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Subject: Cautious Optimism for Obama and Democrats - ALR's National Polling Summary

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Anzalone Liszt Research

National Polling Summary

Friends,

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

President Obama's approval ratings following the killing of Osama bin Laden and Democrats improve generic ballot should give both the President and his party a sense of cautious optimism as the debate over the limit heats up. Meanwhile, Republican are not doing themselves any favors with voters with their continued opposition to eliminating tax breaks for [oil companies](#).

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

John Anzalone and Jeff Liszt

STORY THIS WEEK: REASON FOR CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM FOR OBAMA AND DEMS

In spite of sluggish economic growth and rising gas prices, recent polls should give President Obama and Democrats a sense of cautious optimism as the battle over the debt-limit heats up. While the standing of Obama and Democrats has improved in recent weeks, Republican opposition to eliminating tax breaks for [wealthy](#) and for [oil companies](#) puts them out of step with a broad swath of the American public.

The killing of Osama bin Laden appears to have given President Obama a bump of about 6 points in the his [average approval rating](#) since the Navy SEAL raid coming in at 52%. According to the latest [AP/Gfk](#) Americans now support Obama being re-elected by a 10-margin (53% to 43%), after favoring a second term by 3 points in March (50% to 37%). Additionally, the latest [Ipsos/Reuters](#) poll shows that a plurality of 45% that he will be re-elected, a 10-point increase from October, while the latest [Politico/GWU Battleground](#) shows that 59% of likely voters are open to voting for him.

Obama's improved standing is driven by his enhanced stature on national security issues and leadership on the economy. The most recent [NBC/WSJ poll](#) found his ratings as a "good commander in chief," "being firm and decisive in decision-making," and "having the ability to handle a crisis," all improving by double digits. The [AP/Gfk survey](#) showed similar results, with the percentage viewing him as a "strong leader" and trusting him to "keep America safe" both increasing by 8 points, and his job approval ratings on terrorism and Afghanistan surging by 10 and 10 points, respectively.

Despite his improved overall standing, the President does not appear to have seen any improvement in his standing on the economy, with his average approval rating on the country's most pressing issue still around 40%.

Although Obama's ratings on the economy may not have improved, he can take solace in the fact that he is more trusted on the issue than Republicans in Congress. The most recent [Quinnipiac poll](#) finds that registered voters trust President Obama to handle the economy over Republicans in Congress by a 9-point margin (57% to 37%) and the latest [Battleground poll](#) gives him a 6-point edge (48% to 42%). On the question of who they blame more for the country's current economic problems - Obama and Democrats or Bush and Republican new [CNN poll](#) finds that the public faults the latter by an overwhelming 25-point margin (55% to 30%).

Though they did not experience any bounce following the killing of bin Laden, Democrats in Congress have received some reassuring poll results recently, as the latest [CNN poll](#) shows Democrats holding a 4-point lead on the generic Congressional ballot (50% to 46%). Although the sample universe is different, these results mark a major reversal from the [CNN poll](#) conducted just before the midterm elections that showed Republicans with a 5-point point advantage. The [Battleground poll](#) shows a tighter generic ballot (42% Dem / 41% Rep), but also marked improvement for Democrats from their 5-point deficit in October.

The improved standing of Democrats in the Congressional ballot is due primarily to the weakness of their Republican counterparts, as both parties in Congress are viewed unfavorably by a strong majority of the public. However, while the [AP/GfK poll](#) finds that Congressional Democrats are viewed negatively by a 13-point margin (43% approve to 56% disapprove), the public renders a much harsher judgment on Congressional Republicans, disapproving of their job performance by a ratio of more than 2:1 (32% approve to 66% disapprove).

Given its [opposition](#) to repealing tax breaks for oil companies, the GOP is unlikely to see an improvement in its numbers any time soon, as Americans place most of the blame for higher gas prices on the oil industry. [C](#)NN finds that 61% of Americans say that oil companies deserve a *great deal* of blame for higher prices at the pump and 77% believe that they make too much in profits. It's therefore no surprise that a February [NBC/WSJ poll](#) found that 76% of registered voters support eliminating tax breaks for oil companies, making the GOP's defense of the breaks a risky.

In addition to supporting tax breaks for oil companies, Republicans are also putting themselves at odds with a vast majority of the public when it comes to taxing the rich. Americans clearly want steps taken to reduce the deficit, and while Republicans claim they are serious about it, they are [staunchly opposed](#) to at least one of the most popular, if not [the most popular](#), ways to tackle it: increasing taxes for those earning over two-hundred thousand dollars a year. An April [ABC/Washington Post poll](#) found that 72% of Americans supported such an increase, highlighting another example of Republicans staking out a position on the deficit that is opposed by a vast majority of Americans.

Such positions could be particularly perilous for the GOP if they cling to them in negotiations over the debt limit, as the [Battleground poll](#) finds that 56% of likely voters believe that not raising the debt limit will be economically disastrous, with less than a third (32%) saying that it will not have a serious impact on the economy.

OTHER NEWS FROM THE POLLING AND POLITICAL WORLD

Obama 60 Minutes interview: Worth a [viewing](#) if you haven't seen it yet.

Plurality of Virginians support gay marriage: Just five years after voting to amend the Constitution to ban gay marriage, a new [Washington Post poll](#) finds that a plurality of Virginians now supports it.

At least Gary Busey still likes him: [PPP](#) finds that Donald Trump's support among Republican primary collapsed from 26% to just 8%.

Presidential "Bumps": A great [table](#) from our friends at Public Opinion Strategies shows that the length of the President's approval rating bounce is much more important than how high it gets.

Gas prices: [USA Today/Gallup poll](#) finds that 7 in 10 Americans are hurt by higher gas prices. In related news, 10 Americans quote Dave Chappelle in saying "I'm rich, *****!"

PUBLIC POLLING

PRESIDENT OBAMA'S JOB RATING				
Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Approve	Disapprove
Gallup	5/12-14/11	Adults	48%	44%
Politico/GWU/Battleground	5/8-12/11	Likely voters	52%	44%
Reuters/Ipsos	5/5-9/11	Adults	49%	47%
AP/GfK	5/5-9/11	Adults	60%	39%
Pew Research	5/5-8/11	Adults	50%	39%
NBC News	5/5-7/11	Adults	52%	41%

DIRECTION OF THE COUNTRY				
Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Right Direction	Wrong Track
Politico/GWU/Battleground	5/8-12/11	Likely voters	32%	60%
Reuters/Ipsos	5/5-9/11	Adults	38%	56%
AP/GfK	5/5-9/11	Adults	45%	52%
NBC News	5/5-7/11	Adults	36%	50%
Newsweek / Daily Beast	5/2-3/11	Adults	27%	60%

PARTY SELF ID					
Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Dem	Rep	Ind / other
Pollster.com Trend	5/16/11	Adults	32%	22%	38%

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