

INSIDE POLITICS

with 

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Remember the Alamo!

Republicans want revenge. They suffered a bitter defeat on the health care bill, when they were outgunned in Congress by the more numerous Democrats. Just as the Texas defenders of the Alamo were outgunned by Santa Anna's army in 1836. Texans rallied to the cry of "Remember the Alamo!" and defeated the Mexican army two months later at San Jacinto.

Republicans have seven months to rally before the midterm election. That's the problem. Republican voters are pretty much rallied right now. Seven months from now, who knows?

Polls all along have shown two things about the health care bill: (1) opponents outnumbered supporters, and (2) opponents felt more strongly about the issue than supporters. That's why, throughout the debate, Republicans could claim they were on the side of the people. Congress

softening. Before the bill was signed, the margin of public disapproval was 11 points in the CBS News poll. After it became law, the gap closed to 4 points. The Quinnipiac poll showed the margin of disapproval shrinking from 18 points to 9.

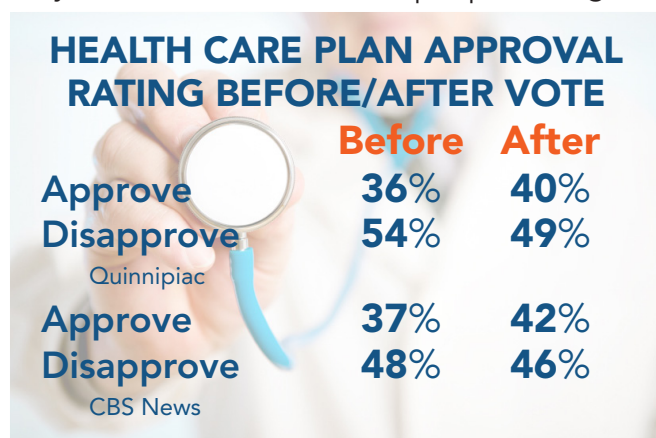
Conservative activists, led by the Club for Growth, are trying to get Republican candidates to sign a pledge to repeal health care reform. It won't happen as long as Obama is President. He will veto any repeal. But conservatives see it as an issue they can use to rally Republicans.

They will also rally Democrats. That may be happening already. In the Washington Post-ABC News poll, the number who said they "strongly support" the new law rose by 10 points since February, to 32%. They were still outnumbered by those who "strongly oppose" the law (40%), but the margin was closing.

What will Democrats run on? Maybe the tag line from the old Alka Seltzer commercials: "Try it, you'll like it!"

President Obama told House Democrats before the vote that once health care reform is signed into law, "it's going to be a little harder [for opponents] to mischaracterize what this effort has been all about." Some of the most popular insurance reforms will take place this year. Voters will discover that they have new rights and benefits. It's always risky to threaten to take away people's rights and benefits.

Moreover, voters are unlikely to want to go back to the status quo before reform. One thing was clear from the polls taken over the past year:



always risks a backlash when it acts in defiance of public opinion (see Clinton impeachment, 1998).

But there are already signs that opposition to the new law is softening. Not reversing, but

people were dissatisfied with the health care status quo. They wanted change. Maybe not this particular bill. But change.

In a Pew poll last month, 51% believed that if the Obama plan passed, their health care costs would go up. But 63% said their costs would go up if no changes were made to the health care system. That's why Republicans have adopted the line, "Repeal and replace."

In both the CNN poll and the Washington Post-ABC News poll, 26% of Americans describe themselves as "angry" over the new law. What's driving the anger? Some liberals suspect a hidden social issue backlash—racism and anti-immigrant sentiment.

President Obama tried hard to defuse explosive social issues. He is encountering fury from abortion rights supporters over his executive order mandating restrictive treatment of abortion coverage. Immigration rights activists are unhappy over the denial of coverage to illegal immigrants.

President Obama has not stuck his neck out on social issues the way President Clinton did. He didn't have to, many Democrats say. He's black. But while there is some racial component

GENERIC CONGRESSIONAL BALLOT

Democrat **45%** | **46%** Republican
USA Today/Gallup March 26-28

Democrat **45%** | **49%** Republican
CNN March 25-28

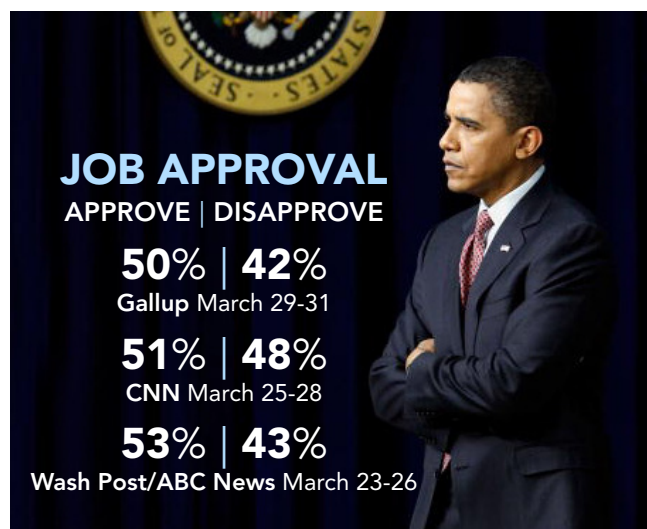
Democrat **48%** | **44%** Republican
Wash Post/ABC News March 23-26

to the anger, the big surprise is that it erupted over economic issues—federal bailouts, deficit spending and health care reform.

Yes, the tea party movement is almost all white, but it has kept some distance from the

religious right, which has not played a central role in this debate.

What health care opponents fear is a government takeover. A tea party activist told a rally in Iowa, "Every single person's body in this whole country belongs to the government now."



The Obama Administration epitomizes some of their worst nightmares of big government. Huge increases in federal spending. A federal takeover of major corporations. Now government control of medical care. The fact that President Obama is doing all this with the support of young people and minorities just makes it seem more alien. But the core of the complaint is not bigotry. It is fear of the abusive power of big government. Those angry Americans will remember the health care vote. Just as Texans have remembered the Alamo for nearly 175 years.

For the majority of voters, however, the issue is more likely to be jobs. While Washington has been fixated on health care for the past ten months, the top issue to voters was always the economy. Is that good news for Democrats? Maybe not. The latest CNN poll shows Democrats losing their lead on the economy for the first time since 2003. Democrats can't expect to stem their midterm losses unless there are clear signs that the jobs are coming back. ■

Jobs

The economy is the reverse of foreign policy. Democrats get higher ratings on the economy than Republicans. But President Obama gets some of his lowest ratings on the economy.

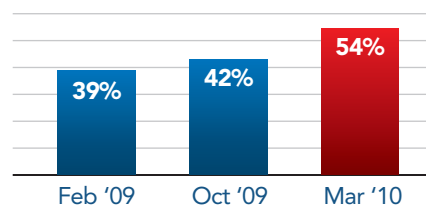
Why do Democrats have the advantage on the economy? History. With one exception, every recession since World War II started under a Republican President. Including the current recession. The exception? 1980. Democrat Jimmy Carter paid a price for that, including a stiff challenge within his own party.

The Constitution makes the President commander-in-chief of the military. But the voters also regard the President as commander-in-chief of the economy. He's not, of course. Nobody is. The economy is too big and too complex to be "commanded" by anyone. But every President's job approval ratings rise and fall with the unemployment numbers.

In February 2009, at the beginning of the Obama Administration, 39% of Americans reported that someone in their household had been unemployed during the past year, according to the Pew poll. In March 2010, that number jumped to 54%: A majority.

It's even higher among Democrats (57%), low-income Americans (66%) and young people (70%). They're hurting the most. And they are all part of Obama's base.

Percent of Americans who say someone in the household has been unemployed during the past year



National Security

National security dominated the last two midterm elections. Terrorism in 2002. Iraq in 2006.

Right now, foreign policy is President Obama's strong suit. Several polls show President Obama getting his highest ratings on Afghanistan, Iraq, terrorism and national security. His lowest marks are on the deficit, the economy and unemployment.

What's President Obama done to get high marks in foreign policy?

The public believes things are going well for the U.S. in Afghanistan (55% in the March CNN poll, up from 32% last November). The Administration has negotiated a new arms control agreement with Russia. In the Middle East, President Obama pushed back after Israel announced plans to build 1,600 new Jewish homes in a disputed area of Jerusalem. The pressure is now on the Netanyahu government, which appears to have been surprised by the Administration's tough stand.

A note of caution is in order. While President Obama gets high marks on national security, that does not apply to his fellow Democrats. By a 17-point margin, voters believe Republicans would handle national security better than Democrats in the poll conducted for Third Way and Democracy Corps. Congressional Democrats' names will be on the ballot this year. President Obama's name will not.

Who Goes to Siberia?



with
Mikhail Suslov

Carried by Obama

Carried by McCain

F Freshman

Dem Target

GOP Target



Palin's List

Republicans who voted NO in marginal or Democrat-leaning districts:
"Right-Wing Reactionaries"

Democrats who voted YES in marginal or Republican-leaning districts:
"Left-Wing Adventurists"

Democrats who voted NO in marginal or Dem.-leaning districts:
"Centrist Opportunists"

Bachmann MN-6 '08-46%	Guthrie KY-2 '08-53% F	Posey FL-15 '08-53% F
Biggert IL-13 '08-54%	Heller NV-2 '08-52%	Reichert WA-8 '08-53% Dem Target
Bilbray CA-50 '08-50%	Jenkins KS-2 '08-51% F	Rogers AL-3 '08-53%
Bono Mack CA-45 '08-58% Dem Target	Kirk IL-10 '08-53% Dem Target	Rogers MI-8 '08-56%
Brown SC-1 '08-52% OPEN SEAT	Lance NJ-7 '08-50%	Rohrabacher CA-46 '08-53%
Calvert CA-44 '08-51%	Latham IA-4 '08-61%	Ros-Lehtinen FL-18 '08-58%
Camp MI-4 '08-62%	Lee NY-26 '08-55% F	Roskam IL-6 '08-58%
Campbell CA-48 '08-56%	LoBiondo NJ-2 '08-59%	Ryan WI-1 '08-64%
Cao LA-2 '08-50% F Dem Target	Luetkemeyer MO-9 '08-50% F	Schmidt OH-2 '08-45%
Cassidy LA-6 '08-48% F	Lummis WY-AL '08-53% F	Shadegg AZ-3 '08-54% OPEN SEAT
Castle DE-1 '08-61% Dem Target	Lungren CA-3 '08-49% Dem Target	Terry NE-2 '08-53% Dem Target
Dent PA-15 '08-59% Dem Target	Manzullo IL-16 '08-61%	Tiberi OH-12 '08-55% Dem Target
Diaz-Balart FL-25 '08-53% OPEN SEAT	McCaul TX-10 '08-54%	Upton MI-6 '08-59%
Dreier CA-26 '08-53%	McClintock CA-4 '08-50% F	Wilson SC-2 '08-54%
Fleming LA-4 '08-48% F	McCotter MI-11 '08-51%	Wolf VA-10 '08-59%
Forbes VA-4 '08-60%	McKeon CA-25 '08-58%	Young FL-10 '08-61%
Gallegly CA-24 '08-58%	Olson TX-22 '08-52% F	Young AK-AL '08-50%
Gerlach PA-6 '08-52% Dem Target	Paulsen MN-3 '08-49% F	
Griffith AL-5 '08-51% F	Petri WI-6 '08-64%	

Boccieri OH-16 '08-55% F	Markey CO-4 '08-56% F Dem Target	Adler NJ-3 '08-52% F
Boyd FL-2 '08-62% Dem Target	McNerney CA-11 '08-55% Dem Target	Arcuri NY-24 '08-51%
Carney PA-10 '08-56% Dem Target	Mitchell AZ-5 '08-53% Dem Target	Barrow GA-12 '08-66%
Connolly VA-11 '08-53% F Dem Target	Mollohan WV-1 '08-100% Dem Target	Bright AL-2 '08-50% F
Dahlkemper PA-3 '08-52% F Dem Target	Murphy NY-20 '08-50% F Dem Target	Childers MS-1 '08-54%
Driehaus OH-1 '08-52% F Dem Target	Owens NY-23 '08-49% F Dem Target	Davis AL-7 '08-99% OPEN SEAT
Ellsworth IN-8 '08-65% OPEN SEAT	Perriello VA-5 '08-50% F Dem Target	Edwards TX-17 '08-53%
Giffords AZ-8 '08-55% Dem Target	Peters MI-9 '08-52% F	Kissell NC-8 '08-55% F
Gordon TN-6 '08-74% OPEN SEAT	Pingree ME-1 '08-55% F	Kratovil MD-1 '08-49% F
Grayson FL-8 '08-52% F Dem Target	Pomeroy ND-AL '08-62% Dem Target	Lipinski IL-3 '08-73%
Hill IN-9 '08-58% Dem Target	Rahall WV-3 '08-67%	Lynch MA-9 '08-100%
Himes CT-4 '08-51% F Dem Target	Salazar CO-3 '08-62% Dem Target	Minnick ID-1 '08-51% F
Kagen WI-8 '08-54% Dem Target	Schauer MI-7 '08-49% F Dem Target	Nye VA-2 '08-52% F
Kanjorski PA-11 '08-52% Dem Target	Schrader OR-5 '08-55% F Dem Target	
Kilroy OH-15 '08-46% F Dem Target	Shea-Porter NH-1 '08-52% Dem Target	
Kirkpatrick AZ-1 '08-56% Dem Target	Snyder AR-2 '08-71% OPEN SEAT	
Klein FL-22 '08-55% Dem Target	Spratt SC-5 '08-62% Dem Target	
Kosmas FL-24 '08-57% F Dem Target	Titus NV-3 '08-47% F Dem Target	
Maffei NY-25 '08-55% F	Wilson OH-6 '08-62%	