

Poll finds voter discontent with Washington

November 5 2013

The American public's attitude towards its elected leaders and the policies they pursue has turned sharply negative, according to a new George Washington University Battleground Poll. Over 70 percent of likely voters say the country is on the wrong track; with a full 61 percent strongly holding that view.

"American [voters](#) are extraordinarily dispirited," said Christopher Arterton, founding dean of GW's Graduate School of Political Management. "The fights in Washington over the federal budget and the debt ceiling, coming on top of an aggravatingly slow economic recovery have produced a cauldron of discontent. If these sentiments last for the next 12 months, a large number of incumbents are going to be in trouble on Election Day."

Only 13 percent of voters surveyed rate the economy as excellent or good, while 42 percent describe the economy as poor. More than the economy, more than jobs or healthcare, Americans say the biggest problem the nation faces is Washington's inability to solve problems, and they do not appear to have confidence in the ability of their elected leaders to turn things around.

President Barack Obama's approval ratings have taken a hit since his re-election. His job approval now stands at 44 percent, with 52 percent expressing disapproval. His personal ratings have also slid, with 47 percent favorable and 50 percent unfavorable.

"For the first time in our polling, the President has both majority

unfavorable image and majority disapproval on his job rating," said Ed Goeas, president/CEO of The Tarrance Group. "As has all too often happened to Presidents in their second term, there is a lot throughout this data that raises the very real prospect that Barack Obama has lost the ability to lead this country."

Lawmakers in the Capitol fare worse, with only 9 percent expressing approval of the job Congress is doing while 89 percent disapprove. The public also has turned sour on their own member of the Legislature; just 25 percent say the person representing them today should be in office next term. A 58 percent majority says that it's time to give a new person a chance.

Not surprisingly given this negative rating of job performance, voters are more likely to express negative feelings about the political parties in Congress. Democrats are viewed unfavorably by 53 percent while 41 percent voice a favorable impression. Republicans in Congress are rated even worse; fully 65 percent express a negative view and only 27 percent rate them favorably. The Tea Party does somewhat better than the Republicans: 54 percent unfavorable versus 32 percent favorable.

"Americans are not willing to forgive the growing pattern of reckless brinksmanship from the right," said Celinda Lake, president of Lake Research Partners. "There is little question in voters' minds that Congressional Republicans and their Tea Party allies deserve the lion's share of the blame for the inability to solve problems in Washington, the issue that voters now rank above all others, including jobs and the economy—a first in Battleground history. The 2014 midterms are a long way off, but the political implications of this latest act of reckless gamesmanship can already be seen in this poll, reaching down to imperil individual incumbents."

The survey also asked voters about their feelings toward the Affordable

Care Act, commonly called "Obamacare." Fifty-three percent oppose the law, while 43 percent favor it and only 4 percent say they are unsure. When asked if they thought the legislation went too far or not far enough, 49 percent said it went too far, and 21 percent said that the law was about right, but 23 percent said the law did not go far enough.

For complete results, including questions on the roll out of the health care law, the impact of the government shutdown, and the state of the [economy](http://www.gwu.edu/battleground-poll) visit www.gwu.edu/battleground-poll.

About the George Washington University Battleground Poll

The George Washington University Battleground Poll is a nationally recognized, series of surveys conducted by Republican pollster Ed Goeas of The Tarrance Group and Democratic pollster Celinda Lake of Lake Research Partners. The George Washington University Global Media Institute, affiliated with the Graduate School of Political Management (GSPM) and the School of Media and Public Affairs (SMPA), serves as the university's home for the partnership. George Washington's Gelman

Library houses the data archive of the survey results dating back more than two decades. The poll, which is distinguished from other surveys by its presentation of separate analyses from these top pollsters representing both sides of the aisle, surveyed 1,011 registered likely voters nationwide October 27 through October 31 2013 including a protocol for reaching mobile phone users, and yields a margin of error of +/- 3.1 percent.

Provided by George Washington University

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