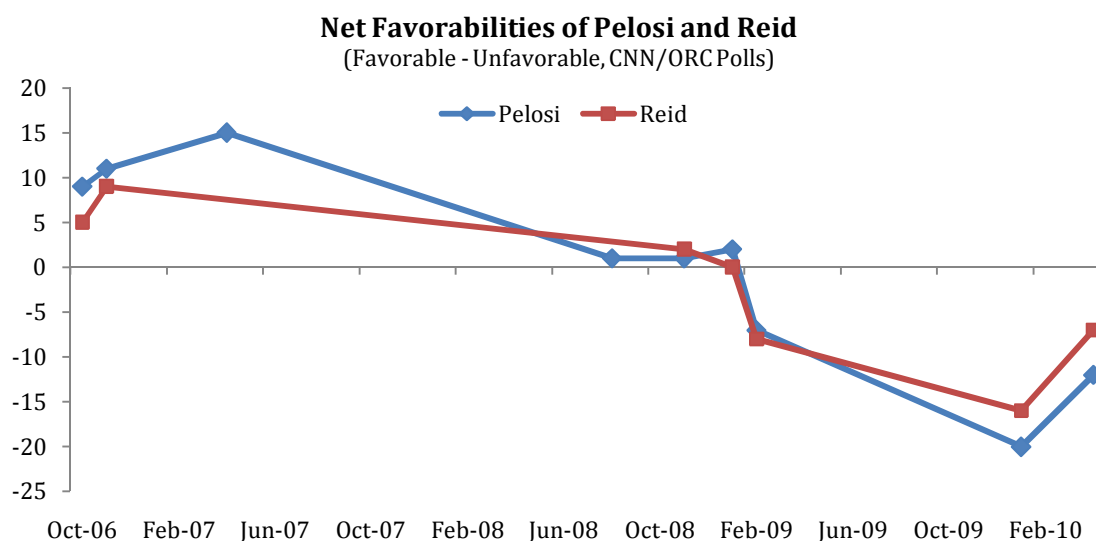


Polling News & Notes

Overlooked Recent Polling and Insights • June 3, 2010

Can Republican Attacks on Pelosi, Reid Be Effective? Recent posts on liberal blogs have [mocked](#) GOP candidates for attacking Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid. According to the DailyKos, Republican losses in special elections in California, New York, and Pennsylvania are evidence that “people don’t hate Pelosi,” while FiveThirtyEight.com [claims](#) “most Americans don’t know who she is, and if they do, they don’t really care.” But does polling data support these statements?

In a mid-April CNN/Opinion Research poll, 88% had an opinion of Nancy Pelosi, and just 38% rated her favorably. Fifty percent of Americans had an unfavorable opinion of her; double her unfavorables in 2006. Similarly, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid has a net negative favorability rating, with 28% viewing him favorably and 35% unfavorably. Since 2006, Reid’s unfavorables have climbed from 19% to 35%.



So why haven’t GOP attacks on Pelosi and Reid been more powerful? For starters, congressional Republicans are no more popular themselves. Historically, when one party and its leaders have been unpopular, the other party has benefited. But today, congressional Republicans are just as unpopular as congressional Democrats. An early May AP poll found 31% of Americans approve of the job congressional Republicans are doing (essentially unchanged from January’s 32%), compared to 37% for congressional Democrats (down slightly from January’s 40%). Gallup polling [has also found](#) both major favorability ratings to be close to record lows. Republicans will need to improve their own image to capitalize on Democrats’ unpopularity.

Democratic candidates have also been successful in recent special elections by running against their own party’s leaders. For example, Mark Critz, the victor of the mid-May PA-12 special election, [ran campaign ads](#) boasting that he opposed the health care bill and is pro-life and pro-gun. Attacks on Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid have fallen flat in recent special elections, but Democratic incumbents who voted for ObamaCare, the stimulus, additional spending, deficits, cap and trade, and card check may have a tougher time distancing themselves from their party’s leadership this fall.