

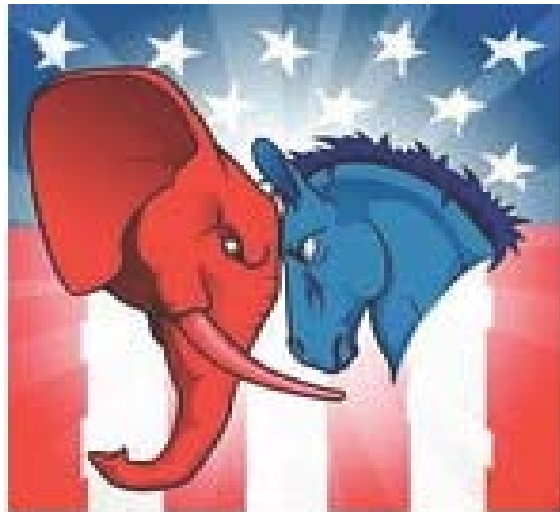
THE MSU BILLINGS POLL

NATIONAL, STATE,
AND
LOCAL ISSUES – DAY 1

OCTOBER 2011

26TH POLL

23rd YEAR



***DR. CRAIG WILSON, DR. SCOTT RICKARD
AND DR. CATHY GROTT, CO-DIRECTORS***

**The “MSU-Billings Poll” is available on our website
www.msubillings.edu/urelations**

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INTRODUCTION

The “MSU Billings Poll” began in 1989. This is the 23rd year the survey has been conducted, during this time 26 surveys have been completed. The Co-Directors of the Poll are Dr. Craig Wilson (Political Science), Dr. Scott Rickard (Director of the Center for Applied Economic Research) and Dr. Cathy Grott (Sociology-Methodology). We would like to thank Ms. Brenda Dockery for serving as the supervisor for this research project, Ms. Jonna Jones for also assisting us and Ms. Tami Eller for word processing the survey results.

This report summarizes the results of a statewide random sample telephone survey involving the responses of 411 adult Montanans. The poll was conducted October 17-21. Forty students enrolled in Political Science 342, Media, Public Opinion, Polling and Sociology 318, Sociological Research Methods, completed the interviews for this survey. The survey was completed using random digit dial methodology, which selects both the phone numbers and members of a household to interview. A sample of cell phone numbers was also included in the sample. The poll was conducted using MSU-Billings’ CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) software. Multiple attempts were made to reach selected households. The survey results have a +/- 5% margin of error at a confidence level of 95% (95% of the time the results will fall within the +/- 5% margin of error). Factors such as question order and wording can affect survey results. Statistical tests were employed to determine whether statistically significant relationships ($p=.05$) existed between key variables.

I. NATIONAL ISSUES

1. PRESIDENT OBAMA'S OVERALL PERFORMANCE IN OFFICE

This is the third year the “MSU-Billings Poll” asked respondents: “At this point in time do you approve or disapprove of President Barack Obama’s overall performance in office?” A majority of those polled (57.5%) answered “disapprove.”

In comparison, in 2009, 53% of those questioned replied “disapprove” and 37% said “approve.” In 2010, 52.9% of the respondents said “disapprove” and 32.1% replied “approve.”

PRESIDENT OBAMA'S OVERALL PERFORMANCE IN OFFICE

<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
32.0%	57.5%	10.5%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- 45% of Democrats approve of the President’s performance, while 44.2% of Republicans and 5% of independents are undecided.
- In terms of age, Obama’s greatest support (34.6%) exists among those age 61+, while his least support (33.9%) is found within this same cohort.
- Gender, income and education are not related to opinions about his popularity.
- 56.3% of those who approve of the President’s performance approve of his proposed economic stimulus package. 74.8% of those disapproving of his performance disapprove of the stimulus package.
- 88.7% of those who approve of the President overall, like him personally, while a plurality (41.5%) who disapprove of the President do not like him personally.
- A plurality (27.8%) of the respondents who approve of the Afghanistan war, approve of the President’s performance overall. A plurality (44.3%) of the respondents who disapprove of his overall performance also opposed the war.
- There is no relationship between those who feel the U.S. is winning the war in Afghanistan and their opinion of the President’s approval in managing foreign relations.

- 79.1% of those who like Obama, favor dropping “don’t ask, don’t tell,” while a plurality (36.9%) of those both supporting and opposing the policy do not approve of his performance.
- Majorities of both those who like (72.2%) or dislike (56.8%) the President approve of the action against Muammar Khadaffi.
- In terms of responsibility for the U.S. annual deficit, 78.4% of individuals who approve of the President’s performance hold Congress responsible, while 85.0% who hold the President responsible for the deficit disapprove of his job overall.
- 49.0% of those disapproving Presidential performance and 48.5% approving it are “very interested” in the 2012 general election.
- 90.0% of individuals disapproving of Obama’s performance say they would not vote for him next year, while 78.0% of those polled who approve of his performance say they would support him.
- 51.1% of those approving of the President’s performance feel passage of the healthcare law in the future would make health care much better. While 86.3% of those disapproving of the job the President is doing feel the law would make health care much worse.
- 45% of the respondents who approve of the President’s performance, feel they are economically about the same as 5 years ago, while 53.5% of individuals disapproving of the President think they are worse off.
- 64.1% of individuals who dislike the President’s authority have a favorable opinion of the Tea Party movement, while 52.7% approving of the job he is doing disapprove of the President’s official actions.

2. **PRESIDENT OBAMA’S ABILITY TO MANAGE U.S. FOREIGN RELATIONS**

In reply to the question, “At this point in time, do you believe that President Obama is doing a “good job,” or a “bad job,” in managing U.S. international relations,” a plurality (41.1%) of those interviewed said “bad job.” Last year, in response to a similarly worded question, 42% of those polled answered both “good job” and “bad job.” In 2009, 45% of those polled said “bad job” and 40% “good job.”

PRESIDENT OBAMA’S ABILITY TO MANAGE U.S. FOREIGN RELATIONS

<u>Good Job</u>	<u>Bad Job</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
40.1%	41.1%	18.8%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- 78.3% of individuals who regard Obama as doing a “good job” with foreign policy also like him as a person. 50.5% who view him as doing a “bad job” with the economy are undecided about whether they approve of his performance in foreign affairs.
- 48.8% of those polled who think the President is doing a “good job” in foreign policy feel it was somewhat likely the U.S. will suffer another terrorist attack. 54.6% who feel he had done a “bad” job dealing with international relations say it was very likely the U.S. would have to deal with another terrorist attack.
- 70.8% who say they approve of the President’s handling of international relations supported ending the “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy. 39.9% who regarded the President as doing a poor job with foreign policy opposed ending “don’t ask, don’t tell.”
- 67.3% of individuals who believed the President had done a “good job” in the areas of foreign policy approve his actions regarding Libya. 56.1% of individuals who believe the president is doing a “bad job” in foreign relations feel the same way.
- 79.2% of those approving the President’s handling of foreign policy and 78.5% feeling he was doing a “bad job” both had a negative view about how Congress is operating.
- A plurality (41.3%) of individuals who believed the President was handling international relations correctly and 57.2% of those disagreeing were both “very interested” in next year’s election.
- 67.9% of respondents approving of the President’s handling of foreign affairs planned on voting for a Democrat in next year’s election. 71.8% disapproving of his actions in this area say they would vote Republican.
- 92.7% of those whose political views reflect the Tea Party’s political views feel President Obama is doing a “bad job” managing foreign relations. 60.5% of those whose political views do not reflect the Tea Party at all feel the President is doing a “good job” managing foreign relations.
- 44.4% of individuals who were undecided about how religious they were believed the President had done a “good job” in handling international affairs. 35.3% of the respondents disapproving of his international actions say they were “very religious.”

- 29.4% of those viewing the President as doing a “bad job” in handling international relations and 25.1% who say he was doing a “bad job” both lived in households with \$45,000-\$75,000 yearly incomes.

3. **PRESIDENT OBAMA’S ABILITY TO MANAGE THE U.S. ECONOMY**

A majority (67.4%) of those polled replied “bad job” when asked: “In an overall sense, do you believe that President Obama is doing a “good job,” or a “bad job” in managing the U.S. economy?”

In 2009, 56% of those surveyed said “bad job” and 29% “good job.” While in 2010, a majority (62.7%) who answered the question said “bad job” and 29% “good job.”

PRESIDENT OBAMA’S ABILITY TO MANAGE U.S. ECONOMY

<u>Good Job</u>	<u>Bad Job</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
20.6%	67.4%	12.1%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- 94.2% of those with a negative view of the President’s dealing with foreign affairs also believed he had done a negative job handling the economy. 45% believing he had done well managing foreign affairs held a positive view of his dealing with the economy.
- Age, income, education and gender were not related to individuals’ responses of this question.
- 42.4% of Democrats feel he was doing a “good job” and 91.1% of Republicans a “bad job” managing the economy. 72.4% of undecided voters feel President Obama is doing a “bad job” managing the economy.
- 64% of those believing the President was doing a “good job” approve his economic stimulus package, while 68.1% thought he was doing a “bad job” disapprove of the plan.
- 76.7% of those who feel the President was managing the economy well feel Congress was most responsible for the deficit while 51.2% feeling he was doing a “bad job” with the economy also replied “Congress.”
- 76.7% of individuals supporting the President’s handling of the economy held Congress most responsible for the national deficit. 56.3% of the respondents who feel the President has done a poor job handling the economy were undecided about whom was responsible for the deficit.

- 88.2% of individuals approving of Obama’s handling of the economy like him on a personal basis, while 94.3% of those who dislike Obama held the opinion that he was doing a “bad job” managing the economy.
- 55.7% of those polled who approve of the President handling the economy say the Tea Party views did not affect them at all. The 18.6% who believed the President was doing a “bad job” with the economy also say the Tea Party affected their opinion “not at all.”
- 52% of individuals who thought the President did a “bad job” with the economy say they were worse off economically than 5 years ago. 51.2% who approve of his handling of the economy say they were “about the same” economically as 5 years ago.
- 81.1% of respondents feeling the President was doing a “bad job” with the economy believed the healthcare legislation passed would make healthcare much worse. The 60.5% of those polled who thought the President was doing a good economic job say they thought this legislation would make healthcare “much worse.”
- The 87.4% of respondents who thought the President was doing a “good job” with economic policy also believed he was doing a “good job” with foreign policy. The 57.4% who viewed his economic policies badly held a negative view of him handling the economy.

4. **KNOW YEAR 9/11 OCCURRED**

When asked, “Can you tell me the year that the 9/11 attacks on U.S. soil occurred,” a majority (81%) knew the right answer.

KNOW YEAR 9/11 OCCURRED

<u>Right</u>	<u>Wrong</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
81.0%	13.8%	5.2%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- The educational cohort most likely to get the day wrong (54.5%) were those with a high school degree or less.
- In terms of age the 61+ cohort was both most likely to get the right (31.2%) and wrong (26.3%) answer were most likely (54.4%) to give the wrong year.

5. SUPPORT U. S. DECISION TO GO TO WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

The question regarding the war in Afghanistan was phrased: “Do you support or oppose the United States’ decision to go to war in Afghanistan?” A plurality (46.2%) of those replying to this question replied “oppose.”

When a similar question was asked last year a majority (54%) of individuals said “support.” And in 2010, a majority of 51.6% of those polled replied “support.”

SUPPORT U. S. DECISION TO GO TO WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

<u>Support</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
40%	46.2%	13.8%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- Opinions about the war were not related to age.
- In terms of income the \$45,000-\$75,000 cohort were both most (33.5%) and least (21.1%) likely to support the war.
- Males (52.7%) were more likely to back the conflict, while females (53.8%) most likely to oppose the war.
- Republicans (54.8%) were most likely to back the war, Democrats (57.7%) most apt to oppose it.
- Those supporting the war (45.0%) were most likely to feel a terrorist attack was “very likely,” while 62.0% of those who feel a terrorist attack was not very likely opposed the war.
- Those with a favorable opinion (51.2%) of the Tea Party movement were most likely to support the war, while individuals with an unfavorable (53.4%) view of the movement most likely to oppose the war.

6. WINNING WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

When asked “at this time is the U.S. winning the war in Afghanistan” a majority (50.5%) replied “no.”

WINNING WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
25.6%	50.5%	23.9%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- There is no relationship between winning the war in Afghanistan and President Obama's approval of handling foreign relations.
- 69.4% of those who believe the U.S. is winning the war in Afghanistan and 71.6% of those who feel the U.S. is not winning both disapprove of how the President is dealing with the economy.
- 40.7% of the individuals who say the U.S. is winning the war in Afghanistan and the 47.9% who say we were not, both believed another terror attack on the U.S. was "very likely."
- The 59.8% of respondents who believed the U.S. was winning the war and the 63.2% who feel we were not both supported U.S. actions in Libya.
- 27.1% of those believing we were winning the war say the Tea Party movement moderately affected their political opinions. The 34.1% of the respondents who say we were not winning the war feel the Tea party movement reflected their political opinions "not at all."

7. NATO OPPOSING MUAMMAR KHADAFI

A majority (62%) of the respondents said "yes" when asked, "Do you support NATO assisting Libyan opponents of Muammar Khadaffi in removing him from power"

NATO OPPOSING MUAMMAR KHADAFI

<u>Support</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
62%	16.3%	21.7%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- 43.2% of individuals supporting U.S. actions in Libya feel President Obama is doing a “good job” in managing foreign relations. 64.7% opposing the action feel the President was doing a “bad job.”
- 32.8% of those polled who opposed the Libyan action say the Tea Party “moderately” affected their political views. 34.8% who backed the Libyan action say the Tea Party affected their opinions “not at all.”

8. MILITARY DROPPING “DON’T ASK, DON’T TELL” POLICY

When polled and asked the question, “Do you support the U.S. military dropping its’ “don’t ask, don’t tell policy,” a majority (51.1%) of those answering the question replied “support.”

MILITARY DROPPING “DON’T ASK, DON’T TELL” POLICY

<u>Support</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
51%	27.6%	21.4%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- 37.3% of individuals supported “don’t ask, don’t tell” say the Tea Party movement had no impact on their political opinions. 51.2% of individuals who oppose the policy say the Tea Party impacted them “a great deal.” 29.8% opposed to changing the policy say the group “moderately” impacted their viewpoints.
- 39.7% among those liking President Obama on a personal basis opposed changing the policy. 60.1% of those polled who favored the changes liked President Obama.
- 50.2% of those backing changing the policy say they would vote for a Democratic Presidential candidate. 57.9% opposed to it say they would vote Republican.
- 53.9% of the respondents saying they were “somewhat religious” favored changing the policy. 42.6% of those opposed to the change identified themselves as “very religious.”

9. OPINION ABOUT CONGRESS

A majority (76.9%) of the respondents replied “Congress” when asked, “In a general sense, do you have a positive or negative opinion about how the U.S. Congress is operating today?”

OPINION ABOUT CONGRESS

<u>Positive</u>	<u>Negative</u>	<u>Both</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
9.5%	76.9%	5%	8.6%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationship:

- There was no relationship between an individual's personal opinion of President Obama and their opinion about Congress.

10. RESPONSIBLE FOR ANNUAL NATIONAL DEFICIT

When asked the question phrased, "Whom do you hold more responsible for the U.S. budget's annual deficit, the U.S. Congress or the President," a majority (58.4%) of those answering the question said "Congress."

RESPONSIBLE FOR ANNUAL NATIONAL DEFICIT

<u>Congress</u>	<u>President</u>	<u>Both</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
58.4%	9.5%	28.3%	3.9%	100%

11. SUPPORT PRESIDENT OBAMA'S STIMULUS PACKAGE

When the respondents were asked, "Do you support President Obama's most recently announced economic stimulus package," a plurality of respondents (49.4%) replied "no."

SUPPORT PRESIDENT OBAMA'S STIMULUS PACKAGE

<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>Know Nothing About</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
49.4%	21.4%	18.6%	10.6%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- Those least supportive of the plan were aged 40-50 (60.6%), while a plurality (35.9%) of those who support the stimulus package (38.5%) were in the age 61+ cohort.

- 79.1% of those who support the stimulus package blame Congress the most for the deficit. 75.0% of those who blame the President most for the deficit oppose the stimulus.
- 60.4% of individuals who supported the President's economic stimulus package believed the President was handling economic issues well. 92.8% of those opposed to the President's economic stimulus package believed he was doing a "bad job" with the economy.
- 58.1% of individuals who favor to the economic stimulus feel the Tea Party does not reflect their political opinions at all, while 92.7% of those who feel the Tea Party reflects their views a great deal, oppose the stimulus package.
- 79.1% of individuals supporting the stimulus plan and the 49% opposing it both held Congress most responsible for our yearly deficit.

12. **LIKE OR DISLIKE PRESIDENT OBAMA ON A PERSONAL BASIS**

When asked the question, "On a personal basis, do you like or dislike President Obama," a plurality (45.7%) replied "like."

LIKE OR DISLIKE PRESIDENT OBAMA ON A PERSONAL BASIS

<u>Like</u>	<u>Dislike</u>	<u>Like/Dislike Sometimes</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
45.7%	25.6%	7.1%	21.6%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- A plurality of 44.8% of individuals liking the President disapprove of his handling of the economy while 94.3% of those not liking the President say Congress was doing a "bad job."

II. HEALTHCARE

1. OPINION OF NATIONAL HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

A question was asked on a 1-10 scale which was worded, “Based upon what you know, on a 1-10 scaled question where “1” represents “much worse” and “10” “much better,” in terms of the healthcare legislation passed by Congress, if it is fully implemented, do you think the quality of healthcare in the U.S. will get better or worse.” A 66.5% of those responding to some extent said worse. The categories 1-5 were labeled “worse,” and 6-10 “better.”

OPINION OF NATIONAL HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

<u>1-5 (worse)</u>	<u>6-10 (better)</u>	<u>Total</u>
66.5%	33.5%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- 50.5% of individuals feeling the healthcare legislation would make health care delivery “much better” believed the President was doing a “good job” handling economic policy. 81.9% disapproving of Obama’s overall economic performance believed the legislation would make healthcare “much worse.”
- 48.5% of Democrats feel the medical legislation would make healthcare “much better,” and 86.3% of Republicans feel the law would make healthcare “much worse.”
- 67% of individuals who thought the law would make care “much better” backed the legislation. 74.6% of individuals believing the healthcare legislation would make healthcare worse “disapproved” of the federal healthcare law.
- 45.6% of those planning on voting for the Democratic candidate in the 2012 election for the U.S. Senate thought the legislation would make healthcare “much better.” 87.4% of those intending to vote for the Republican candidate in the 2012 election for the U.S. Senate thought the legislation would make health care worse.
- 50.0% of those planning on voting for the Democratic candidate in the 2012 election for the U.S. House feel the law would make healthcare “much better.” 89.4% of those planning on voting for the Republican candidate in the U.S. House feel the law would make healthcare worse..

2. HEALTHCARE COVERAGE

When asked to finish the following statement, “I am currently covered by private health insurance, public health insurance, both, or neither” a plurality (49.1%) of the respondents answered private health insurance.

HEALTHCARE COVERAGE

<u>Private</u>	<u>Public</u>	<u>Both</u>	<u>Neither</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
49.1%	16.5%	17.8%	14.4%	2.2%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationships:

- Those 29-39 (30.0%) are most likely to have neither type of insurance. Those 51-61 are most apt (60.0%) to have private health insurance. 75.0% of those with both types of insurance are over 61 years of age.
- There is no statistically significant relationship between healthcare insurance and party affiliation.

3. OVERALL PERSONAL HEALTH

When asked, “on a scale of 1-10 where 1 represents “poor” and 10 “excellent,” how would you rate your overall personal health,” a majority felt that to some extent their health was good. The categories 1-5 were combined into some extent “poor,” and those saying 6-10 to some extent were felt to mean “good.”

OVERALL PERSONAL HEALTH

<u>1-5 (poor)</u>	<u>6-10 (good)</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Total</u>
17%	81.8%	1.2%	100%

Statistically Significant Relationship:

- 27.8% of those who describe their health as poor earned less than \$15,000 annually. Families earning \$15,001-\$30,000 (27.6%) and those earning \$30,001-\$45,000 (24.7%) rated their health as “fair.” Families earning \$45,001-\$75,000 (83.5%) and over \$75,000 (78.8%) replied “good or excellent” to the question.

4. QUALITY OF HEALTHCARE

When asked “do you think the quality of healthcare in the U.S. will get better or worse,” 66.5% replied to some extent worse.

<u>1-5 (worse)</u>	<u>6-10 (better)</u>	<u>Total</u>
66.5%	33.5%	100%