

Polling News & Notes

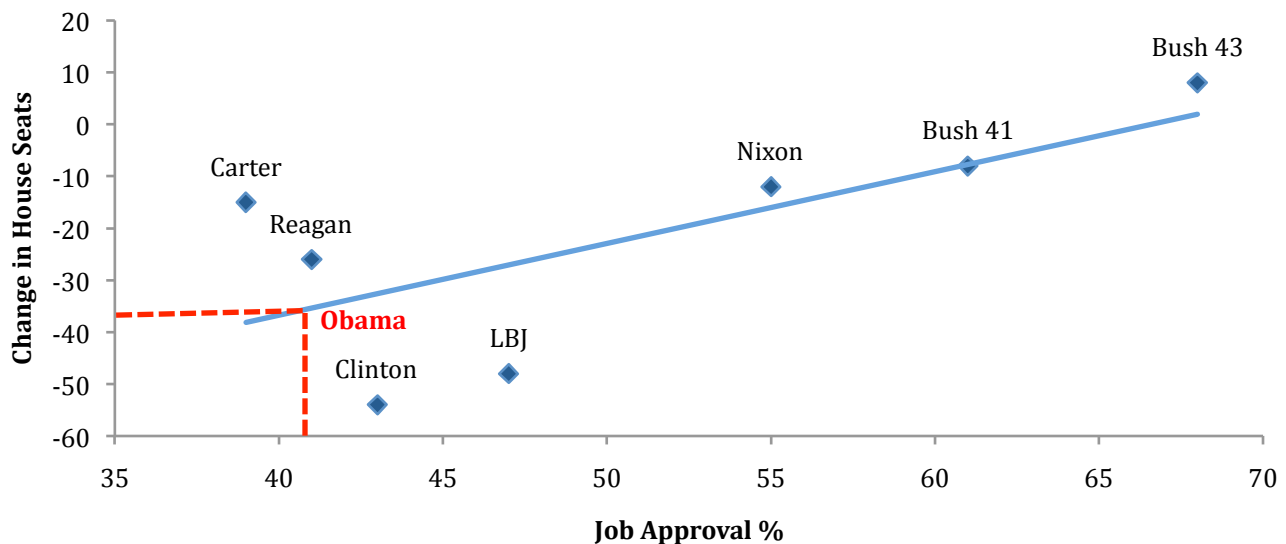
Overlooked Recent Polling and Insights • August 5, 2010

Obama Approval at 41% Points to Midterm Losses for Democrats: A [new USA Today/Gallup poll](#) released this week found President Obama’s job approval at 41%, with 53% disapproving, a drop of 7 points since May and a new low for Obama. The poll may be an outlier—it is four points lower than both Gallup’s latest [daily tracking](#) figure and Obama’s [Pollster.com average](#) approval—yet it is an indication of an undeniably negative trend for the President. After a period of relative stability since last September, Obama’s approval began declining again in mid-June. Obama’s approval has dropped over the past month in the FOX News (-4), YouGov (-4), and CNN (-3) polls.

How will Obama’s flagging approval ratings affect Democrats’ midterm fortunes? Obama is unlikely to recover above the 50% mark before November. Presidents with approval ratings under 50% have lost an average of 41 House seats in midterm elections. A look at the August job approval of Presidents since 1966 alongside the result of their first midterm shows that at 41% approval, Obama would be projected to lose 35 House seats this fall—just shy of the 39 seats Republicans need to regain control of the chamber. At this point in 1994, even Bill Clinton’s approval rating was slightly higher at 43%.

Presidential Job Approval vs. Change in House Seats

August Before First Midterm Election, Gallup Since 1966



The historical record also shows that August job approval and midterm results are not perfectly correlated. Some presidents (Carter, Reagan) lost fewer House seats than their August job approvals would have predicted, while others (Clinton, LBJ) lost more. Obama’s declining job approval points to big GOP gains in the fall—but that number alone will not guarantee a Republican takeover of the House.