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## Obama's 47 Percent Approval Lowest of Any President at This Point

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Jimmy Carter, Gerald Ford and even Richard Nixon all had higher approval ratings 10-and-a-half months into their presidencies. Obama's immediate predecessor, President George W. Bush, had an approval rating of 86 percent, or 39 points higher than Obama at this stage. Bush's support came shortly after he launched the war in Afghanistan in response to the terror attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs said he doesn't "put a lot of stock" in the survey by Gallup, which has conducted presidential approval polls since 1938, longer than any other organization.

"If I was a heart patient and Gallup was my EKG, I'd visit my doctor," Gibbs said in response to questions from Fox. "I'm sure a six-year-old with a Crayon could do something not unlike that. I don't put a lot of stake in, never have, in the EKG that is daily Gallup trend. I don't pay a lot of attention to the meaninglessness of it."

Gallup Editor-in-Chief Frank Newport responded: "Gibbs said that if Gallup were his EKG, he would visit his doctor. Well, I think the doctor might ask him what's going on in his life that would cause his EKG to be fluctuating so much. There is, in fact, a lot going on at the moment -- the health care bill, the jobs summit, the Copenhagen climate conference and Afghanistan."

The new low comes as Obama struggles to overhaul the nation's health care system and escalates America's involvement in the Afghanistan war. He is also presiding over a deep and prolonged recession, with unemployment at 10 percent.

"There's no doubt Obama's 47 percent is mainly a result of the continuing bad economy," said Larry Sabato, director of the University of Virginia's Center for Politics. "But there is also a growing concern about government spending and debt, and a sense that Obama is trying to do too much, too soon."

He added: "President Obama has reason to be concerned about his ratings. Even in tough times, presidents have usually been able to stay above the critical 50 percent mark in the first year, when the public is most inclined to give the new incumbent the benefit of the doubt."

Obama officials have not always shown disdain for Gallup. During last year's presidential campaign, Obama adviser David Plouffe, trumpeted "the latest Gallup poll" to reporters because it showed that 53 percent of Americans did not find Obama Democratic rival, Hillary Clinton, "trustworthy."

When Gallup began taking presidential approval polls 71 years ago, Franklin Roosevelt had been president for more than five years. During his remaining time in office, his job approval rating never fell below 48 percent.

The next 11 presidents, both Democrats and Republicans, all had higher job approval ratings than Obama at this stage of their tenure. Their ratings were:

- George W. Bush, 86 percent
- Bill Clinton, 52 percent
- George H.W. Bush, 71 percent
- Ronald Reagan, 49 percent
- Jimmy Carter, 57 percent
- Gerald Ford, 52 percent
- Richard Nixon, 59 percent
- Lyndon Johnson, 74 percent
- John Kennedy, 77 percent
- Dwight Eisenhower, 69 percent
- Harry Truman, 49 percent

The poll is an average of a three-day tracking of 1,529 adults taken Dec. 4-6. It has a margin of error of 3 percentage points.

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