



Political Insiders Poll



On health care reform, what outcome would most benefit your party in the 2010 midterms?

■ Democrats (106 votes)

Enacting legislation similar to the Senate Finance bill	36 percent
Enacting legislation similar to the House committee bills	44 percent
Enacting more-limited legislation with significant bipartisan support	15 percent
Enacting nothing	0 percent
Combination of bills (volunteered)	5 percent

■ Enacting legislation similar to the Senate Finance bill

"Incremental reform is a win for Democrats. Republicans have painted themselves into a no-progress corner, and less sweeping change helps in marginal districts."

"The Finance Committee bill with its CBO-certified frugality has the ability to pull the rug out from under health care reform critics."

"Because it is the only legislation that has a chance of passing both chambers and being signed into law."

■ Enacting legislation similar to the House committee bills

"The Senate Finance bill will depress the Democratic base and confuse independents."

"The House bill will create the competition necessary in the marketplace to drive insurance costs down."

"It is not tainted with charges of special-interest influence like the Senate bill. It is also true, not faux, reform."

"The public option is a sine qua non for the Democratic base."

"A strong health care package will be popular, especially when people see that none of the predictions from the town hall crazies came true."

"Democrats are often their own worst enemy when we show timidity in the face of opposition. We have to pass a strong bill and then make no apologies for it."

"In for a penny, in for a pound. Might as well get it right for one's base."

■ Enacting more-limited legislation with significant bipartisan support

"Cutting the baby in half neutralizes the R's and shows the American people that this Democratic president can get a 'Do-Nothing' Congress to finally get something done."

"Enacting more-limited legislation with significant bipartisan support would significantly reduce the 'fear factor' for the midterms, and would allow Obama to refocus on the fact that he is fixing the economy."

■ Republicans (97 votes)

Enacting legislation similar to the Senate Finance bill	1 percent
Enacting legislation similar to the House committee bills	35 percent
Enacting more-limited legislation with significant bipartisan support	23 percent
Enacting nothing	37 percent
Unsure; doesn't matter (volunteered)	4 percent

■ Enacting legislation similar to the House committee bills

"Passing the most liberal version helps Republicans: The theme for 2010 and '12 will be, elect more R's so we can fix this before it goes into effect."

"With more and more Americans distrustful of government, passing the House bill would be a gift to the GOP."

"There's majority discontent now over health care reform. With a public option, the country would be in full-scale revolt."

"If it's the House bill, it can be positioned as Pelosi's world and can make the president look like he's not in charge."

■ Enacting more-limited legislation with significant bipartisan support

"It takes the issue off the table for next year and deflates the Democratic base."

"Republicans are completely out of touch if they don't think that people want, at a minimum, insurance reform."

"We need to stop this foolishness, but we can't be the party of Dr. No."

■ Enacting nothing

"There are no viable options that currently reflect GOP principles."

"If the governing party cannot govern, they lose."

"Ask any senior who gave them prescription drugs for the first time ever through Medicare and cut a check for \$700 billion in the process. You'll be lucky if they even mention Republicans had a hand in it."

"Defeat for the Dems demoralizes their base, defends the Republic. Worked great in 1994."

"There is virtually nothing that could pass that wouldn't infuriate the GOP base."

The Dems will never put real market-based elements in [reform bills], so better to do nothing and explain how awful the bills are."

"I agree with Jim DeMint: This could be the president's Waterloo. Let's find out."

—JAMES A. BARNES AND PETER BELL



Political Insiders Poll



How worried are you that your party may be alienating political independents?

Democrats (105 votes)

Very worried	30 percent
Somewhat worried	45 percent
Not very worried	21 percent
Not at all worried	3 percent
They're mad with everyone (volunteered)	1 percent

Very worried

"The administration and congressional leadership are losing independents over fiscal issues like the GM bailout and failure to reform Wall Street. Special interests are still feeding at the trough."

"Independents have short-term memories. We need to consistently remind them that the meltdown happened on the Republicans' watch."

"Every indicator says that independents are concerned about an overreaching government that continues to add to the deficit. Every moderate Democrat in a marginal district or state should be worried."

"Independents are mostly looking at the domestic economy and jobs creation, both of which we are failing at."

Somewhat worried

The upcoming elections will be about the margins. Right now, Republicans are consolidating their anger nationally and, in the process, are dragging independents along with them."

"If the unemployment rate is anything like this in nine months, Democrats will pay a significant price with independents—and everybody else, too."

"Things are still very much in flux; independents will reserve judgment until the major agenda items pass or fail. But if we lose them, the majority is gone."

"We are not telling them how we will create jobs and opportunities that will ease their anxieties. And then passing record spending to bail out Wall Street doesn't help, either."

Not very worried

"We have 13 months before the election."

"On most issues, independents still favor Democratic policy options over Republican alternatives."

"Independents aren't going to leap into the laps of Limbaugh and Beck no matter how strongly they are wooed."

Not at all worried

"With Republicans encouraging the birthers, deathers, and tea baggers, the independents either stay with us or check out altogether."

Republicans (97 votes)

Very worried	12 percent
Somewhat worried	24 percent
Not very worried	43 percent
Not at all worried	21 percent

Very worried

"Independents are agreeing with us right now, but they still actively dislike us."

"There is an angry populist movement brewing in America, which is increasingly disconnected from any major party."

Somewhat worried

"The Democratic agenda is chasing indies into the arms of the GOP, but will we welcome them?"

"Right now, independent voters are coming our way, but [after] a few more bouts with Glenn Beck, they could easily swing to their side."

"If they're coming back our way, it's not because of who we are but who we aren't. That's not the basis of a long-term relationship."

Not very worried

"At the moment only an immigration fight could hurt Republicans."

"Obama's Big Government overreach is eclipsing any GOP mistakes."

"But the GOP isn't exactly attracting them, either. Gotta have a positive agenda we're for, too."

"We are attracting independents, especially seniors and those with taxable 'Cadillac' health care plans."

"Republicans are channeling the concerns of independents by urging caution and measured progress on the big issues such as health care and climate [change]. Mistakes on these policies will be paid for from the pockets of the middle class. Independents get this better."

"Midterms are about Obama. The issue is not giving Republicans power—voters are not ready to do that. It is putting a check on Obama."

"How could we alienate them any more than we have already done so?"

Not at all worried

"Independents would rather see nothing happen than see Big Government happen."

"Independents in 2009 are seriously scared about jobs, record deficits, and the collapsing dollar. Democrats own all three problems. Republicans are the alternative."

NationalJournal.com

See how prominent bloggers responded to these questions by visiting the Insiders Poll online.

—JAMES A. BARNES AND PETER BELL



Political Insiders Poll



On balance, does winning the Nobel Peace Prize help or hurt President Obama's image at home?

Democrats (104 votes)

Helps	Hurts	Neither*
71%	14%	15%

*Volunteered.

Helps

"We are proud of President Obama, even if the Nobel committee jumped the gun. Now let's start withdrawing those troops from Afghanistan."

"Wait until the speech and the photo ops with world leaders."

"The fact remains that most Americans are ultimately proud of a countryman, including a president, who is admired throughout the world."

"I guess it helps a little, but how many Americans really give a @#%& who wins the Nobel Peace Prize? Since when did the Nobel Peace Prize start going to who the committee thought was going to do a good job?"

"The prize augments the president's stature and helps enhance his credibility as a champion of the broader public interest."

"It's still a reminder of why we elected Obama and what he means for America in the eyes of the world, especially compared to his predecessor."

"In the end, he has downplayed it; it helps with moderate voters."

"One of the world's most prominent and prestigious awards coming to the POTUS after a decade of global conflict, how can it hurt?"

Hurts

"When the first question everyone asks themselves is, 'The Nobel Peace Prize, for doing what?' That can't be good."

"It feeds into the stereotype of being elite and entitled, which riles middle-class Americans and many others."

Neither; doesn't matter; depends

"Helps in Washington, hurts in Kansas."

Republicans (95 votes)

Helps	Hurts	Neither*
24%	64%	12%

*Volunteered.

Helps

"It will help marginally because people understand that it's a true honor."

"Despite the jokes and the disbelief, it is a form of validation, which increases the gravitas quotient in a W.H. that needs it."

Hurts

"The president already suffers from a growing 'style-over-substance' image problem, and this incredibly embarrassing award only exacerbates that viewpoint."

"Anything that subjects our president to ridicule hurts his image."

"The narrative for him is not good—that he hasn't accomplished anything and is getting rave reviews for it."

"Makes him look like he is in the clutches of the global left-wingers."

"It reaffirms in people's minds that Obama is getting ahead by doing nothing."

"It puts the laser light on the question of what he's actually achieved and answers it: Not much. Verifies everything the right wing said about pandering to European-style socialism."

"Because most people know you have to do something to get the award: I hear they may now award him the Heisman Trophy for watching [college] football."

"Shows that leftist Europeans are the true Obama constituency."

"Getting something else without really earning it—bad image for America's first black president."

Neither; no real impact; depends

"If you liked him already, you like him even more. If you didn't like him, this is salt in the wound."

—JAMES A. BARNES AND PETER BELL

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