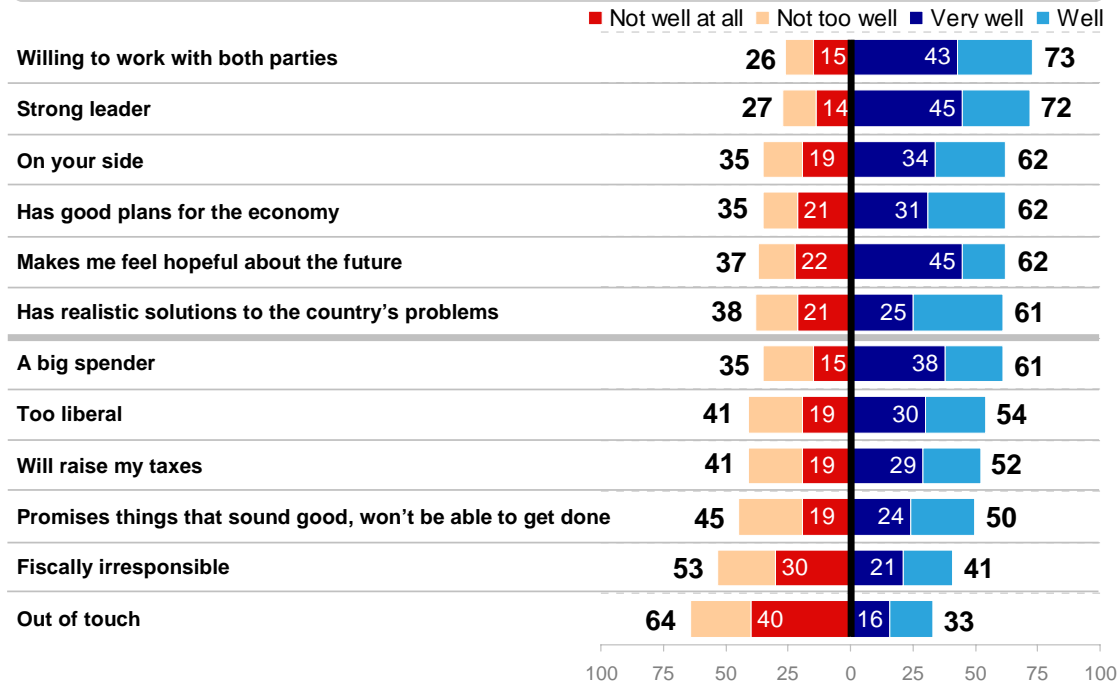


Obama also continues to earn extraordinary ratings on a series of key positive attributes. Nearly three-quarters of voters say the president is a “strong leader” while more than six-in-ten say he in “has good plans for the economy” and is “on your side.” These ratings are little changed from last month and remain well above their pre-election levels. Obama does encounter a couple of warning signs on a series of negative attributes, however. While the electorate does not agree that he is “fiscally irresponsible,” 61 percent of voters (and 68 percent of independents) say that Obama is “a big spender,” suggesting significant voter concern about the scale of spending and deficits.



Obama’s pretty extraordinary attributes

Now, I am going to read you a list of words and phrases which people use to describe political figures. For each word or phrase, please tell me whether it describes Barack Obama very well, well, not too well, or not well at all.



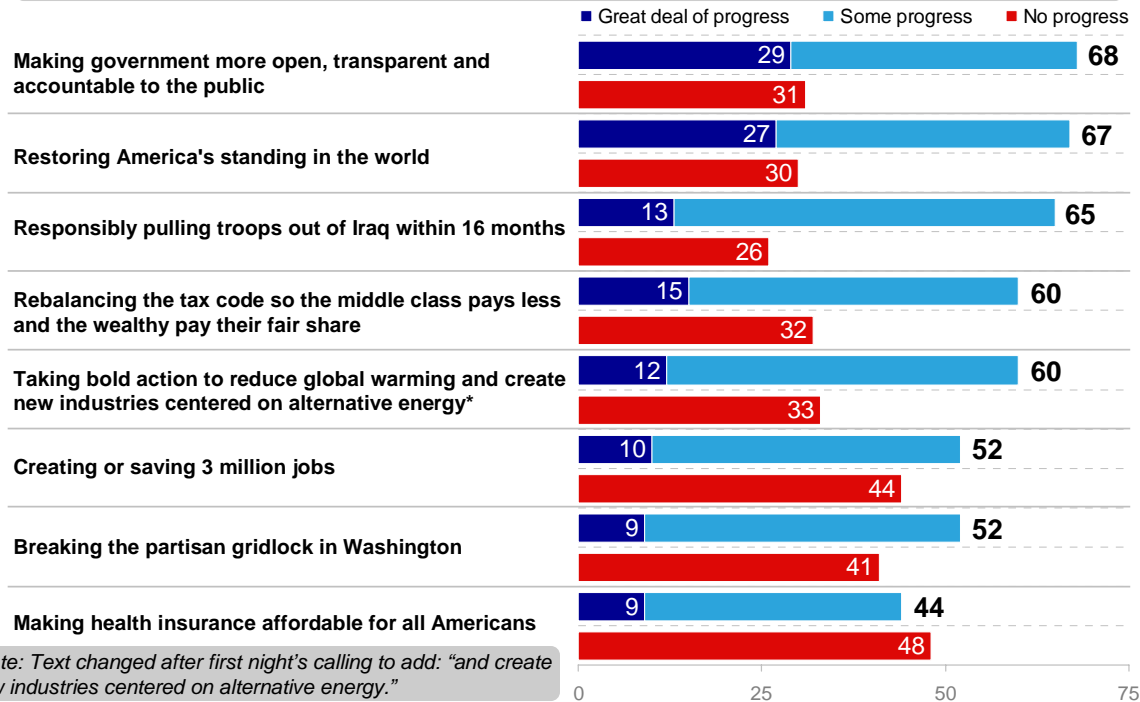
Obama Seen as Making Progress on Many Promises

Just 100 days into his term, voters give Obama high marks for making progress on a range of promises he made during and immediately after the campaign. About two-thirds say Obama has made at least some progress making government more transparent and accountable, restoring America’s standing in the world, and responsibly withdrawing American troops from Iraq, with even a 51 percent majority of Republicans agreeing with the last. Six-in-ten voters also say the president has made progress in rebalancing the tax code to benefit the middle class and in taking action to reduce global warming and boost alternative energy. They see less progress, however, on a few of Obama’s signature issues. Fewer than half believe Obama has made progress expanding affordable health care to all Americans, while bare majorities say he has made progress creating or saving 3 million jobs or breaking the partisan gridlock in Washington. Independents are the most optimistic about Obama’s progress restoring America’s standing, responsibly pulling out of Iraq and rebalancing the tax code, but are more skeptical about progress on alternative energy.



Obama making progress on most promises

I'm going to read you a list of things that Barack Obama said he intended to do if elected president. For each one please tell me whether, in your own opinion, Obama is making progress accomplishing what he said he would do, or not?



While voters feel that Obama has made progress on restoring America’s standing and removing troops from Iraq, overall they also think he has done a creditable job keeping America safe. A 51 percent majority reject the recent accusations, lobbed by former Vice President Cheney, that Obama’s foreign and security policies have made the country less safe (compared to 41 percent who agree with Cheney). When asked a different way, without mention of the former Vice President, the results are similar – 50 percent say Obama’s policies have made us safer while 39 percent say they have made us less safe. Interestingly, while the overall numbers are very similar, the same is not true among independents. When Cheney is not part of the equation, independents are split on the question, but when he is mentioned they side against Cheney by 12 points.

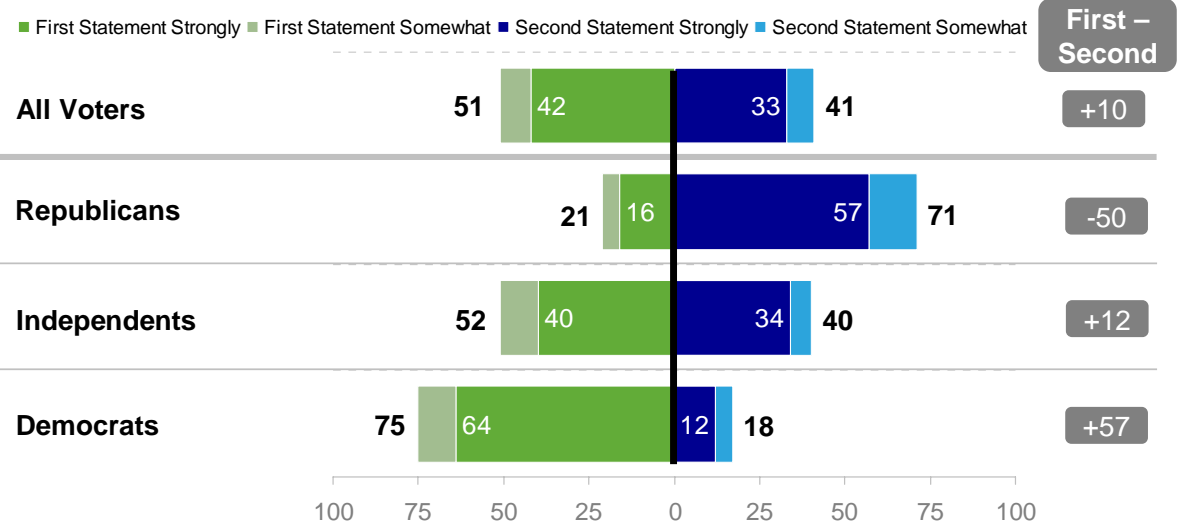


Voters disagree with Cheney’s assessment of Obama’s security policy

Now I’m going to read you some pairs of statements. After I read each pair, please tell me whether the FIRST statement or the SECOND statement comes closer to your own view, even if neither is exactly right.

First Statement: Vice President Cheney is wrong when he says that President Obama’s foreign and security policies have made us less safe.

Second Statement: Vice President Cheney is right when he says that President Obama’s foreign and security policies have made us less safe.



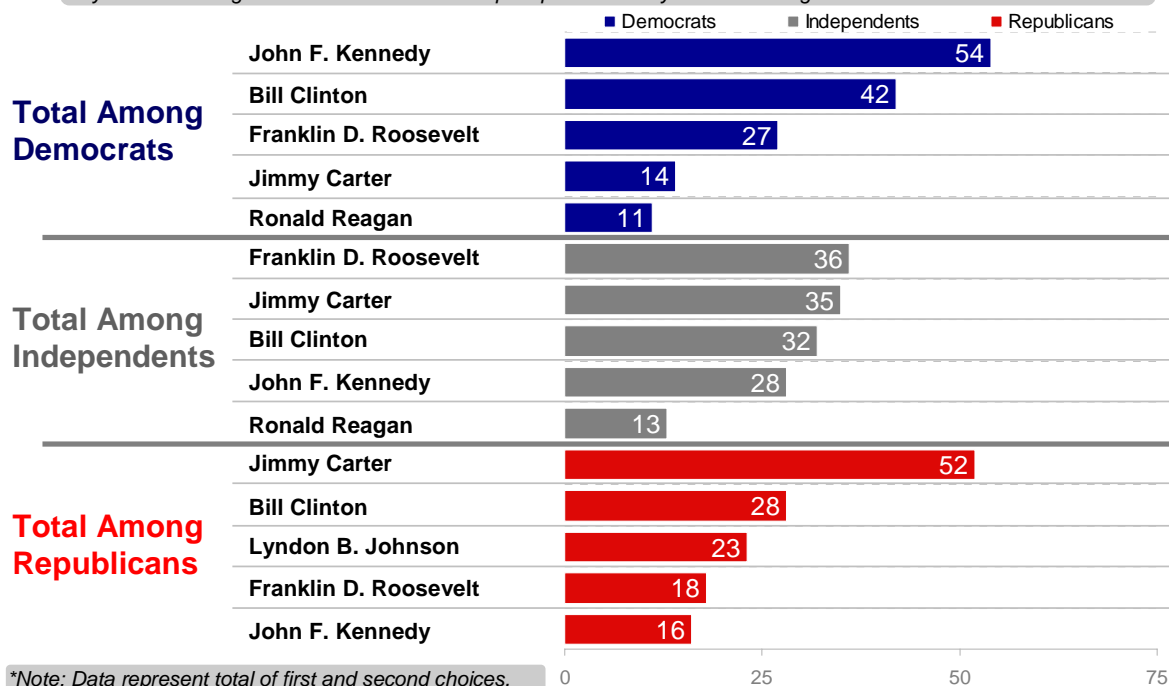
In Obama, Democrats see Another Kennedy, Republicans Another Carter

During Obama’s first 100 days he has drawn many comparisons to previous presidents – to John F. Kennedy for his youth and charisma, to Bill Clinton for his promise to bring change on the heels of a failed Bush presidency, to Franklin Roosevelt for the size and scale of the economic challenges he faces, and even to Ronald Reagan for his potential to realign politics in a fundamental way. It turns out, perhaps not surprisingly, that one’s preferred presidential analogy is largely dependent on partisanship. Overall, voters say Obama’s first 100 days make them think he will be most like one of the three last Democratic presidents, Kennedy (cited as one of the top two choices by 35 percent of voters), Clinton (35 percent) and Jimmy Carter (32 percent). However, Democrats are most apt to compare Obama to Kennedy, while Republicans says Obama is most like Carter. Interestingly, even though he was not among the top 3 overall, Franklin Roosevelt was most often cited by independents (followed closely by Carter and Clinton).



Different parties associate Obama most with different past presidents

And based on what you've seen and heard about President Obama in his first 100 days in office, which past president do you think he might be most like? And which past president do you think he might be next most like?



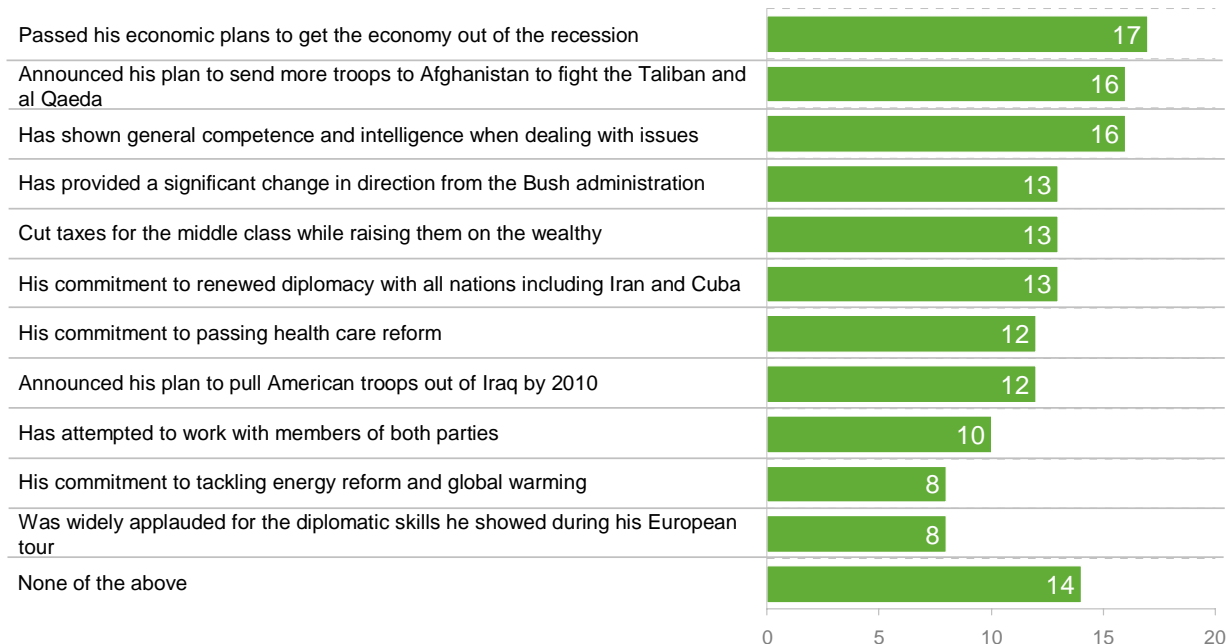
No Consensus on Most Encouraging Sign from First 100 Days, Spending is Top Worry

When asked to name the two most encouraging things about President Obama's first 100 days in office, no single item sticks out to voters. Overall, three items are grouped together at the top of this list: Obama's ability to pass his economic plans to get us out of the recession, his announcement of plans to send more troops to Afghanistan and the general competence and intelligence he has displayed in dealing with the issues. When broken down by party, however, some distinctions do emerge. Not surprisingly, Democrats choose Obama's action on the economy (cited by 22 percent) and the change of direction he has provided from the Bush administration (21 percent) while Republicans zero in on his decision to boost troop levels in Afghanistan (24 percent). Curiously, Obama's renewed diplomatic efforts with all nations, including Iran and Cuba, is the top choice of independents (cited by 19 percent), even though it ranked firmly in the second tier overall.



Encouraging actions about President Obama's first 100 days

Now I'd like to read you a list of things some people say are encouraging about President Obama's first 100 days in office. After I read this list I'd like you to tell me, in your own opinion, which TWO are the most encouraging about President Obama's first 100 days in office?



There is far greater consensus about the most worrisome aspects of Obama's first 100 days. His commitment to spend over 4 trillion dollars, resulting in an increase of the deficit to 1.8 trillion dollars (cited by 24 percent of voters), and the loophole that allowed AIG to pay out taxpayer-funded bonuses (21 percent) were clearly at the top of the list.

While Obama Prospers, Republicans Spend First 100 Days in Disarray

In announcing his intention to leave the Republican Party, Pennsylvania Senator Arlen Specter said yesterday, "Since my election in 1980, as part of the Reagan Big Tent, the Republican Party has moved far to the right... I now find my political philosophy more in line with Democrats than Republicans." The results of this survey show that this sentiment is shared by a sizeable majority of voters as well.

Democrats continue to maintain a sizeable advantage on partisan identification (currently 8 points), and the proportion of voters that considers themselves to be "strong Republicans" is at just 18 percent, close to an all-time low in our polling. Moreover, moderates now self-identify as Democrats by a more than two-to-one ratio – 47 to 21 percent. Meanwhile, the Republican brand remains deeply unpopular, with the party sporting a net favorability rating of -15 points (31 percent favorable, 46 percent unfavorable). By comparison, the Democratic Party enjoys a relatively strong +10 rating (46 percent favorable, 36 percent unfavorable). And in a test of the

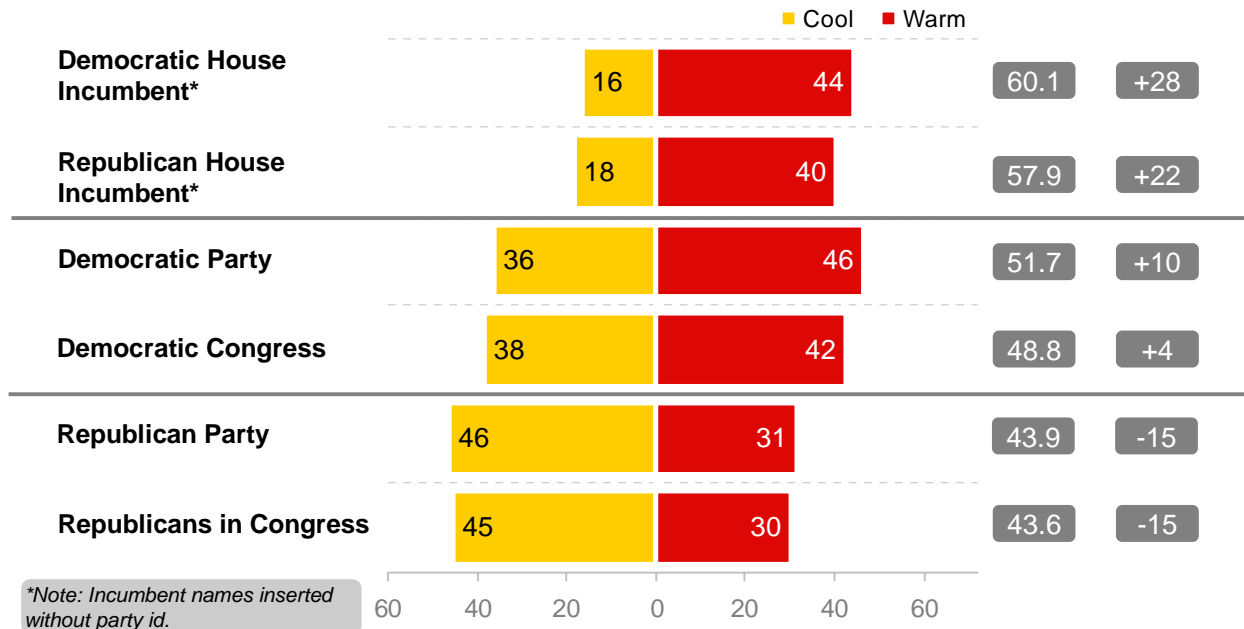


2010 congressional vote (using the incumbents' names), Democrats currently hold a 10-point advantage, a slight increase from their 2008 margin.

Democratic brand much more popular than Republican

Now, I'd like to rate your feelings toward some people and organizations, with one hundred meaning a VERY WARM, FAVORABLE feeling; zero meaning a VERY COLD, UNFAVORABLE feeling; and fifty meaning not particularly warm or cold.

Therm. Mean Warm - Cool

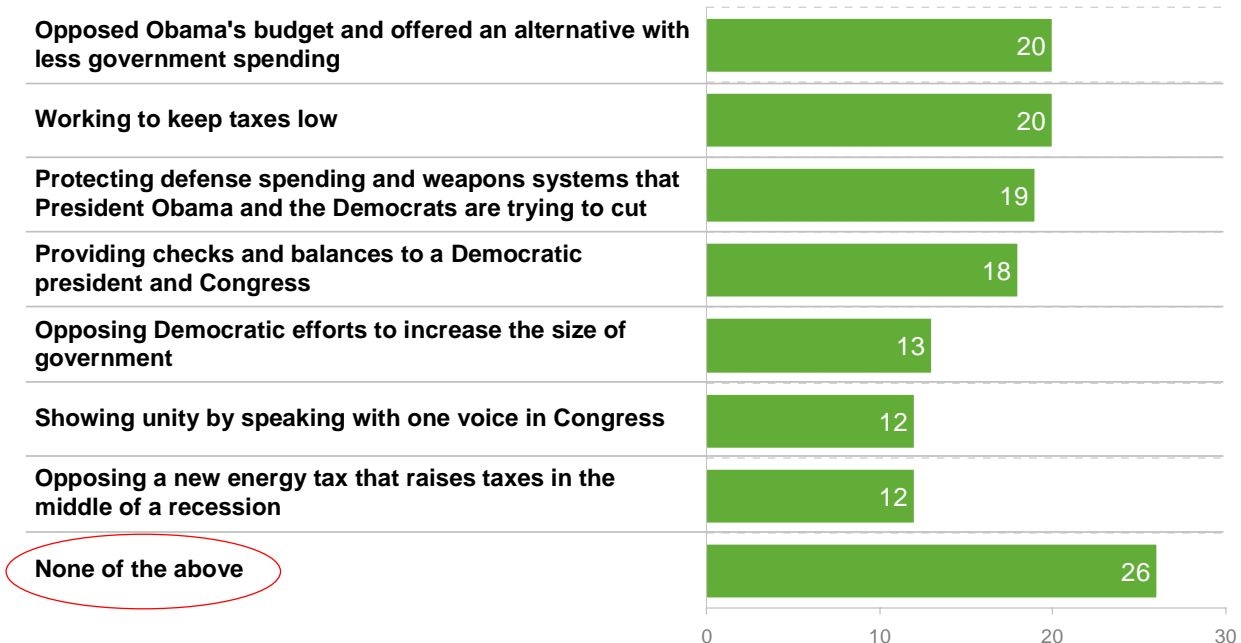


The Republican leadership's persistent yet directionless opposition to President Obama over his first 100 days in office has not helped matters. When asked which of seven actions (including working to keep taxes low, proving checks and balances and offering an alternative budget with less spending and a lower deficit) by the Republicans during Obama's first 100 days were the most encouraging, a full 26 percent of voters reply "none of the above." Meanwhile, voters cite the party's obstruction of Obama and its lack of leadership and direction (each cited as one of their top two choices by 22 percent of voters) as the most worrisome aspects of today's GOP. Independents are particularly troubled by the rudderless direction of the party as a total of 57 percent cite either the GOP's lack of leadership and direction or their unwillingness to offer alternative ideas and solutions.



A quarter find nothing encouraging about GOP actions during 1st 100 days

Now I'd like to read you a list of things some people say are encouraging about how the Republican Party has acted during President Obama's first 100 days in office. After I read this list I'd like you to tell me, in your own opinion, which TWO are the most encouraging about the Republican Party?



All of this has left the Republican Party in a deep hole, especially when compared to President Obama. Indeed, even in the 40-most vulnerable Democratic congressional seats, a more conservative battleground than the country as a whole, President Obama is trusted to do a better job than the Republicans on every issue tested, most by dominant margins. This includes a 16-point advantage on the economy, a 24-point advantage on health care and a 27-point advantage on energy policy, along with a two-to-one lead on being willing to cross the aisle and work with both parties.¹

¹ Based on a Democracy Corps survey of 1,000 likely voters in the 40 most vulnerable Democratic-held congressional districts, conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner April 16-21, 2009.