

## Generic Congressional Ballot Tied

### *Job Ratings for Congress still near all time low*

**NEW YORK, N.Y. – January 31, 2012** – While almost all the election related media attention has been on the Republicans battling for the chance to challenge President Obama in November, every seat in the House of Representatives is also up for election this November. And, if the election for Congress were being held today, among registered voters, it would be a tie with 38% voting for the Republican candidate and 38% voting for the Democratic candidate. Just under one in ten (8%) would vote for another party's candidate and 16% are not sure who they would vote for.

Almost nine in ten Republicans (88%) would vote for their candidate and four in five Democrats (81%) would vote for their candidate while Independents are a bit more divided as 28% would vote for the Democratic candidate, 26% for the Republican, 15% for another party's candidate and three in ten (30%) are not sure.

These are some of the results of ***The Harris Poll*** of 2,016 adults surveyed online between January 16 and 23, 2012 by [Harris Interactive](#).

One issue that Members of Congress have is that the institution itself as well as the two major parties in Congress and the leaders are all looking at very low job approval ratings. Specifically:

- When it comes to Congress itself, just 6% of Americans would rate the overall job they are doing positively while 94% would rate their job negatively. Last month 5% gave them positive ratings while 95% gave them negative ones;
- Over two in five Americans (46%) give Speaker of the House John Boehner negative ratings, 11% give him positive marks and more than two in five (44%) are not familiar enough to have an opinion;
- Looking at the two Democratic Congressional leaders, over half of Americans (53%) give House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi negative ratings, while 13% give her positive marks and 34% are not familiar with her. Two in five U.S. adults (42%) give Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid negative ratings, 8% give him positive ratings and half (50%) are not familiar enough with him to have an opinion; and,
- Looking at the two political parties, over half of Americans have negative opinions of the job both Republicans in Congress (56%) and Democrats in Congress (53%) are doing. Just one in ten have a positive opinion of the job Republicans in Congress are doing (10%) and 13% have positive opinions of the job Democrats in Congress are doing. One-third of U.S. adults are not familiar enough with the job either party is doing (34% for both) to have an opinion regarding them.

### **So What?**

With approval ratings at historic lows, Members of Congress have reason to be nervous about their chances for re-election. This may be why, so far, around 30 have decided to retire rather than run again. There also isn't any one to rally around—President Obama's ratings are also low and, with the bruising primary so far, it's possible that whoever emerges as the Republican candidate will be damaged, so coattails from the presidential race may

be short. Representatives have to hope that the old adage of “hate the Institution, but like my Member” holds true for November or it could be another watershed year with incumbents not able to win re-election.

**TABLE 1  
GENERIC CONGRESSIONAL BALLOT**

"If the election for Congress were being held today, for whom would you most likely vote?"

Base: All adults

	Total	Reg voters	Political Party		
			Rep.	Dem.	Ind.
	%	%	%	%	%
Democratic candidate	37	38	3	81	28
Republican candidate	35	38	88	4	26
Other	8	8	2	3	15
Not sure	20	16	7	11	30

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

**TABLE 2  
CONGRESS' OVERALL JOB RATING**

"How would you rate the overall job Congress is doing?"

Base: All adults

	Total	Political Party		
		Rep.	Dem.	Ind.
	%	%	%	%
<b>POSITIVE</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>
Excellent	*	*	*	*
Pretty good	5	5	6	5
<b>NEGATIVE</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>95</b>
Only fair	34	41	34	27
Poor	60	54	60	67

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

**TABLE 3**  
**CONGRESS' OVERALL JOB RATING – TREND**  
 "How would you rate the overall job Congress is doing?"

Base: All adults

	TREND	Positive*	Negative**
		%	%
<b>2012</b>	<b>January</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>94</b>
2011	December	5	95
	November	5	95
	October	5	95
	September	6	94
	August	5	95
	July	8	92
	June	11	89
	May 19th	12	88
	May 9th	13	87
	April	8	92
	March	10	90
	February	14	86
	January	16	84
<b>2010</b>	December	11	89
	November	13	87
	October	11	89
	September	13	87
	August	15	85
	June	14	86
	May	15	85
	April	16	84
	March	10	90
	Jan.	16	84
<b>2009</b>	Dec.	17	83
	Oct.	16	84
	Sept.	19	81
	Aug.	22	78
	June	25	75
	March	29	71
<b>2008</b>	October	10	86
	August	18	77
	June	13	83
	February	20	76
<b>2007</b>	December	17	79
	October	20	77
	April	27	69
	February	33	62
<b>2006</b>	September	24	73
	May	18	80
	February	25	71
	January	25	72

\*Positive = excellent or pretty good. \*\*Negative = only fair or poor.

**TABLE 4**  
**FAMILIARITY WITH SENIOR CABINET MEMBERS, CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS AND PARTIES IN CONGRESS**

“Are you familiar enough with each of the following to have an opinion regarding them?”

Base: All adults

	FAMILIAR														
	2009							2010				2011			2012
	Mar	April	May	June	Aug	Sept	Dec	Jan	Mar	June	Oct	Jan	May	Oct	Jan
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi	68	65	66	66	67	69	71	68	69	69	72	69	75	72	<b>66</b>
Democrats in Congress	66	64	64	65	68	69	67	71	68	68	67	66	66	67	<b>66</b>
Republicans in Congress	62	61	59	58	63	65	64	66	67	64	64	63	62	66	<b>66</b>
House Speaker John Boehner	37	N/a	37	N/a	27	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	37	48	54	60	<b>56</b>
Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid	32	N/a	N/a	N/a	39	N/a	44	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	53	53	<b>50</b>

Note: N/a indicates not asked; In January 2011 Nancy Pelosi became House Minority Leader (from House Speaker) and John Boehner became House Speaker (from House Minority Leader).

**TABLE 5**  
**RATINGS OF SENIOR CABINET MEMBERS, CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS AND PARTIES IN CONGRESS**

“How would you rate the overall job each of the following is doing?”

Base: All adults

	Positive*	Excellent	Pretty Good	Negative**	Only Fair	Poor	Not Familiar
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Democrats in Congress	<b>13</b>	2	11	<b>53</b>	21	32	34
House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi	<b>13</b>	2	11	<b>53</b>	17	36	34
House Speaker John Boehner	<b>11</b>	1	10	<b>46</b>	20	25	44
Republicans in Congress	<b>10</b>	1	9	<b>56</b>	20	36	34
Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid	<b>8</b>	1	7	<b>42</b>	15	27	50

\*Positive = excellent or pretty good \*\*Negative = only fair or poor; In January 2011 Nancy Pelosi became House Minority Leader (from House Speaker) and John Boehner became House Speaker (from House Minority Leader).

**TABLE 6**  
**RATING OF HOUSE SPEAKER JOHN BOEHNER – TREND**  
 How would you rate the job House Speaker John Boehner is doing?"

Base: All adults

			Positive*	Negative**	Not Familiar
<b>2012</b>	<b>Jan.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>44</b>
2011	Oct.	%	17	43	40
	May	%	22	32	46
	Jan.	%	22	27	52
2010	Oct.	%	12	25	63
2009	Aug.	%	8	19	73
	March	%	9	16	75

\*Excellent or pretty good. \*\*Only fair or poor. Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding; Until January 2011 John Boehner was House Minority Leader.

**TABLE 7**  
**RATING OF HOUSE MINORITY LEADER NANCY PELOSI – TREND**  
 How would you rate the job House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi is doing?"

Base: All adults

			Positive*	Negative**	Not Familiar
<b>2012</b>	<b>Jan</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>34</b>
2011	Oct.	%	18	54	28
	May	%	24	51	25
	Jan.	%	22	48	31
2010	Oct.	%	19	52	28
	June	%	20	49	31
	March	%	16	52	31
	Jan.	%	18	50	32
2009	Dec.	%	22	49	29
	Sept.	%	20	49	31
	Aug.	%	19	48	33
	June	%	18	49	34
	May	%	21	45	34
	April	%	21	44	35
	March	%	23	45	32

\*Excellent or pretty good. \*\*Only fair or poor. Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding; until January 2011 Nancy Pelosi was House Speaker.

**TABLE 8**  
**RATING OF SENATE MAJORITY LEADER HARRY REID – TREND**  
 How would you rate the job Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid is doing?"

Base: All adults

			Positive*	Negative**	Not Familiar
<b>2012</b>	<b>Jan.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>50</b>
2011	Oct.	%	10	42	47
	May	%	17	36	47
2009	Dec.	%	11	33	56
	Aug.	%	10	29	61
	March	%	12	26	61

\*Excellent or pretty good. \*\*Only fair or poor. Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding.

**TABLE 9**  
**RATING OF DEMOCRATS IN CONGRESS – TREND**

How would you rate the job the Democrats in Congress are doing?"

Base: All adults

			Positive*	Negative**	Not Familiar
<b>2012</b>	<b>Jan.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>34</b>
2011	Oct.	%	12	54	33
	May	%	18	48	34
	Jan.	%	19	47	34
2010	Oct.	%	16	51	33
	June	%	14	54	32
	March	%	14	54	32
	Jan.	%	17	54	29
2009	Dec.	%	18	50	33
	Sept.	%	18	51	31
	Aug.	%	21	47	32
	June	%	21	43	35
	May	%	25	39	36
	April	%	22	42	36
	March	%	25	41	34

\*Excellent or pretty good. \*\*Only fair or poor. Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding.

**TABLE 10**  
**RATING OF REPUBLICANS IN CONGRESS – TREND**

How would you rate the job the Republicans in Congress are doing?"

Base: All adults

			Positive*	Negative**	Not Familiar
<b>2012</b>	<b>Jan.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>34</b>
2011	Oct.	%	13	53	34
	May	%	18	44	38
	Jan.	%	20	44	37
2010	Oct.	%	14	51	36
	June	%	11	52	36
	March	%	16	51	33
	Jan.	%	16	50	34
2009	Dec.	%	14	50	36
	Sept.	%	11	54	35
	Aug.	%	12	52	37
	June	%	12	46	42
	May	%	14	45	41
	April	%	14	48	39
	March	%	15	47	38

\*Excellent or pretty good. \*\*Only fair or poor. Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding.

## Methodology

This **Harris Poll** was conducted online within the United States between January 16 and 23, 2012 among 2,016 adults (aged 18 and over). Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words "margin of error" as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the adult population. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in the Harris Interactive panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

***These statements conform to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.***

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