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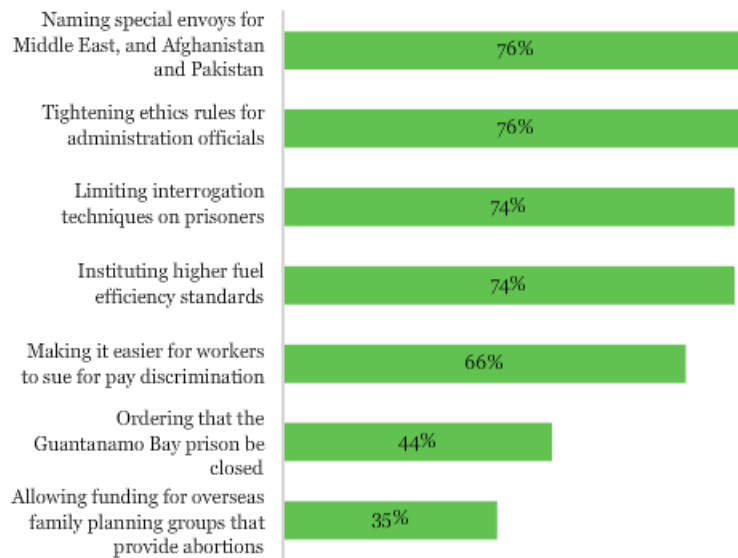
February 2, 2009

## Americans Approve of Most Obama Actions to Date

Widespread support for decisions on ethics reform, interrogations, fuel standards

by Jeffrey M. Jones

PRINCETON, NJ -- Of seven actions Barack Obama has taken during the early days of his presidency, five are supported by large majorities of Americans.

*Approval of Barack Obama's Actions as President*

Jan. 30-Feb. 1 USA Today/Gallup poll

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The Jan. 30-Feb. 1 *USA Today*/Gallup poll asked Americans to say whether they approve or disapprove of seven specific actions Obama has taken as president. Americans' general support for most of these is in line with [Obama's initial overall job approval ratings](#).

The public is most supportive of his decisions to name special envoys to oversee the administration's efforts in the Middle East, and Pakistan and Afghanistan, and to tighten rules on people working as lobbyists either before or after serving in his administration. Both of these moves are favored by 76% of Americans.

Americans are nearly as supportive of Obama's actions to limit the interrogation methods that can be used on military prisoners -- actions designed to ensure the United States does not resort to torture to find out information from prisoners. Seventy-four percent of Americans favor that decision, the same percentage who favor his executive order to institute higher fuel efficiency standards.

Two in three Americans approve of his signing a bill to make it easier for workers to sue for pay discrimination, the first legislation he has signed into law as president.

The public does not agree with everything Obama has done, however. For example, more Americans say they disapprove (50%) than approve (44%) of his decision to order the closing of the Guantanamo Bay prison for terrorist suspects in Cuba within a year.

Further, Obama's decision to reverse the prohibition on funding for overseas family-planning providers may be the least popular thing he has done so far. This was an executive order that forbade federal government money from going to overseas family-planning groups that provide abortions or offer abortion counseling. Fifty-eight percent of Americans disapprove of Obama's decision to lift this

ban, while only 35% approve of it. The ban on federal funds to these groups was put in place by Ronald Reagan, but lifted by Bill Clinton. George W. Bush re-instituted the ban after taking office in 2001, but Obama has once again lifted it.

The abortion and Guantanamo Bay prison decisions are especially unpopular among Republicans; only 8% approve of the former and 11% of the latter. But these are also the least popular decisions among independents and Democrats as well, though a majority of Democrats still approve of both.

*Approval of Barack Obama's Actions as President, by Political Party*

	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
Naming special envoys for Middle East, and Afghanistan and Pakistan	87%	76%	61%
Tightening ethics rules for administration officials	86%	73%	69%
Limiting interrogation techniques on prisoners	88%	73%	58%
Instituting higher fuel efficiency standards	89%	73%	56%
Making it easier for workers to sue for pay discrimination	85%	66%	41%
Ordering that the Guantanamo Bay prison be closed	68%	46%	11%
Allowing funding for overseas family planning groups that provide abortions	59%	33%	8%

Jan. 30-Feb. 1 USA Today/Gallup poll

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Republicans are in general less supportive of all of Obama's important early actions than are Democrats and independents, as would be expected. But a majority of Republicans do approve of four of the seven decisions, including 58% who approve of limitations on certain interrogation techniques, something the Bush administration resisted.

### Implications

While the public has not supported everything Obama has done in his presidency thus far, he continues to receive strong overall job approval ratings around 66%. It appears that Americans believe the good outweighs the bad to this point in the Obama presidency.

Admittedly, many of Obama's early actions have been noncontroversial, and ones that did not receive a great deal of continuing news coverage. His work in passing an economic stimulus plan is a departure from that, and may provide a stiffer test of how strong his public support is. The U.S. House version of his plan met with opposition from the entire Republican caucus, and the Senate will work this week to craft a different version of the plan that enjoys broader partisan support.

Still, like prior presidents, Obama appears to be enjoying solid public support during this early stage or "honeymoon" phase of his administration.

### Survey Methods

Results are based on telephone interviews with 1,027 national adults, aged 18 and older, conducted Jan. 30-Feb. 1, 2009. For results based on the total sample of national adults, one can say with 95% confidence that the maximum margin of sampling error is  $\pm 3$  percentage points.

Interviews are conducted with respondents on land-line telephones (for respondents with a land-line telephone) and cellular phones (for respondents who are cell-phone only).

In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

3. Thinking now about some of the specific actions Barack Obama has taken since he has been in office, would you say you approve or disapprove of each of the following. How about -- [RANDOM ORDER]?

	% Approve	% Disapprove	% No opinion
Naming special U.S. envoys to deal with the situations in Afghanistan and Pakistan and the Middle East	76	15	9
Restricting former lobbyists from working in the Obama administration, and restricting administration officials from working as lobbyists after leaving the government	76	17	6
Requiring that all interrogations of military prisoners be conducted according to the Army Field Manual	74	19	7
Ordering the Environmental Protection Agency to institute higher fuel efficiency standards	74	22	3
Signing a bill that makes it easier for workers to sue companies for pay discrimination	66	29	5
Ordering the Guantanamo Bay prison for terrorist suspects be closed within a year	44	50	5
Allowing U.S. funding for overseas family planning organizations that provide abortions	35	58	7

Jan. 30-Feb. 1 USA Today/Gallup poll

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