



# Political Insiders Poll



**How much will Democrats be helped or hurt in the midterm elections if Congress doesn't pass major health care reform legislation?**

## Democrats (101 votes)

Helped a lot	6 percent
Helped a little	5 percent
Hurt a little	22 percent
Hurt a lot	65 percent
Depends (volunteered)	2 percent

### Helped a lot

"Democrats will be helped immensely if they fail to cut Medicare by \$500 billion and [fail to] tax health care benefits."

### Helped a little

"Failure to address health care will cement the Republicans as the Party of No."

### Hurt a little

"Democrats voted for change and expect change. The activists will begin to drift off the longer that Congress delays."

"A lot less than not fixing unemployment."

### Hurt a lot

"This is President Obama's No. 1 priority. And if a Democratic Congress can't pass something, it will make us look incompetent."

"Failing to pass health care legislation will mobilize the Right and significantly hinder Democratic turnout in key races."

"They need to come away with something. Hard to blame failure on the Republicans."

"As we learned in 1994, losing begets losing. If they don't get it done, it will be every member for themselves. And that will be a disaster."

"Longtime Democrats will have a meltdown if it doesn't happen."

"Voters wanted change; they wanted leadership. Instead, it increasingly appears they were being led by a group of chumps."

"Half--hell, even a quarter--of a loaf is much better than nothing at all. Nothing at all means not only do we want to socialize medicine, but we're too damn weak and inept to even get it done!"

"If the Democrats cannot make progress toward health care reform, why should the electorate believe they can handle other difficult issues?"

"If you vote for change and nothing happens regarding the most important issue, you will vote for change again."

## Republicans (96 votes)

Helped a lot	9 percent
Helped a little	15 percent
Hurt a little	31 percent
Hurt a lot	43 percent
Depends (volunteered)	2 percent

### Helped a lot

"Health care is a political loser for the Democrats because it's causing them to lose independent voters."

"Republicans will pick off swing districts if the Democratic leadership forces conservative Democrats to vote for 'Obamacare.' "

### Helped a little

"Passing a health care 'reform' bill that adds to the growing spending deficit will just guarantee additional losses in 2010."

"There is no good outcome from here, but the less-worse outcome is no legislation. They can then blame Republicans for preventing the cheap health care that nobody could afford."

### Hurt a little

"Their base will be slightly depressed. And that is the extent of it."

"Their fortunes will turn more on the overall economy: jobs, jobs, jobs."

"It hurts a little not to pass any bill. It hurts a lot if they pass a bad bill."

### Hurt a lot

"Cap-and-trade is going nowhere, so some health care 'victory' is necessary to slow GOP momentum."

"If major health care fails at this point, the Democratic Party's Left might eat their center and spit out the bones."

"It will send a message that the Democrats don't have the juice to solve problems."

"If health care reform fails, their base will be highly demoralized compared to its 'Yes, we can' expectations."

"I always tell my kids, 'Never make a promise you can't keep, but keep every promise you make.' "

"Without a Rose Garden ceremony, it will be just too easy to portray the Democrats as beholden to their crazies and unable to govern. A signing ceremony makes any bill 10 points more popular."

**Democratic Political Insiders** Jill Alper, Brad Bannon, Dave Beattie, Andy Bechhoefer, Cornell Belcher, Matt Bennett, Mitchell W. Berger, Mike Berman, Stephanie Bosh, Paul Brathwaite, Donna Brazile, Mark Brewer, Ed Bruley, George Bruno, Deb Callahan, Bonnie Campbell, Bill Carrick, Guy Cecil, Martin J. Chavez, Tony Coelho, Jerry Crawford, Jeff Danielson, Peter Daou, Howard Dean, Jim Demers, Tad Devine, David DiMartino, Debbie Dingell, Monica Dixon, Patrick Dorton, Anita Dunn, Jeff Eller, Steve Elmendorf, Carter Eskew, Eric Eve, Vic Fazio, Peter Fenn, Scott Ferson, Jim Fleischmann, Tina Flournoy, Don Foley, Don Fowler, Vincent Frillici, Gina Glantz, Niles Godes, John Michael Gonzalez, Joe Grandmaison, Anna Greenberg, Stan Greenberg, Pat Griffin, Larry Grisolan, Michael Gronstal, Lisa Grove, Marcia Hale, Jill Hanauer, Dick Harpootlian, Paul Harstad, Laura Hartigan, Mike Henry, Karen Hicks, Leo Hindery, Jr., Harold Ickes, Marcus Jadotte, John Jameson, Steve Jarding, Jonathon Jones, Jim Jordan, Gale Kaufman, Lisa Kountoupes, Kam Kuwata, Celinda Lake, David Lang, Penny Lee, Chris Lehane, Jeff Link, Bill Lynch, Bob Maloney, Steve Marchand, Jim Margolis, Paul Maslin, Keith Mason, Terry McAuliffe, Susan McCue, Gerald McEntee, Tom McMahon, Phil McNamara, David Medina, Mark Mellman, John Merrigan, Steve Murphy, Janet Napolitano, David Nassar, Marcia Nichols, John Norris, Tom Ochs, Tom O'Donnell, Scott Parven, Jeffrey Peck, Debora Pignatelli, Tony Podesta, Jack Quinn, Larry Rasky, Bruce Reed, Mame Reiley, Steve Ricchetti, Will Robinson, Steve Rosenthal, David Rudd, John Ryan, Wendy Sherman, Terry Shumaker, Sean Sinclair, Phil Singer, Erik Smith, Doug Sosnik, Darryl Sragow, Katrina Swett, Sarah Swisher, Jeffrey Trammell, Ed Turlington, Mike Veon, Rick Wiener, Bridgette Williams, James Williams, JoDee Winterhof, Brian Wolff, and Jim Zogby.



## How closely should the Republican Party align itself with the “tea party” movement?

### ■ Democrats (101 votes)

<b>Very closely</b>	<b>22 percent</b>
<b>Somewhat closely</b>	<b>31 percent</b>
<b>Not at all</b>	<b>46 percent</b>
<b>Between somewhat and not at all (volunteered)</b>	<b>2 percent</b>

#### ■ Very closely

“By the time they get through running people off, it may be all they have left.”

“It’s not that they should—they are. They’re incapable of charting a new, positive course.”

“You don’t win an election throwing figurative tea in Boston Harbor. And I, as a Democrat, will be happy to see them do just that.”

#### ■ Somewhat closely

“The Republicans need a lifeline. And this is the best they have.”

“The movement can supply energy and organization, but beware of nuts.”

“It’s very similar to how the Democrats used MoveOn.org and other liberal groups: Keep them close to advocate, energize, and fundraise, but you also keep them at arm’s length.”

“Just like high school: Dance, but not too close.”

#### ■ Not at all

“They get close at their peril. Those signs are all Democrats need for ads in 2010.”

“People are starting to see [that] the tea party movement is the Radical Right. And many of their tactics are wearing thin on the public.”

“Because Democrats control everything, this anti-incumbent movement will disproportionately hurt Democrats in 2010. Why endure the liabilities of the relationship when you can enjoy its benefits without it?”

“The tea party movement is good for drumming up the conservative GOP base but does nothing to attract independent voters.”

“They are at great risk of becoming totally marginalized and need to start looking rational.”

### ■ Republicans (96 votes)

<b>Very closely</b>	<b>4 percent</b>
<b>Somewhat closely</b>	<b>49 percent</b>
<b>Not at all</b>	<b>45 percent</b>
<b>Acknowledge, keep at a distance (volunteered)</b>	<b>2 percent</b>

#### ■ Very closely

“They could learn a thing or two about growing a grassroots movement.”

#### ■ Somewhat closely

“It’s a natural alliance but not easily managed or taken advantage of.”

“GOP should walk a fine line—supporting goals but not getting in bed with them because of some of the nuts aligned with the movement.”

“Tea parties are legitimate grassroots, filled with independents and elderly. Good groups to have in tow.”

“Republicans do not need to embrace an unruly mob, but this type of grassroots populism can morph into a third-party movement if not carefully monitored.”

“The Democrats didn’t condemn MoveOn.org. We shouldn’t condemn our activists.”

“Don’t underestimate the impact this has on grassroots conservatives, who haven’t had much inspiration since 2004. That being said, parties and movements have a tricky relationship.”

“These are real people with real concerns. And if we abandon them, they’ll eventually abandon us.”

#### ■ Not at all

“Create the greatest distance possible from that uncontrollable and angry army.”

“The Republican Party needs to find its own voice.”

“Read the tea leaves: The GOP has to broaden to the center, not to the increasingly rabid right.”

“That group will be there for Republicans whether they want them or not. Not looking like a wack job is helpful in general elections.”

“The Republican Party has to find a way to own big ideas, not just anger.”

—JAMES A. BARNES AND PETER BELL

### ■ NationalJournal.com

See how prominent bloggers responded to these questions by visiting the [Insiders Poll](#) online.

■ **GOP Political Insiders** Dan Allen, Stan Anderson, Gary Andres, Saulius (Saul) Anuzis, Rich Ashooh, Whit Ayres, Brett Bader, Mitch Bainwol, Gary Bauer, David Beckwith, Clark Benson, Wayne Berman, Brian Bieron, Charlie Black, Kirk Blalock, Carmine Boal, Jeff Boeyink, Ron Bonjean, Jeff Buley, Luke Byars, Nick Calio, Danny Carroll, Ron Christie, Jim Cicconi, Cesar Conda, Jake Corman, Scott Cottingham, Charlie Crist, Greg Crist, Diane Crookham-Johnson, Fergus Cullen, Tom Davis, Mike Dennehy, Ken Duberstein, Steve Duprey, Debi Durham, Frank Fahrenkopf, John Feehey, Don Fierce, Carl Forti, Alex Gage, Sam Geduldig, Adam Geller, Benjamin Ginsberg, David Girard-diCarlo, Bill Greener, Jonathan Grella, Lanny Griffith, Janet Mullins Grissom, Doug Gross, Todd Harris, Steve Hart, Christopher Healy, Ralph Hellmann, Chris Henick, Terry Holt, David Iannelli, Barry Jackson, Clark Judge, David Keating, David Kensinger, Bruce Keough, Bob Kjellander, Ed Kutler, Chris Lacivita, Jim Lake, Steve Lombardo, Kevin Madden, Joel Maiola, Gary Maloney, David Marin, Mary Matalin, Dan Mattoon, Brian McCormack, Mark McKinnon, Kyle McSiarow, Ken Mehlman, Jim Merrill, Tim Morrison, Mike Murphy, Phil Musser, Ron Nehring, Terry Nelson, Neil Newhouse, David Norcross, Ziad Ojakli, Jack Oliver, Todd Olsen, Van B. Poole, Tom Rath, Scott Reed, David Rehr, Steve Roberts, Jason Roe, David Roederer, Dan Schnur, Russ Schriefer, Rich Schwarm, Brent Seaborn, Rick Shelby, Andrew Shore, Kevin Shuvalov, Don Sipple, Fred Steeper, Bob Stevenson, Eric Tanenblatt, Richard Temple, Heath Thompson, Jay Timmons, Warren Tompkins, Ted Van Der Meid, Dirk van Dongen, Jan van Lohuizen, Stewart Verdery, Dick Wadhams, John Weaver, Tom Wilson, Dave Winston, Ginny Wolfe, and Fred Wszolek.



# Congressional & Political Insiders Poll



**Rank order one-through-five the five columnists, bloggers, and television or radio commentators who most help to shape your own opinion or worldview.**

	Total points	Democratic points	Republican points
Thomas Friedman	335	230	105
David Brooks	282	141	141
Charles Krauthammer	281	1	280
George Will	246	23	223
Paul Krugman	182	181	1
David Broder	165	106	59
E.J. Dionne	147	143	4
Karl Rove	126	1	125
Peggy Noonan	101	5	96
William Kristol	91	5	86

Also receiving points: Frank Rich, 81; Fareed Zakaria, 80; David Gergen, 79; Robert Samuelson, 60; Rush Limbaugh, 51; Maureen Dowd, 50; Rachel Maddow, 43; Bill Moyers, 42; Keith Olbermann, 38; Ruth Marcus, 37; Chris Matthews, 33; Dick Morris, 32; Sean Hannity, 31; Arianna Huffington, 29; David Ignatius, 26; Ronald Brownstein, 25; Jon Meacham, 25; Jonathan Alter, 24; Bill O'Reilly, 24; Eugene Robinson, 24; Jon Stewart, 24; Ben Stein, 22; Gerald Seib, 20; Mark Steyn, 20; Glen Beck, 18; Nicholas Kristof, 17; Mark Levin, 17; Joe Scarborough, 15; Jonah Goldberg, 14; Harold Meyerson, 14; Chuck Todd, 14; Charlie Cook, 12; Dan Balz, 11; Fred Barnes, 11; Holman Jenkins, 11; Michael Kinsley, 10; Kathleen Parker, 10; Andrew Sullivan, 10. Another 92 members of the media received 9 to 1 points.

## ■ Thomas Friedman

Democratic Insider: "Has attained that watercooler status of 'Did you read what Friedman had to say today?' Analysis of issues and policy implications often reveals ones that readers might not see themselves."

Republican Insider: "An interesting blend of a liberal and a realist and a man ahead of his time on energy and green issues."

D: "I've never read or listened to anyone who is better prepared, smarter, and more insightful. The premier thinker and writer in the group—yet presents so abrasively."

R: "He'd be a lot more influential if he'd actually return a phone call."

## ■ David Brooks

R: "Fast becoming my favorite: Good-hearted, serious about the country. Views the purpose of politics as to tackle problems and get results."

D: "You have to appreciate a conservative who's not an apologist for the GOP."

R: "Clear, conservative thinking but neither a wing nut nor bombastic."

## ■ Charles Krauthammer

R: "Brilliant analyst; highest slugging percentage of any opinionista."

R: "Though often strident and negative, the power of his brain is always impressive."

## ■ George Will

R: "Nobody is better at explaining why conservatives believe what they do, and applying tried-and-true principles to today's issues."

R: "Sometimes cranky but always erudite. Still a must-read opinion leader."

## ■ Paul Krugman

D: "Nobel status gives him a gravitas that places him in the 'must read' category during the current financial crisis."

D: "Reading Krugman is the best way to figure out if the president is taking bold enough government action to save the economy."

## ■ David Broder

D: "Even when I disagree with his conclusions, it is impossible to argue how well researched and thoughtful he is."

R: "The dean of this group: Politically sensitive and incisive; great experience and perspective; no real ideological spin; positive in approach."

## ■ E.J. Dionne

D: "Consistently takes today's public policy issues and looks beyond political expediency and provokes thoughts regarding the morality of the issues we face."

D: "He speaks to the center, which is where most Americans reside."

## ■ Karl Rove

R: "I find his comments insightful and his analysis spot-on: He scares the Democrats, and not many Republicans do these days."

## ■ Peggy Noonan

R: "Great social commentary and a reminder of the good old days."

## ■ William Kristol

R: "First-rate thinker and a good person as well."

—JAMES A. BARNES, RICHARD E. COHEN, AND PETER BELL

Methodology: All 375 National Journal Congressional and Political Insiders were asked to rank five influential columnists, bloggers, and television or radio commentators: 115 Democrats and 116 Republicans participated. In tallying the ranking, a first-place vote was worth 5 points, a second-place vote was worth 4 points, and so on. Not all Insiders ranked five names. For a list of Congressional Insiders see NJ, September 12, 2009, p.8.