

# THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY FOUNDATION

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## Public Confidence in the State of the Nation

Public attitudes have changed significantly since our last report in July, 2009. Among the most striking changes are:

- Public Confidence that the country is moving in the right direction has declined sharply.
- There has been a significant decline in the percentage of Americans who approve of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as President.
- Jobs and other economic issues are the most important public concerns of a majority of Americans. By contrast, only 16% consider health care reform to be most important and fewer than 2 out of 10 mention either War, Iraq, Afghanistan, Defense, Terrorism or Foreign Policy.
- More than 3 out of 4 Americans believe the condition of the economy is bad.
- Rising levels of unemployment dampen peoples' hopes for the near term, as does the prospect of huge ever-growing government deficits.
- Mistrust of the business community has increased, supporting stronger regulation.

In summary, most Americans are dissatisfied with the state of the economy. They seem to be telling us that time spent on other issues is distracting our leaders from responding effectively to their concerns about the impact of the weak economy on their personal lives.

The findings of our last report in July, 2009 indicated that President Obama was still in the "honeymoon phase" enjoyed by all our recent Presidents. In that phase, what counts most is Presidential rhetoric: how forcefully and clearly the President articulates goals and policies that match the public's own values and objectives.

The honeymoon phase has now given way to a new phase of public expectations. In this new phase, public confidence in the President and the State of the Nation will be sustained only if the public believes that the President and his Administration are producing positive results on the economic issues that concern them most. Despite much disappointment in the Administration's performance in 2009, most Americans hope President Obama's policies will succeed in the future.

Public Confidence in the State of the Nation is the most important indicator of the health of our Democracy. This report is designed to provide a barometer of public confidence based on data gathered by America's major public opinion research organizations. The report was compiled under the supervision of the Chairman of the Foundation, Norton Garfinkle and the Chairman of the Foundation's Board of Advisors, Daniel Yankelovich, America's foremost analyst of public opinion.

The complete report is available at [www.tfadf.org](http://www.tfadf.org)

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