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Congress grandstands, and America is not impressed

New polls reveal Americans more disappointed with Congress than ever as shutdown shows no sign of end

October 1, 2013 9:46PM ET

by **Peter Moskowitz** (/profiles/m/peter-moskowitz.html) - @ptrmsk (<http://www.twitter.com/p>)



A protester waves a sign in front of the Capitol in Washington D.C. on Oct. 1 2013. Jewel Samad/AFP/Getty Images

As Democrats and Republicans argued over the past few weeks (<http://america.aljazeera.com/topics/topic/issue/budget.html>) about which party better understands the will of the American people, they may have forgotten about a crucial element of politics: the will of the American people.

According to three recent polls, Americans are extremely dissatisfied with the job their representatives are doing, and most think the attempt to block the implementation of the Affordable Care Act -- also known as Obamacare -- by shutting down the government was a bad idea.

The polls -- one by CNN and ORC, one by Quinnipiac University, and one from health care industry report The Morning Consult -- paint a bleak picture for both parties, but especially for Republicans, which analysts say are viewed as mostly responsible for Washington's current quagmire.

"I just think that both parties are in such bad odor that no one is going to particularly benefit," said Karlyn Bowman, a poll analyst at the right-leaning American Enterprise Institute. "But there's no question that Republicans are getting a little more blame."

CNN's survey (http://www.cnn.com/2013/09/30/politics/cnn-poll-congress-approval/index.html?hpt=hp_t2) found that only 10 percent of Americans approve of the job Congress is doing, an all-time low for CNN's polls. The survey also found that 87 percent say they disapprove of the job the federal government is doing as a whole, an all-time high.

Democrats saw their approval drop more in recent weeks than Republicans, but still maintain higher favorability ratings. According to the CNN poll, 52 percent of Americans see Democrats in an unfavorable light, whereas 62 percent of Americans view Republicans unfavorably.

But even though the gridlock is negatively affecting both parties, it seems like the Republicans are getting the brunt of the blame.

The polls suggest that while Americans are increasingly ambivalent about the Affordable Care Act, most believe that Republicans should stop trying to repeal it.

Seventy-two percent of Americans oppose Republican efforts to shut down the government in order to delay the implementation of the ACA, according to the Quinnipiac poll (<http://www.quinnipiac.edu/institutes-and-centers/polling-institute/national/release->

detail?ReleaseID=1958) released on Tuesday; 22 percent support the effort.

So why, exactly, are politicians forcing a shutdown if Americans are so opposed to it?

Analysts say that House Republicans' shutdown strategy could be banking on the fact that a slight majority of Americans have negative views of the health care act signed into law during President Obama's first term.

But that's not a smart policy, according to Jon Krosnick (<http://comm.stanford.edu/faculty-krosnick/>), a social psychologist and communications and political science professor at Stanford University. Krosnick and his colleagues have studied people's understanding and perception of Obamacare since 2010 (PDF (<http://www.stanford.edu/dept/communication/faculty/krosnick/docs/2012/Health%20Care%20%20Knowledge%20and%20Favorability.pdf>)). Their studies found that as people come to know more about the law, they view it more favorably. That could make Republicans' absolutist stance against the ACA backfire, he says.

"You can imagine Congress saying, 'the public is moving in our direction, let's shut down the government,' ... But that's a bit of an 'extremization' of public opinion, and it's at their own peril," he said. "If only the American public were educated completely (on the ACA), then more than 70 percent would favor it."

Repealing or defunding "Obamacare" by linking it to the federal budget seems to be a particularly noxious proposition for most Americans, regardless of their opinion of the law.

According to The Morning Consult report (PDF (<http://www.scribd.com/doc/171715723/TMC-September-2013-Tracking-Poll-Toplines>)), only 7 percent of registered voters think the law should be delayed or defunded.

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Karlyn Bowman says that's because most Americans, whether for or against this particular law, usually believe in upholding the law in general.

"Americans don't think much about process, but when they do, they have a sense of fairness," she said. "Americans don't want to upend a Supreme Court decision."

That's why Bowman and other analysts say they're confused about the current situation in Washington. They say there's no perceptible political advantage to be had in the current budget debacle.

And they say it's not only political parties that are suffering because of the shutdown and showdown over Obamacare. Americans are too. Jon Krosnick says that the more politicians rely on rhetoric and political maneuvering to run Washington, the less people actually learn and care about laws like the ACA.

Karlyn Bowman is also worried about the effect of the shutdown on Americans' involvement in politics, saying that if it continues, "people will just start to tune out."

It seems as if that may already be happening.

Diego Manuel, a 26-year-old artist from Denver says he used to go to protests and read a lot about politics, but has become increasingly apathetic over the last few years.

"Of course I still care (about politics), but i don't go out of my way to get involved anymore" he said. "The debates have come to such a standstill that it feels like I can't root for either side ... that's just something I've gotten used to."

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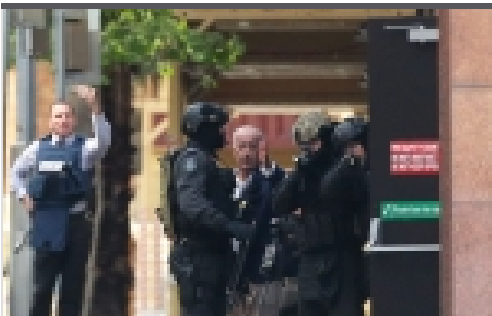
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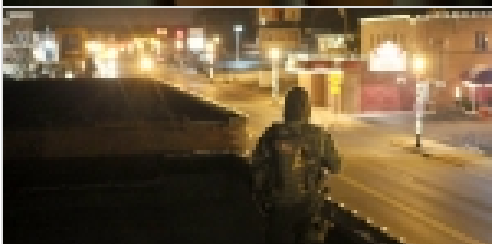
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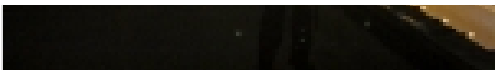


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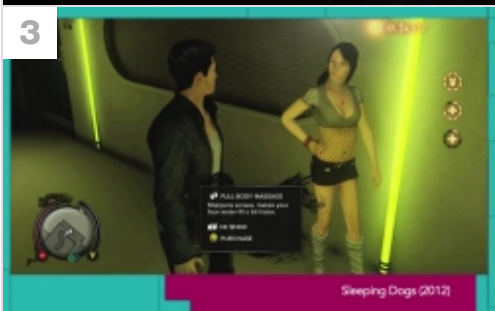
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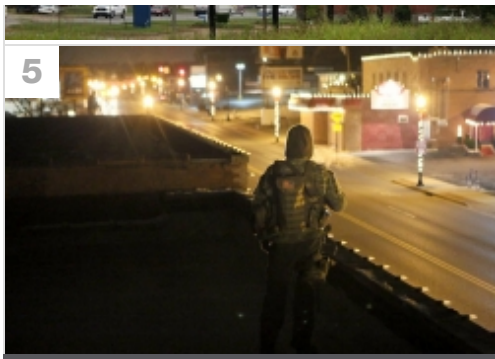


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Crystal DeVelis

438 days ago

Problem is the whole concept of the "Affordable Care Act" is unamerican. How can the government force me to buy something I don't want? The government didn't build the healthcare infrastructure and should not be allowed to tax me to use it. The premiums are not affordable (as those who have looked carefully and read the fine print know). If you add up the premiums and the out of pocket deductions, it is much MORE expensive for most, and the unintended consequence is that while insurance coverage will be available to all (except those exempted from it!), it looks like actual health care may become more scarce. The administration's reaction to shutdown (because the predominantly democrat senate would not accept a compromise of simply eliminating the exemptions) was to make it as painful for the public as possible. Now we have paid armed guards keeping us ifrom our own parks and memorials. Doesn't that tell you something about the direction our government is going? I support this fight wholeheartedly. We might just find we can live with a lot less "government."

Q

REPLY

0



Benet Garcia

439 days ago

Republicans.

(Do we really need to say anything more?)

Ω

REPLY

0



John Allard

439 days ago

I've got an idea! Let's send Congress somewhere really scary, like the ghetto or North Korea and we'll tell them the can come home AFTER the agree to a budget. You know what I saw when Rand Paul or Ted Cruz talked for over 20 while Congress was in session, a monstrously disgusting waste of Americans time. If you the American people are fed up, call your congressmen TODAY, email, write, and politely and diligently explain you want results or you'll vote for someone else since you aren't being represented. If the gvm't were a body, Congress would the malfunctioning digestive track that nothing can pass through. Blockage of the Republic.

Ω

REPLY

1 reply

+2



Robert Maiorana

439 days ago

A more reasonable thing would be to lock them all inside of The Capitol Building until they get it passed. They can have one big sleep over, complete with Pizza and soda and force them to watch Michael Moore movies like Sicko, Capitalism: A Love Story and Canadian Bacon all night!

Ω

REPLY

0



Clem Henson

439 days ago

Here's some simple math. There three entities that make laws and implement them. The House, Senate and the Presidency. Having control of ONE of the three DOES NOT make a majority. Therefore, the

House DOES NOT represent the majority of Americans.

Ω

REPLY

2 replies

+2



Ed Griffin

439 days ago

And it's just a small fraction of the House membership. They don't really believe in democracy and I think of them as terrorists.

Ω

REPLY

+3



Brendan Comfort

439 days ago

The President does not make laws. The President is an office of the executive branch. Only Congress has the power to legislate (with rare exceptions such as executive order, etc.)

Ω

REPLY

+1



Robert Conte

439 days ago

America has truly become sickening. It's very sad when the people who get up and go to work everyday won't give the majority of their money to the government and who ignore the plight of the lazy people who view their freebies as an entitlement. Truly sad.

Ω

REPLY

1 reply

-9



Bryan Keller

439 days ago

Please excuse me then while I take on tens of thousands of dollars of personal debt so that I can receive an education and *hope* to get a good job out of it while my friend who moved back to Australia gets paid by the government (through taxes) to earn his physics degree, make more money than me, and pay back his government's investment in him tenfold throughout his career. Also I'm extremely glad that if something happens and I need to go to the hospital I'll likely have to drop out of college and work at McDonald's attempting to

avoid bankruptcy because I can no longer pay my college bills and my medical bills at the same time. Or perhaps we should have a small safety net for the people because sometimes things out of our control happen and we need some help? By the way, Obamacare also helps you out more than you'd think, as a large portion of it deals with preventing insurance companies from scamming you, as has been traditional of them.

(Also, were I to drop out and work at a McDonald's in Aus I'd still be making \$15/hr, probably more than you, and certainly more than I am with only half a degree finished.)

Ω

REPLY

+1



Miklos Legrady

439 days ago

American ethos demands that the smart, the strong and the rich should get rewarded while the poor, the weak, those who lack intelligence, and those who are unable to help themselves should suffer.

Ω

REPLY

-3



Craig Leslie

439 days ago

here's how this will end: after @ a week we'll hear from wall street. of course, it'll be through the mouths of politicians, but you'll know it's them by the reversal of content. YOU can make a difference, if you have millions of dollars.

Ω

REPLY

1 reply

0



Ed Griffin

439 days ago

Already starting to happen: WSJ, Chamber of Commerce, etc.

Ω

REPLY

0

gevalien

439 days ago

The fact that Congress is only beholden to the moneyed interest that have absolutely nothing at stake is

what I perceive as the biggest problem, that and apathy. Corporations are not people and when Congress will only work for the ones who give fat political donations then we will never have a government that works as it should for the people and by the people and our 'democracy' will have failed. The money must get out of American politics.

🔒

REPLY

1 reply

+8



Yvonne Sinclair

439 days ago

I agree, corporations are not people and so by definition, congress is not working for the people. What a beautiful idea of getting money out of politics. Thanks for this one.

🔒

REPLY

0



Crystal DeVelis

439 days ago

That's pure hogwash. The congress passed a complete budget and sent it to the senate with a provision to defund Obamacare. When rejected, they sent it back with a provision to delay it a year. Senate rejected that. Finally they sent it back with a provision to eliminate the (illegal) exemptions to Obamacare. The Senate rejected that. Now the House has now proposed to send piecemeal bills to the Senate to fund important parts of the government. The Senate has, without even seeing the bill, rejected that offer. Who's the obstructionist here? The Senate. The Democratically controlled Senate. Americans elected a majority of republicans to Congress in 2010 with the mission to scale down the size of government and repeal Obamacare. Thank heaven they are doing their jobs. Yes, it's painful. But it has to be done.

🔒

REPLY

6 replies

-7



Craig Leslie

439 days ago

drink the cool-aid. if i don't win at a game can i hold the other team, and my own hostage until everyone agrees to change the score we already have? the dems and reasonable repubs have not done this over their issues. no government shut down for gun control or immigration reform etc..... here's my biggest problem: on the excuse of fiscal responsibility they are costing us unmeasurably in order to pander uneffectively. and they know it. who else can abandon their own ideals and act like it's a victory? do you not like food safety? regulation of energy cost or monopolies? medicine testing?. cancer research? government is just people, just like you. it is Not us & them, just US!

Ω

REPLY

+3



Jack Shedd

439 days ago

While yes, it can be argued that the Senate is being obstructionist, you cannot argue on one hand that the House was elected with a majority, and is thus "only doing their job", while ignoring that the Senate was ALSO elected to do their job.

Secondly, it should be remembered that, while Republicans hold a majority in the House, they did not receive a majority of the popular vote.

Ω

REPLY

+4



David Jost

439 days ago

You misunderstand negotiation. Negotiation does not necessarily mean that you automatically find the center between two viewpoints, because you have to rationally scrutinize the other side's demands. If 40 Democratic senators refused to approve any budget whatsoever unless it made enormous political concessions to them (say, a single-payer system) you would be absolutely furious, and basically rightfully so (though you would be wrong to oppose such a system, it's obviously better than ours). They would be blackmailing the entire country and endangering the entire global economy to force an extreme agenda. That's exactly what your Republicans are doing. The law was duly passed, Americans who actually understand the provisions like it, it's based on a Republican model of private health insurance and Republican ideas from the 1990's, and most Americans want you to stand down, and not us (look at the polls). Grow up!

Ω

REPLY

+6



Sam Wellman

439 days ago

Actually the American people voted overwhelmingly for a Democratic House. Democratic candidates nationwide received 1.17 million more votes than did the Republican candidates. The only reason the Rethuglicans won more seats is because of political gerrymandering.

Ω

REPLY

+4



Indraneel Kasmalkar

439 days ago

Tell me something - forget Republicans and Democrats. Do you agree with the strategy that - if we don't get something that we want we will shut down the government? Would you like the next president to say, I want to expand the powers of the NSA even more and, unless I don't get that I will not sign any budget? The ACA, whether you like it or not, was passed through both houses and deemed legitimate by the supreme court. You can't have the Republicans take the government as a hostage to repeal an already established law - that's blackmail. By allowing them to do so would set a precedent that can destroy the political process.

Ω

REPLY

1 reply

+4



Yvonne Sinclair

439 days ago

Who allowed them to get away with it?

Ω

REPLY

0



Quevin Singh

439 days ago

Hit the ail rt on the Head! Great post Fredrick, I couldn't say it any better.

Ω

REPLY

+1



Van Benno

439 days ago

Why would Republicans focus on Healthcare when the real constitution-breakers were the NDAA and Patriot act. Where's the rally to repeal those? Apparently they don't care THAT much about "big government" intruding into our lives.

Q

REPLY

+7



D G

440 days ago

Very well said Mr. Fredrick
I think America is in such a deep sleep.
It will be too late when an if they do wake up.

Q

REPLY

0

FredrickWLee

440 days ago

Interesting that the majority of Americans, regardless of political background, are disappointed in how Congress operates. Interesting because the majority of Americans either choose not to vote or vote for the same people who have served multiple terms. It comes to a point where America needs its own revolt in the same manner as in the Middle East and Europe without the violence or destruction. Unfortunately, most Americans are too focused on distractions that carry about the state of their community, city, county, state, and country. Seems like those in the Middle East and Europe are far more politically savvy than Americans and are willing to throw politicians out if they are not doing their job, regardless of party affiliation. Wake up America!

Q

REPLY

2 replies

+6

RobertC94597

440 days ago

Fredrick - Well said.

Q

REPLY

0

ElCapitahn

439 days ago

If there were political revolution that removed the main representatives that are involved in the shutdown, (Ted Cruz, Harry Reid, Nancy Pelosi, John Boehner etc.) then how would they be replaced? Would there seats remain vacant until a replacement is voted in or would a

person be appointed as interim rep?

Ω

REPLY

0

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