

April 2, 2012

Anzalone Liszt Research

National Polling Summary

Friends,

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

With health care in the spotlight following last week's Supreme Court arguments, we examine public opinion on Obamacare and its consequences for Democrats in the upcoming election cycle.

Following our analysis are additional news items and data we thought you'd enjoy - plus information on our new March Madness-style Crazy Republicans Bracket.

John Anzalone and Jeff Liszt

STORY THIS WEEK: The mandate is high, Verrilli is low

President Obama's high-profile health care law arrived at the Supreme Court this week, trailing protesters, ticket-seekers and breathless media coverage. As the justices wrestle with the law's many-headed implications, they carry on a debate that has simmered in the court of public opinion for over two years.

What do Americans think about the health care law? What do they really know about it? How do they want the Supreme Court to decide this case? And how will Americans' views of his landmark legislation impact their decisions at the polls?

Nuanced Views on ACA

President Obama signed the Affordable Care Act (ACA) (now identified as Obamacare by both opponents and [supporters](#)) into law on March 23, 2010, and the first Republican lawsuit was filed about [seven minutes later](#). The law's support - judging by a rudimentary favor / oppose rating - has remained consistent. A Kaiser Family Foundation [survey](#) from May 2010 showed 41% favor / 44% oppose; two years later, public sentiment seems to have barely budged (41% favor / 40% oppose).

Those numbers have emboldened critics, like Rep. Michele Bachmann, to call for an outright repeal of the law. "The American people expect no less," she warned in a [recent Fox News appearance](#).

Polls show that Americans have a more nuanced view of the issue, one that a simple favor / oppose question cannot fully capture. An ALR poll from May 2011 showed a majority (56%) against the idea of "repealing the entire law and starting over again." The answers are not as black-and-white as Rep. Bachmann suggests, and GOP-led efforts to demonize and demolish the law have turned off many voters: 51% in a *National Journal* [survey](#) consider the Republican crusade "harmful in distracting Congress from other important work", while only about a third (37%) find it "helpful in highlighting concerns about the law".

Whole < Sum of its Parts

There has been a consistent discrepancy between the popularity of the components of the ACA (which transcend partisanship), and the popularity of the law as a whole (which is seen through a deeply partisan lens) According to [CBS News / New York Times](#), the requirement for insurers to cover pre-existing conditions receives 85% approval; expanding Medicare prescription drug coverage nets 77% approval; and the provision allowing children to stay on their parents' policies until the age of twenty-six gets 68% approval. Since many of the most common Republican criticisms of the law center on process rather than content, the question is how many Americans really know what policies are included in the health care law they are assessing?

As recently as three weeks ago, a Kaiser [poll](#) found that 59% of Americans felt they did not have enough information to understand the law, while others were unaware of many of the law's most popular benefits. According to Kaiser, a bare majority (51%) acknowledged that the ACA ends denials for pre-existing conditions, while 48% do not believe or do not know that it does. Since the law was passed in 2010, the percentage of doubters on that issue has actually risen (from 37% to 48%). The one component of the ACA that a solid majority of people know about is an unpopular one - the individual mandate (64%). And it is the individual mandate that has landed in the spotlight this week, in front of the Supreme Court.

Supreme Court Case & Individual Mandate

A panel of legal experts was [polled](#) by the American Bar Association on their predictions for the Supreme Court case before oral arguments started, and 85% believed the Court would uphold the Affordable Care Act. Average Americans seem to disagree, as Kaiser [shows](#) 53% expect the Court to deem Obamacare unconstitutional. (These opinions might be informed by the general "buzz" surrounding the case, as 70% of people in ABC News [poll](#) say they have heard "mainly negative things" about the law.)

A plurality of Americans seem to favor a middle approach, like in a [CNN/ORC poll](#) in which 43% want the Court to "overturn only some provisions" of the law, but keep others in place. The sticking point, as this and other polls indicate, remains the requirement to purchase health insurance. About half (51%) in the CNN poll oppose the mandate. But multiple polls also suggest that Democrats can parry concerns on the mandate by providing more information.

In a Kaiser [poll](#) from Dec. 2010, public opinion on the mandate starts at 33% Favorable / 65% unfavorable. When questioners connected the mandate to ending denials for pre-existing

conditions, however, approval for the mandate jumped 16 points (49% Favorable / 44% Unfavorable). And when questioners added that Americans who get coverage through their employers automatically satisfy the requirement, and would not need to buy any new insurance, favorability spikes 28 points (61% Favorable / 34% Unfavorable).

[Pew Research Center](#) tried to see if simply wording the mandate differently would move the needle on public opinion.

Opposition to the Mandate, But Opinions May Be Fluid

As you may know, by 2014 nearly all Americans will be required to have health insurance. [People who do not buy insurance will pay a penalty] while [People who cannot afford it will receive financial help from the government]. Do you approve or disapprove of this policy? *Statements randomized*

	Approve	Dis-approve	DK
	%	%	%
Total	41	56	3=100
If "people who cannot afford it will receive financial help from the government" is mentioned <u>last</u>	47	49	3=100
If "people who do not buy it will pay a penalty" is mentioned <u>last</u>	34	63	3=100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Mar. 7-11, 2012.
 Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

When the mandate's penalty was brought up closer to the end of the question, opposition to the mandate is almost 2:1. But when the penalty is mentioned earlier in the prompt, and the assurance of financial aid is brought toward the end, opinion is almost evenly split.

Impact on General Election

Despite the public's ambivalence about the law, Pew Research Center [finds](#) that the public still trusts Democrats by 14 points (49% - 35%) over Republicans on "dealing with health care". When Republican Paul Ryan released his budget proposal last year, for example, opposition to his approach on Medicare was [nearly 2:1](#).

Over the next seven months, health care may figure into a larger campaign about economic fairness and protecting the middle class. Democrats can point to their strengths on issues like Social Security and Medicare to beat back Republican attacks about government interference, and if they dispel misperceptions and address misgivings about the Affordable Care Act, health care can still be a winning issue come November.

OTHER NEWS FROM THE POLLING AND POLITICAL WORLD

Obama leading Romney in key swing states according to new USA Today/Gallup [poll](#); Obama leads by 9 points in battleground states (51% Obama - 42% Romney) and by 4 points among registered voters nationally (49% Obama - 45% Romney).

Bay State Battle. Latest [poll](#) from *Boston Globe* puts Scott Brown and Elizabeth Warren into a statistical tie (37% Brown - 35% Warren) with 26% still undecided.

CNN/ORC [poll](#) finds a majority (55%) favoring a faster military withdrawal from Afghanistan, with opposition to the conflict at 72%, an all-time high.

Unscientific polling. According to a [study in the American Sociological Review](#), the level of trust in science among conservatives and frequent churchgoers has "declined precipitously" since 1974, when conservatives were the subgroup *most* trusting of science.

ALR Crazy Republicans Bracket. Recently on Twitter (follow us @AnzaloneLiszt) we began tweeting #CrazyRepublicanoftheDay to highlight weird, silly and outrageous GOP antics. Our March Madness-style bracket now lets you pick the craziest of them all.

Click [here](#) to vote in the first round; you'll also find articles and videos of our contenders caught in the act of craziness. (You may have to click on the link a second time after being redirected to the homepage to get to the bracket.) You can vote for the second round on Tuesday, April 3rd at 11:00 AM EST. The third round begins Wednesday the 4th at 11:00 AM. Round 4, the championship round, is from 11:00 AM on Thursday the 5th to 11:00 AM on Friday the 6th. The winner will be announced in the next ALR newsletter.

May the craziest Republican win!

Missed a past newsletter? They can be found on our website, [here](#).

PUBLIC POLLING

PRESIDENT OBAMA'S JOB RATING

Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Approve	Disapprove
<i>Gallup</i>	March 26-28	Adults	46%	46%
<i>Rasmussen</i>	March 26-28	Likely Voters	46%	53%
<i>CNN/ORC</i>	March 24-25	Adults	51%	45%

PRESIDENTIAL HEAD TO HEAD

Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Obama	Romney
<i>Rasmussen</i>	March 26-28	Likely Voters	44%	46%
<i>CNN/ORC</i>	March 24-25	Reg. Voters	54%	43%
<i>McClatchy/Marist</i>	March 20-22	Reg. Voters	46%	44%

Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Obama	Santorum
<i>Rasmussen</i>	March 26-28	Likely Voters	45%	43%

<i>CNN/ORC</i>	March 24-25	Reg. Voters	55%	42%
<i>McClatchy/Marist</i>	March 20-22	Reg. Voters	48%	43%

PARTY SELF ID

Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Dem	Rep	Ind/Other
<i>Pollster.com Trend</i>	March 30	Adults	35.3%	30.5%	31.7%

GOP NATIONWIDE PRIMARY

Polling Firm	Date	Sample
<i>Gallup</i>	March 24-28	Registered Voters
Romney	39%	
Santorum	28%	
Gingrich	10%	
Paul	11%	

GENERIC HOUSE BALLOT

Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Dem	Rep
<i>Rasmussen</i>	March 19-25	Likely Voters	38%	43%
<i>McClatchy/Marist</i>	March 20-22	Reg. Voters	43%	47%

OBAMA POPULAR VOTE SHARE

Polling Firm	Date	Polly Vote	Polls	Iowa Electronic Markets	Econometric Models	Index Models
<i>PollyVote</i>	March 29	52.4%	52.9%	52.8%	49.9%	54.6%

DIRECTION OF THE COUNTRY

Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Right Direction	Wrong Track
<i>Rasmussen</i>	March 19-25	Adults	29%	64%

UPCOMING PRIMARIES

	Size	Date	Romney	Santorum	Gingrich	Paul
Wisconsin						
<i>Rasmussen</i>	717	March 29	44%	34%	7%	7%
<i>NBC News/Marist</i>	740	March 26-27	40%	33%	11%	8%
Pennsylvania						
<i>Franklin & Marshall</i>	505	March 20-25	28%	30%	6%	9%

North Carolina						
PPP	561	March 22-25	30%	30%	19%	13%
SurveyUSA	403	March 16-20	26%	34%	18%	10%