



# RESURGENT REPUBLIC

## MEMORANDUM

**TO: Interested Parties**  
**FROM: Ed Gillespie and Whit Ayres**  
**DATE: April 29, 2009**  
**RE: Overview of Resurgent Republic Survey April 2009**

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This first Resurgent Republic survey of 1000 registered voters, conducted April 13-16, 2009, shows that President Obama remains quite popular, with 61 percent approving of his job performance and 32 percent disapproving so far. That is comparable to President George W. Bush's job approval of 62 to 29 percent in the Gallup Poll on April 20-22 of his first year in office. President Obama's job approval is somewhat higher than both President Clinton's (55 percent) and the first President Bush's (58 percent) in April of their first year, but lower than President Reagan's in April after the attempt on his life (67 percent).

A wide partisan gap of 67 points exists in President Obama's job approval, with 92 percent of Democrats approving versus only 25 percent of Republicans. Independents fall exactly between Democrats and Republicans on this measure, with 59 percent approving of the President's job performance. Independent support for the President is a key indicator to monitor.

This survey verifies that America remains a center-right country. Voters prefer a smaller government with lower taxes over a larger government with higher taxes by a three-to-one margin. By a two-to-one margin, they think government should promote opportunity by fostering job growth, encouraging entrepreneurs, and allowing people to keep more of what they earn, rather than promote fairness by narrowing the gap between rich and poor, spreading the wealth, and making sure that economic outcomes are more equal.

Not surprisingly, concerns about the economy eclipse all others right now, with 57 percent citing it as the most important issue facing the United States. A majority of voters opposes President Obama's proposed \$3.6 trillion budget with its \$1.4 trillion deficit, even as they believe he is responding to problems he inherited. They are deeply skeptical about the amount of money Mr. Obama proposes for the government to spend, tax, and borrow for bailouts and other spending programs that produce few private sector jobs. Independents, who hold the balance of power in this electorate, are closer to Republicans than to Democrats on these fiscal issues. Moreover, 84 percent of voters think the maximum federal income tax rate should be below its current rate of 35 percent, with more than two-thirds believing the maximum rate should be 20 percent or lower.

**Republicans are on favorable ground resisting the amount of spending, taxing, and borrowing in the President's proposed budget and will draw independents away from Mr. Obama's camp by doing so.**

As is often the case however, the more liberal argument fares better when it comes to specific spending proposals. Mention of education, energy, and health care "investment" to bring the country out of recession is more resonant than the argument that this Administration is taking advantage of the recession to make massive increases in government spending that will hurt our economy in the future by nearly tripling our debt.

On the debate over climate change, a substantial majority of American voters, including an overwhelming majority of independents, thinks climate change is happening and human activity is a significant cause. However, they think addressing the problem with any proposal that could raise energy prices during a severe recession is a bad idea. Recognizing that climate change is a problem is important, but voters want a solution that strengthens rather than hurts the economy. Cap-and-trade advocates have made significant progress on the "green jobs" argument. Those opposed to cap-and-trade will need to make a more persuasive case that such policies will shift more jobs abroad than they will create at home, and that the onus of the cost will fall on consumers rather than companies. Voters are dead set against a bait-and-switch strategy that would justify higher prices for gasoline and electricity to pay for health care reform.

An overwhelming majority of American voters supports President Obama's decision to send 17,000 additional troops and 4,000 more trainers to Afghanistan, even though 41 percent of Democrats are opposed. Sixty-three percent of independents and 71 percent of Republicans back President Obama on this issue.

On the other hand, a strong majority believes the Guantanamo Bay prison helps protect America rather than undermines our moral authority. Independents are, again, much more like Republicans than Democrats on this issue. As is seen repeatedly in public opinion research, **national security remains the Republicans' strongest relative advantage over the Democrats and a major issue on which independents and Republicans hold similar views.**

One social issue tested was the proposal to repeal conscience clause regulations that allow health care providers and workers to refrain from engaging in practices that are legal but personally morally objectionable, including abortion. Overwhelmingly (61 percent), voters believe "health care workers should not be required to perform procedures they oppose on moral grounds, such as abortions."

President Obama is personally popular, enjoying a 61 to 32 percent favorable-unfavorable rating that is driven by an identical rating among independents. Congressional Democrats and Republicans fare less well however, particularly among independents, with "Democrats in Congress" having a 45 to 42 percent favorable-unfavorable rating (39 to 45 percent among independents), and "Republicans in Congress" having a 37 to 47 percent favorable-unfavorable rating (32 to 47 percent among independents).

Republicans have far more to work with in the current environment than many suspect. The key to rebuilding a majority coalition is regaining the support of independents. Particularly on the overall philosophy of government and on national security, Republicans show signs of gaining ground.