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Obama Approval and Democrats are Down

According to the most recent poll by Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind™, 60% of New Jersey voters say the country is "on the wrong track," up six percentage points from the previous measure, and the highest measure since the last months of the Bush presidency. Just 30% say the nation is headed in the right direction, a decrease of three points from the last measure and the lowest so far in the Obama presidency.

Meanwhile, 47% approve of the president's job performance while 43% disapprove. That nearly even split conceals important differences: The president's approval runs 10 points ahead with women (50%-40%) but three points behind with men (43%-46%). Obama runs way ahead with non-white voters (79%-10%) and well behind with white voters (36%-54%). Most telling is that among voters who do not rate their chances of voting in the midterm elections as "excellent," the president runs comfortably ahead (53%-33%), but among voters who do rate their chances of voting as excellent, the president runs five points behind (43%-49%).

"That doesn't translate well for Democratic candidates," said Dan Cassino, a professor of political science and analyst for PublicMind. "It remains to be seen if Democrats can muster the enthusiasm to get out enough of their voters to hold on to contested seats. People who put Obama over the top in 2008 are far less likely to vote this time."

Asked which party they prefer to control the U.S. Congress after the upcoming elections, voters choose Democrats over Republicans by a close margin, 41%-37%. But voters who say their chance of voting is "excellent" prefer Republicans by a five-point margin (44%-39%) while those who rate their chance of voting as less than excellent prefer Democrats by a much wider 16-point margin (43%-27%).

While 70% of Garden State Republicans rate their chance of voting in the upcoming congressional elections as "excellent," just 55% of Democrats rate their chance of voting as "excellent."

Further evidence of the challenges facing the Democratic Party in this election is seen in the difference between how voters view named and generic candidates. Half of respondents to the survey were asked to choose between the actual, named candidates in their congressional district, while the other half were only asked to choose only between "the Republican" and "the Democrat." Voters choosing only between the party names preferred Democrats over Republicans by a five-point margin, 42% to 37%. But voters given the names of the actual candidates in their district preferred the Republican candidates over the Democratic candidates by a four-point margin, 41% to 37%.

"The Democratic Party hasn't managed to field very many first-tier challengers this year," said Cassino. "It doesn't matter if it's because they've run out and need to rebuild their bench, or because highly qualified Democrats are scared to run this year – either way, Republican incumbents don't have much to worry about."

"Most estimates we have about which party is going to control the U.S. Congress show that the election will be very tight," said Cassino. "Most national polls ask voters to choose between unnamed candidates for Congress, and such questions tend to overestimate the vote share of the Democrats."

The Fairleigh Dickinson University poll of 831 registered voters statewide was conducted by telephone from Oct. 4, 2010, through Oct. 10, 2010, and has a margin of error of +/- 3.5 percentage points.

Methodology, questions, and tables on the web at: <http://publicmind.fdu.edu>
 Radio actualities at 201.692.2846 For more information, please call 973.443.8661

Methodology, Questions, and Tables

The most recent survey by Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind was conducted by telephone from Oct. 4, 2010, through Oct. 10, 2010, using a randomly selected sample of 831 registered voters statewide. The margin of error for a sample of 831 randomly selected respondents is +/- 3.5 percentage points. The margin of error for subgroups is larger and varies by the size of that subgroup. Survey results are also subject to non-sampling error. This kind of error, which cannot be measured, arises from a number of factors including, but not limited to, non-response (eligible individuals refusing to be interviewed), question wording, the order in which questions are asked, and variations among interviewers. PublicMind interviews are conducted by Opinion America of Cedar Knolls, NJ, with professionally trained interviewers using a CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) system. Random selection is achieved by computerized random-digit dialing. This technique gives every person with a land-line phone number (including those with unlisted numbers) an equal chance of being selected. Landline households are supplemented with a separate, randomly selected sample of cell-phone-only-households, interviewed in the same time frame. The total combined sample is mathematically weighted to match known demographics of age and gender.

Question: In November, there will be an election for the House of Representatives. How would you rate your chances of voting in November's election... READ?

	All	Men	Women	Dem	Ind	Rep.
Excellent	61%	68	54	55	59	70
Good	24%	21	26	24	22	24
Only Fair	9%	5	12	13	10	3
or Poor	4%	3	5	4	6	2
Don't know (vol)	3%	2	3	3	3	1

Question: In your opinion, do you believe that the country is moving in the right direction or do you believe it has gotten off on the wrong track?

	All	Men	Women	Dem	Ind	Rep.
Right direction	30%	28	32	51	22	7
Wrong track	60%	65	36	36	65	87
Unsure/ref.	10%	7	12	13	13	6

Right/wrong direction trend

	2010					2009							2008
	Aug.	May	Mar 30	Mar 3	Jan	Oct 30	Oct 9	Sep	July	Apr	Mar	Jan	Oct
Right	33%	34	42	38	35	41	41	44	49	51	51	34	13
Wrong	54%	52	51	52	53	50	49	46	41	37	37	52	78
Unsure/ref.	13%	13	8	10	12	8	9	10	11	11	12	13	9

US2: In general, do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as President?

	All	Men	Women	Dem	Ind	Rep.	white	Non-white	Chance of voting	
									Excellent	Good/ fair/ poor
Approve	47%	43	50	78	37	12	36	79	43	53
Disapprove	43%	46	40	12	43	81	54	10	49	33
Unsure/ref.	10%	10	10	11	20	6	10	11	8	14

Obama approval, previous measures

	2010					2009						
	Aug	May	Mar 30	Mar 3	Jan	Oct 30	Oct 6	Sep	Jun	Apr	Mar	Jan*
Approve	49%	49	54	53	48	52	52	56	61	66	66	72
Disapprove	40%	40	37	38	41	37	35	36	29	22	21	10
Unsure/Ref.	11%	11	9	9	11	10	12	8	10	12	13	18

*January 2009 question asked how Obama was handling his transition to the presidency.

Question: [Ask all] Would you prefer that the Democrats or Republicans control the US Congress after these elections?

N=831	All	men	wom	party			Chance of voting	
				Dem	Ind	Rep	Excellent	Good/ fair/ poor/dk
Democrats	41%	39	43	78	19	4	39	43
Republicans	37%	41	34	6	26	83	44	27
Neither/other (vol)	8%	9	7	5	22	6	6	11
Don't Know (vol)	13%	10	16	11	34	7	10	19

Question: If the election for the U.S. House of Representatives were held today, in your congressional district, would you vote for ... or ... ? [1/2 of respondents received the name of the candidates in their district; in the other half, the candidates were not named].

	All	Dem	Ind	Rep.
Unnamed Republican	37%	7	25	80
Unnamed Democrat	42%	80	21	5
Other/neither	5%	4	11	6
Unsure	14%	9	42	9
Refused	1%	0	1	1
Named Republican	41%	11	45	80
Named Democrat	37%	67	19	8
Other/neither	2%	1	3	2
unsure	18%	19	32	10
Refused	2%	3	1	0

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Question Wording and Order

US1. In November, there will be an election for the House of Representatives. How would you rate your chances of voting in November's election... READ?

Excellent
Good
Only Fair
or Poor

[NO TERMINATES]

US2. In your opinion, do you believe that the country is moving in the right direction or has it gotten off on the wrong track?

Right direction
Wrong track
DK/Unsure [DON'T READ]
Ref. [DON'T READ]

US3. In general, do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as President?

Approve
Disapprove
DK/Unsure [DON'T READ]
Ref. [DON'T READ]

[AT RANDOM, ASK ½ RESPONDENTS US3A AND ½ RESPONDENTS US3B]

US3A. If the election for the U.S. House of Representatives were held today, in your congressional district, would you vote for the... or the?

[ROTATE]

Republican
Democrat
Other (vol)
Neither (vol)
Don't know/depends (vol)

US3B. If the election for the U.S. House of Representatives were held today, in your congressional district, would you vote for ... or ... ?

IF DISTRICT 01 [ROTATE]

Dale Glading, the Republican
Rob Andrews, the Democrat
Other (vol)
Don't know (vol)
Will not vote (vol)
Wrong district (vol)

IF DISTRICT 02 [ROTATE]

Frank A. LoBiondo, the Republican
Gary Stein, the Democrat
Other (vol)
Don't know (vol)
Will not vote (vol)
Wrong district (vol)

IF DISTRICT 03 [ROTATE]

Jon Runyan, the Republican
John Adler, the Democrat
Other (vol)
Don't know (vol)
Will not vote (vol)
Wrong district (vol)

IF DISTRICT 04 [ROTATE]

Chris Smith, the Republican
Howard Kleinhendler, the Democrat
Other (vol)
Don't know (vol)
Will not vote (vol)
Wrong district (vol)

IF DISTRICT 05 [ROTATE]

Scott Garrett, the Republican
Tod Theise, the Democrat
Other (vol)
Don't know (vol)
Will not vote (vol)
Wrong district (vol)

IF DISTRICT 06 [ROTATE]

Anna Little, the Republican
Frank Pallone, the Democrat
Other (vol)
Don't know (vol)
Will not vote (vol)
Wrong district (vol)

IF DISTRICT 07 [ROTATE]

Leonard Lance, the Republican
Ed Potosnak, the Democrat
Other (vol)
Don't know (vol)
Will not vote (vol)
Wrong district (vol)

IF DISTRICT 08 [ROTATE]

Roland Straten, the Republican
Bill Pascrell, the Democrat
Other (vol)
Don't know (vol)
Will not vote (vol)
Wrong district (vol)

IF DISTRICT 09 [ROTATE]

Michael Agosta, the Republican
Steve Rothman, the Democrat
Other (vol)
Don't know (vol)
Will not vote (vol)
Wrong district (vol)

IF DISTRICT 10 [ROTATE]

Michael Alonso, the Republican
Donald Payne, the Democrat
Other (vol)
Don't know (vol)
Will not vote (vol)
Wrong district (vol)

IF DISTRICT 11 [ROTATE]

Rodney Frelinghuysen, the Republican
Douglas Herbert, the Democrat
Other (vol)
Don't know (vol)
Will not vote (vol)
Wrong district (vol)

IF DISTRICT 12 [ROTATE]

Scott Sippelle, the Republican
Rush Holt, the Democrat
Other (vol)
Don't know (vol)
Will not vote (vol)
Wrong district (vol)

IF DISTRICT 13 [ROTATE]

Henrietta Dwyer, the Republican
Albio Sires, the Democrat
Other (vol)
Don't know (vol)
Will not vote (vol)
Wrong district (vol)

US4. Would you prefer that the Democrats or Republicans control the US Congress after these elections?

rotate

Democrats

Republicans

Neither/other (vol)

Don't Know (vol)