

Eisenhower Executive Office Building.

The White House went out of its way to praise the protesters and present them as mainstream. "What I think is that the American people understand that not everybody's been following the rules," Obama explained in a press conference on the same day protesters marched by the White House chanting, "We got sold out."

Vice President Joe Biden, Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner and House minority leader Nancy Pelosi have offered words of sympathy, as have the heads of the nation's major labor unions. "The protests you're seeing are the same conversations people are having in living rooms and kitchens all across America," said David Plouffe, the President's top strategist. Obama's campaign got into the game, blasting its Twitter feed with calls for Republicans to quickly confirm the new head of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and accusing the GOP of being "on the side of Wall Street."

Behind the scenes, the embrace has been even more dramatic. Former Obama official Van Jones has been organizing established liberal interest groups into a protest network called Rebuild the Dream, which he hopes will dovetail with the Occupy demonstrations. "There is enough overlap between these networks of people," Jones says. "We text together."

The courtship will be a delicate one, as the Occupy movement remains more an idea than an organization. "It's safe to say that our movement has always been appreciative of whatever help individuals or organizations are willing to give," says Patrick Bruner, the closest thing the Wall Street protesters have to a spokesman. "As long as those organizations don't attach strings, I don't see any reason why we wouldn't accept."

But Democrats don't need to attach strings to benefit; they only need to keep the conversation focused on their issues. Obama rode to victory in 2008 on the backs of first-time voters and young people who felt he would improve their lives. Those voters have been AWOL ever since. "These people did not go away," explains Jones. "They just went from hopey to mokey."

Back in lower Manhattan, the vigil goes on. If it spreads and grows, Obama and his team will be nearby to collect the dividends. Occupy Wall Street is a movement the White House, lacking better options, is already investing in. —WITH REPORTING BY NATE RAWLINGS/NEW YORK AND ELIZABETH DIAS/WASHINGTON ■

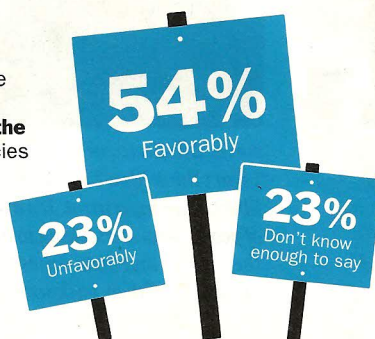
Occupied Territory. A TIME poll shows more voters support the protesters than the Tea Party

Are things in this country generally going in the **right direction**, or have they **pretty seriously gotten onto the wrong track**?



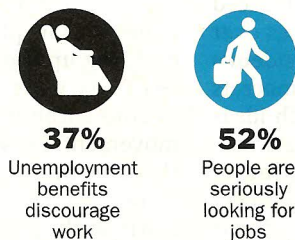
PROTESTS

How do you view the **protests on Wall Street and across the nation** against policies demonstrators say favor the rich, the government's bank bailout and the influence of money in our political system?



UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

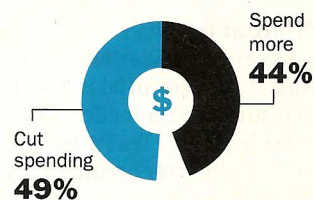
Do unemployment benefits **discourage people from seeking work**, or are most unemployed people **seriously looking for jobs**?



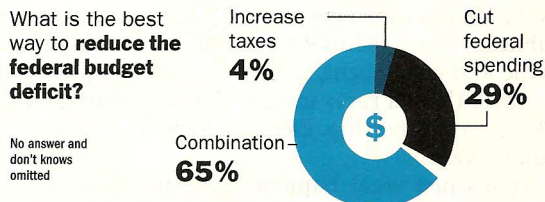
SPENDING AND TAXES

73% of people favor **raising taxes on those with annual incomes of \$1 million or more** to help cut the federal deficit

Is it more important for the government to **cut government spending** or to **spend more money** to stimulate the economy and create jobs?



What is the best way to **reduce the federal budget deficit**?



No answer and don't know omitted

TEA PARTY

What is your opinion of the **Tea Party movement**?

39% Don't know enough to say

33% Unfavorable

27% Favorable

Very: 24%
Somewhat: 9%

Very: 8%
Somewhat: 19%



This TIME/Abt SRBI poll was conducted by telephone Oct. 9–10 among a national random sample of 1,001 Americans ages 18 and older. The margin of error for the entire sample is ±3 percentage points. The full questionnaire and trend data may be found at www.srbi.com