

May 23, 2013

Anzalone Liszt Grove Research National Polling Summary

Friends,

Below you will find the Anzalone Liszt Grove Research National Polling Summary, which provides a pollster's take on data and trends that affect political campaigns.

This week we focus on the reaction to a trifecta of controversies in Washington.

Following our analysis are additional news items and data we thought you'd enjoy.

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Richard Nixon had Watergate, Ronald Reagan had Iran-Contra, and Bill Clinton had Monica Lewinsky. Republicans are salivating at the prospect that, after twice being unable to beat Obama at the ballot box, they may have an opportunity to tank his popularity through the IRS/Benghazi/AP trio of recent controversies.

And yet, despite the GOP's fever pitch, the American people's opinion of Obama hasn't changed. Obama's job approval has remained at 48% over the past month, according to [Huffington Post](#) poll averages. In [contrast](#), Nixon's job approval fell 36% over six months in 1973 as the full scope of Watergate emerged, Reagan's fell 20% in about five months as Iran-Contra became public, and Carter's fell 27% in six months as he was unable to negotiate a return of the American hostages from Iran.

The reason behind Obama's steady approval rating appears two-fold. First, the public believes Obama is focused on what's important – namely, the economy. Second, while Americans aren't condoning the actions in these controversies, they aren't buying the conspiracy theories either.

America to Congress: Do as Obama Does, Focus on the Economy

At the same time that [one-third](#) of all House committees are investigating some aspect of the Obama administration, Americans want Washington to be focused on the economy/jobs (41% rate it as their [top concern](#)). They are also looking at their pocketbooks and feeling a little better. According to [Gallup](#), U.S. economic confidence is at a five-year high: for the first time in five years, more Americans think the economy is getting better than think it is getting worse.

According to the latest ABC News/Washington Post poll, 56% of Americans think the economy has begun to [recover](#), and 66% feel [optimistic](#) about their family's financial situation in the coming year.

Along with this general increased economic optimism, Americans are also viewing the way Obama is handling the economy more favorably. After two consecutive months of negative ratings, Obama breaks [even](#) on economic job approval in the ABC News/Washington Post poll.

Republicans in Congress, however, are not given similar credit – when asked whom they trust to do a better job handling the economy, Americans give Obama a nine-point [advantage](#) over Congressional Republicans (up from a four-point advantage in March). Moreover, most Americans believe Obama is focusing on issues [important](#) to them personally (51% important / 44% not important), while most Americans believe Republicans in Congress are not (33% important / 60% not important).

Blame game

While 30% of Americans report they are very closely [following](#) reports about the U.S. economy, only a quarter of Americans are very closely following the stories on the Benghazi investigation (25%) and the IRS controversy (26%), and only 16% are very closely following the story on the AP phone records. Not surprisingly, Republicans are paying much closer [attention](#) to the three stories and are more likely to suspect White House [involvement](#).

While few are paying close attention, [majorities](#) of Americans believe the three underlying issues in these stories are very important to the nation: the inaccurate statements about Benghazi (55%), the extra scrutiny conservative political groups faced on their applications for tax-exempt status (55%), and the secret collection of journalists' phone records (53%).

However, people don't believe Obama or his administration is guilty of major wrongdoing in any of the three situations. Only 37% of people believe the White House [ordered](#) the IRS to target conservative groups for extra scrutiny. A plurality of Americans (44%) say they place no [blame](#) on Obama for the IRS investigations, while only 19% say they place a lot of blame on him. On Benghazi, 50% of people think the administration said what they [believed](#) at the time, while 44% think the administration intentionally misled people about the attacks. And Americans believe by a wide margin that the administrations' actions in the AP case were [justified](#) (52% justified / 33% not justified).

While voters largely don't blame Obama for these controversies, they believe Republicans are trumpeting Benghazi for political purposes. 59% of adults in a USA Today [poll](#) said Republicans are holding Benghazi hearings in order to score political points while only 20% said they are doing so in order to prevent future attacks. So far Americans believe Republicans are acting [appropriately](#) with the fresher IRS story (54% appropriate / 42% overreacting), but there was a time when they believed the same about Benghazi.

What does this mean for Democrats?

The winds may shift away from the President if verifiable new information comes out, and they may shift further away from the GOP if they repeat their mistakes of the Lewinsky investigation in Clinton's second term. For now, Democrats in Congress would do well to focus on issues that matter to people like creating jobs and strengthening the economy, rather than getting mired in scandal talk. In a year, they may be calling Jay Inslee for the playbook he used to [knock off a Republican in moderate suburban Washington](#) in 1998: ask voters to choose whether they want two more years of endless investigations or two years of focus on the issues that matter to them.

OTHER NEWS FROM THE POLLING AND POLITICAL WORLD

Roll Call ranks the potential [flips](#) in 2014 rematches

Gallup shows us how Americans' views have changed on a number of [moral](#) issues over the last decade

Roll Call tracks the potential [influence](#) each state has on national affairs

Gallup will release a new [review](#) on what went wrong with its presidential polling last cycle

AKPD Media is out with a clever [ad](#) for Barbara Buono in the New Jersey Governor's race

Pew Research shows how question [wording](#) matters when public attention is limited

Quinnipiac's latest poll of the NYC [mayoral race](#) has Christine Quinn at 25% in the Democratic primary

Public Polling

PRESIDENT OBAMA'S JOB RATING

Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Approve	Disapprove
RCP Average	5/9 - 5/21	--	48.3	48.0
Gallup	5/19 - 5/21	1500 A	50	44
Rasmussen	5/19 - 5/21	1500 LV	46	53
FOX News	5/18 - 5/20	1013 RV	45	51
Economist/YouGov	5/18 - 5/20	675 RV	47	52
ABC News/WaPo	5/16 - 5/19	RV	50	47

GENERIC CONGRESSIONAL VOTE

Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Democrats	Republicans
RCP Average	3/9 - 5/19	--	42.0	39.7
Rasmussen	5/13 - 5/19	3500 LV	39	40
Quinnipiac	4/25 - 4/29	1471 RV	41	37
Dem Corps	3/9 - 3/12	840 LV	46	42

PARTY SELF ID

Polling Firm	Date	Dem	Rep	Ind/Other
Pollster.com Trend	May 22	32.7%	23.0%	33.2%

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