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NATIONAL: OBAMA MIDDLE CLASS FOCUS TOO LITTLE TOO LATE?

West Long Branch, NJ – Last week, Pres. Barack Obama announced a major refocus on the country’s middle class. The latest national *Monmouth University Poll*, though, finds he has limited credibility with that group.

The American public is split on the veracity of Pres. Obama’s announcement that he wants to refocus the remainder of his term on helping the middle class. Less than half (46%) believe the president when he says this, while exactly half (50%) do not believe him. The vast majority of Democrats (78%) take the president at his word, but nearly all Republicans (87%) do not. Independents tend to be more skeptical (54%) than trusting (42%) of the president’s claim.

Looking back over his term so far, Americans put the middle class at the bottom of the list for groups who have been helped by Obama’s policies. Among five different groups asked about in the poll, Wall Street bankers are the most likely to be seen as doing well under Obama, with 44% of Americans saying this group has benefited a lot and 26% saying they benefited a little from the president’s policies. Wealthy families (35% a lot and 31% a little) and health insurance companies (34% a lot and 27% a little) are next in line as perceived beneficiaries of Obama’s policies. Just 20% of Americans say poor families have benefited a lot and 39% say they have benefited a little during the Obama era.

Groups Helped by Pres. Obama		
<i>Have benefited...</i>	<i>A Lot</i>	<i>Not At All</i>
Wall Street bankers	44%	14%
Wealthy families	35%	23%
Health insurance companies	34%	26%
Poor families	20%	37%
Middle class families	12%	46%

Middle class families, though, stand at the bottom of the list – below both rich and poor. Only 12% of Americans say the middle class has benefited a lot from Obama’s policies and 39% say it has benefited a little. In fact, nearly half (46%) say that middle class families have not benefited at all. This is significantly higher than the number who say no benefits have been seen by Wall Street (14%), wealthy families (23%), health insurers (26%), or even poor families (37%).

“Given Pres. Obama’s track record with the middle class, this new focus may be seen as too little too late,” said Patrick Murray, director of the Monmouth University Polling Institute in West Long Branch, New Jersey. “Of course, some of the problem may lie in the acrimonious relationship between the President and the House of Representatives.”

In spite of perceptions of his policies to date, a majority (55%) of Americans think it is at least somewhat likely that Pres. Obama will propose policies to help the middle class. On the other hand, just 30% say it is likely that Congress will enact any of these measures. There is a partisan divide on the president’s intentions – 84% of Democrats, 50% of independents, and 24% of Republicans say Obama is likely to propose policies to help the middle class. There is no such gap when it comes to the probability that Congress will act on such policies – just 31% of Democrats, 28% of independents, and 32% of Republicans say Congressional action is likely.

Pres. Obama outlined six cornerstones for his new middle-class policy. The Monmouth University Poll finds that Americans feel some are more important than the others. Specifically, about 3-in-4 say that health care costs (79%), being able to save for retirement (75%), and a lack of jobs (73%) are major problems facing the middle class right now. Of somewhat lesser importance are access to good, affordable education (56% major problem) and housing and mortgage costs (52% major problem). Less than half (46%) say that inequality and a lack of opportunity for certain groups are a major problem for the middle class. There are only very slight partisan differences in rating these items as major problems facing the middle class.

The poll also found that 42% of Americans approve of Pres. Obama’s overall job performance while 51% disapprove. Just 28% say the country is headed in the right direction and 63% say it is on the wrong track.

The latest *Monmouth University Poll* was conducted by telephone with a national random sample of 1,012 adults age 18 and older from July 25 to 30, 2013. This sample has a margin of error of ± 3.1 percent. The poll was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute in West Long Branch, New Jersey.

DATA TABLES

The questions referred to in this release are as follows:

(* Some columns may not add to 100% due to rounding.)

1. Would you say things in the country are going in the right direction, or have they gotten off on the wrong track?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			RACE	
		Yes	No	Rep	Ind	Dem	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	White	Black/Hispanic
Right direction	28%	27%	32%	7%	23%	53%	28%	29%	38%	24%	25%	21%	47%
Wrong track	63%	66%	52%	91%	67%	38%	63%	62%	51%	67%	69%	72%	41%
(VOL) Depends	5%	5%	7%	2%	6%	6%	4%	6%	7%	5%	3%	4%	7%
(VOL) Don't know	4%	2%	8%	0%	4%	4%	5%	2%	5%	3%	2%	3%	5%

2. Do you approve or disapprove of the job Barack Obama is doing as president?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			RACE	
		Yes	No	Rep	Ind	Dem	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	White	Black/Hispanic
Approve	42%	41%	47%	7%	37%	75%	39%	46%	50%	40%	37%	33%	67%
Disapprove	51%	54%	42%	90%	54%	21%	54%	49%	42%	53%	58%	61%	28%
(VOL) No opinion	6%	5%	10%	3%	9%	4%	7%	6%	8%	6%	4%	6%	5%

3. How much have each of the following groups benefited from President Obama's policies so far. [READ ITEM] – Have they benefited a lot, a little, or not at all? [ITEMS WERE ROTATED]

Middle class families

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			RACE	
		Yes	No	Rep	Ind	Dem	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	White	Black/Hispanic
Lot	12%	11%	15%	3%	9%	23%	10%	14%	17%	11%	10%	9%	17%
Little	39%	38%	44%	19%	40%	54%	39%	40%	43%	40%	36%	37%	50%
Not at all	46%	49%	37%	77%	48%	22%	48%	44%	37%	49%	52%	51%	32%
(VOL) Don't know	2%	2%	4%	1%	3%	2%	3%	2%	3%	1%	3%	3%	1%

Wealthy families

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			RACE	
		Yes	No	Rep	Ind	Dem	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	White	Black/Hispanic
Lot	35%	34%	42%	24%	39%	40%	36%	35%	36%	33%	40%	33%	42%
Little	31%	31%	33%	25%	31%	37%	30%	32%	34%	33%	28%	33%	30%
Not at all	23%	26%	16%	42%	20%	15%	24%	22%	21%	27%	21%	25%	20%
(VOL) Don't know	10%	10%	9%	9%	10%	9%	9%	11%	10%	8%	11%	10%	8%

Poor families

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			RACE	
		Yes	No	Rep	Ind	Dem	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	White	Black/Hispanic
Lot	20%	19%	22%	20%	15%	26%	17%	22%	23%	20%	16%	20%	20%
Little	39%	41%	32%	30%	38%	46%	39%	39%	44%	37%	37%	37%	47%
Not at all	37%	36%	41%	46%	41%	24%	39%	35%	29%	39%	42%	38%	31%
(VOL) Don't know	4%	5%	4%	3%	6%	3%	5%	4%	4%	4%	5%	4%	2%

Wall Street bankers

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			RACE	
		Yes	No	Rep	Ind	Dem	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	White	Black/Hispanic
Lot	44%	44%	44%	41%	51%	38%	53%	35%	38%	47%	47%	44%	45%
Little	26%	26%	25%	22%	23%	33%	23%	29%	31%	24%	22%	24%	28%
Not at all	14%	14%	13%	22%	10%	12%	13%	15%	12%	15%	14%	14%	12%
(VOL) Don't know	17%	16%	18%	15%	16%	18%	12%	21%	20%	14%	16%	17%	15%

Health insurance companies

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			RACE	
		Yes	No	Rep	Ind	Dem	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	White	Black/Hispanic
Lot	34%	36%	27%	29%	39%	32%	39%	30%	29%	36%	38%	34%	37%
Little	27%	27%	25%	25%	21%	36%	24%	29%	31%	27%	24%	26%	29%
Not at all	26%	24%	32%	38%	24%	20%	24%	27%	26%	25%	25%	28%	18%
(VOL) Don't know	13%	13%	15%	8%	15%	12%	12%	14%	14%	12%	13%	13%	15%

4. Do you generally believe or not believe President Obama when he says he wants to focus the remainder of his term on helping the middle class?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			RACE	
		Yes	No	Rep	Ind	Dem	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	White	Black/Hispanic
Believe	46%	46%	48%	11%	42%	78%	43%	50%	55%	46%	40%	38%	68%
Not believe	50%	51%	47%	87%	54%	19%	53%	47%	42%	52%	55%	59%	28%
(VOL) Don't know	4%	3%	5%	1%	4%	3%	4%	3%	3%	2%	5%	3%	4%

5. How likely is it that President Obama will propose policies to help the middle class – very, somewhat, not too, or not at all likely?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			RACE	
		Yes	No	Rep	Ind	Dem	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	White	Black/Hispanic
Very likely	25%	26%	24%	5%	20%	47%	25%	25%	28%	26%	23%	20%	41%
Somewhat likely	30%	28%	36%	19%	30%	37%	27%	33%	39%	29%	22%	26%	39%
Not too likely	15%	15%	16%	15%	21%	7%	16%	13%	16%	14%	16%	18%	9%
Not at all likely	29%	30%	22%	60%	28%	8%	30%	27%	17%	29%	37%	35%	11%
(VOL) Don't know	1%	1%	2%	0%	2%	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	2%	2%	0%

6. How likely is it that Congress will enact policies to help the middle class – very, somewhat, not too, or not at all likely?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			RACE	
		Yes	No	Rep	Ind	Dem	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	White	Black/Hispanic
Very likely	4%	4%	5%	2%	3%	7%	4%	5%	5%	4%	4%	3%	8%
Somewhat likely	26%	25%	32%	30%	25%	24%	26%	26%	34%	22%	23%	23%	32%
Not too likely	30%	30%	28%	27%	29%	34%	28%	31%	30%	31%	28%	30%	27%
Not at all likely	38%	39%	32%	38%	41%	34%	40%	36%	29%	42%	42%	42%	31%
(VOL) Don't know	2%	2%	3%	3%	3%	0%	2%	2%	2%	1%	3%	2%	2%

7. Please tell me whether each of the following is a major problem, minor problem or not a problem facing the middle class. [ITEMS WERE ROTATED]

Lack of jobs

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			RACE	
		Yes	No	Rep	Ind	Dem	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	White	Black/Hispanic
Major problem	73%	75%	65%	78%	72%	70%	72%	74%	69%	71%	79%	74%	68%
Minor problem	22%	20%	27%	17%	22%	25%	23%	20%	25%	23%	17%	22%	25%
Not a problem	5%	4%	7%	4%	6%	3%	5%	4%	6%	6%	2%	4%	6%
(VOL) Don't know	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	2%	0%	1%

Access to good, affordable education

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			RACE	
		Yes	No	Rep	Ind	Dem	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	White	Black/Hispanic
Major problem	56%	56%	57%	55%	55%	58%	54%	58%	57%	55%	57%	57%	55%
Minor problem	29%	29%	29%	30%	28%	30%	29%	29%	29%	29%	29%	29%	30%
Not a problem	13%	14%	13%	13%	16%	10%	16%	11%	14%	13%	12%	13%	12%
(VOL) Don't know	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%	2%	1%	2%	0%	2%	2%	1%	3%

Housing and mortgage costs

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			RACE	
		Yes	No	Rep	Ind	Dem	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	White	Black/Hispanic
Major problem	52%	50%	58%	50%	52%	52%	47%	56%	50%	51%	53%	49%	58%
Minor problem	36%	37%	32%	38%	35%	38%	39%	33%	40%	38%	30%	39%	33%
Not a problem	9%	10%	7%	8%	10%	8%	11%	7%	7%	9%	11%	9%	8%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	3%	4%	4%	3%	2%	3%	3%	2%	1%	5%	3%	1%

Being able to save for retirement

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			RACE	
		Yes	No	Rep	Ind	Dem	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	White	Black/Hispanic
Major problem	75%	76%	69%	77%	76%	71%	70%	79%	68%	78%	77%	77%	70%
Minor problem	18%	18%	19%	17%	17%	22%	21%	15%	25%	15%	16%	18%	22%
Not a problem	5%	4%	7%	5%	5%	5%	6%	4%	6%	5%	4%	4%	6%
(VOL) Don't know	2%	1%	5%	1%	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%	2%	3%	2%	2%

Health care costs

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			RACE	
		Yes	No	Rep	Ind	Dem	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	White	Black/Hispanic
Major problem	79%	80%	77%	88%	78%	75%	79%	80%	74%	81%	82%	83%	75%
Minor problem	14%	14%	14%	10%	16%	16%	13%	15%	19%	14%	12%	13%	16%
Not a problem	5%	4%	6%	2%	5%	6%	6%	4%	6%	4%	5%	3%	9%
(VOL) Don't know	2%	1%	3%	0%	1%	2%	2%	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%

Inequality and a lack of opportunity for certain groups

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			RACE	
		Yes	No	Rep	Ind	Dem	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	White	Black/Hispanic
Major problem	46%	47%	42%	45%	42%	52%	42%	49%	39%	49%	49%	46%	45%
Minor problem	31%	31%	31%	32%	35%	26%	34%	29%	38%	28%	28%	33%	30%
Not a problem	16%	16%	18%	19%	17%	15%	18%	15%	19%	18%	13%	15%	19%
(VOL) Don't know	7%	6%	9%	5%	6%	8%	7%	7%	5%	5%	10%	6%	6%

The *Monmouth University Poll* was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute from July 25 to 30, 2013 with a national random sample of 1,012 adults age 18 and older, including 708 via live interview on a landline telephone and 304 via live interview on a cell phone. Monmouth is responsible for all aspects of the survey questionnaire design, data weighting and analysis. For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling has a maximum margin of plus or minus 3.1 percentage points. Sampling error increases as the sample size decreases, so statements based on various population subgroups, such as separate figures reported by gender or party identification, are subject to more error than are statements based on the total sample. In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

POLL DEMOGRAPHICS (weighted)			
22% Rep	49% Male	31% 18-34	67% White
45% Ind	51% Female	37% 35-54	11% Black
33% Dem		32% 55+	15% Hispanic
			7% Asian/Other

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			RACE	
		Yes	No	Rep	Ind	Dem	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	White	Black/Hispanic
Unweighted N	1012	850	162	243	450	294	505	507	190	326	472	769	157
moe	3.1%	3.4%	7.7%	6.3%	4.6%	5.7%	4.4%	4.4%	7.1%	5.4%	4.5%	3.5%	7.8%

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