

Jump In Jobless Rate Puts Spotlight On Obama

by KEVIN WHITELAW



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Jim Watson/AFP/Getty Images

President Obama makes a statement at the White House on Friday.

November 6, 2009

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Economists had been predicting for months that the unemployment rate would soon cross the psychologically important 10 percent mark, but few expected it to happen quite so quickly.

The official confirmation on Friday that [unemployment jumped](#) to 10.2 percent last month — hitting double digits for the first time since 1983 — was another blow for an Obama administration already reeling from some high-profile [Democratic losses](#) in key election races this week.

Republicans have been celebrating gubernatorial victories in the Democratic-leaning state of New

Jersey and the battleground state of Virginia.

The GOP, which has tried to make jobs a central theme of its rhetoric, could be well-poised going into the midterm congressional elections next year, particularly with unemployment projected to remain high.

"In the short run, it's going to be a benefit for Republicans," says Joseph Bafumi, a political scientist at Dartmouth College. "They are probably looking at a midterm election where they can pick up a few seats."

James Campbell, a political scientist at the University at Buffalo, says the Republican gains in 2010 could be substantial — as high as 15 to 20 seats.

"From my research, it looks like President Obama's approval rating would have to be in the mid-60s to expect no losses," says Campbell, who has designed an election forecasting model related to economic conditions. "At this point, he's barely above 50 percent in recent polls, and I'm not sure Democrats could count on his approval ratings being much higher going into next year's midterms."

At the same time, other polling experts caution against overstating the benefits for the GOP at this point.

"Obama's marks are going down on handling the economy, but there is no indication that Republicans' marks are going up," says Karlyn Bowman, who studies public opinion trends at the conservative American Enterprise Institute. "There is not a lot of confidence in Congress, either in Democrats or Republicans, so it's a pox on all their houses."

Bracing For The News

The jobless figure stands in contrast to other economic indicators that suggest the economy is beginning to turn around. Gross domestic product grew in the third quarter for the first time in more than a year, suggesting the deep recession may be ending.

But the new unemployment data are sparking concern that the recovery in jobs may be lagging even further than usual behind the broader economic recovery. The unemployment rate is expected to continue rising into early next year and remain high through most of 2010.

"Psychologically, hitting 10 percent is an important marker, but I'm not sure it is for public opinion, in part because Americans have been so pessimistic about the jobs environment in their own communities for a long time," says Bowman.

President Obama acknowledged Friday that the jobs number was "sobering."

"We have to continue to pursue measures that will create new jobs," he told reporters. "I will not rest

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- Karlyn Bowman, American Enterprise Institute

until America prospers once again."

The White House had been bracing for this development for a while, and the response last week to news that that the economy had started to grow again was noticeably restrained.

White House economists have credited the stimulus package passed in February with helping to stimulate economic growth, and they point out that its effects will continue to boost the economy well into next year.

Impact On Health Care Vote?

The job news could also complicate Obama's agenda for a massive health care overhaul, which faces a historic vote in the House this weekend.

"It has the effect of crowding out health care as a public concern," says Campbell. "The public's focus is very much on the economy."

Republicans have long been blasting the Obama administration for its spending plans — including its health care proposals.

"More debt, more spending clearly has not worked — particularly in a time of double-digit unemployment," Senate GOP leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky said on Friday.

Still, experts cautioned that it is important not to read too much into the jobless numbers when it comes to Obama's own chances at re-election in 2012.

"Democrats will probably win the White House in 2012, with Obama at the head of the ticket, because the economy will probably be in a job-full recovery rather than a jobless recovery," says Bafumi.

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ohan karagozian (okaragozian) wrote:

We're getting way too ahead of ourselves. The man, Obama, is trying to do the right thing. What he did is helping. Everybody is saying that what he did is not helping enough. Well, that means another round of stimulus guys - but this time more focused on the type of jobs lost in the first place. Specifically, if we have 14 million unemployed plumbers, you don't want to have a stimulus to help 14 million painters. Get the info on who lost what job and then make the stimulus fit that mold.

See, what everybody is missing is this: It's not that what Obama is doing is NOT helping, its that what he is doing isn't helping enough. So that means he needs to do more, but that he is on the right track. More stiumulus.

Also remember that there is no way we as a country can comepeete in a world where there is a labor force getting paid \$1 a day unless everybody here is willing to work for \$1 a day. So just remember that every time you vote republican, you are voting to work \$1 a day. Republican = business and Democrat = Labor.

The only reason we are missing 14 million jobs here in the USA is because there are 14 million jobs elsewhere in the world. It's as simple as that.

Monday, November 09, 2009 8:42:22 AM

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[Recommend \(0\)](#)[Report abuse](#)**Wolf Pack (ThisIsMyBoomstick)** wrote:

I don't even have words to say right now. Maybe angry, dissapointed, betrayed, hopeless.
 Sunday, November 08, 2009 5:24:49 PM

[Recommend \(0\)](#)[Report abuse](#)**Joe Nathan (Joe_the_inventor)** wrote:

@Michael,

Go easy on Obamalamadingdong. He needs to have at least one job in his life time that exceeds 1 year.

Sunday, November 08, 2009 1:41:39 PM

[Recommend \(0\)](#)[Report abuse](#)**Michael Hessler (Michael_Hessler)** wrote:

Obama is the one who should be unemployed. The question is how will Obama's term end? Will he make it to the end election or will he be thrown out of office? Is Obama constitutionally eligible to serve?

Will the eligibility issue be allowed to have its day in court or will Obama be able to block the investigation? Will his actions in office by his undoing? His poll ratings seem to be in free fall.

Saturday, November 07, 2009 10:31:24 PM

[Recommend \(0\)](#)[Report abuse](#)**myrton woolen (mew)** wrote:

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Saturday, November 07, 2009 8:46:32 PM

[Recommend \(0\)](#)[Report abuse](#)**John Durgin (MoshupTrail)** wrote:

Chris -

I was dissappointed with Obama from the beginning. Instead of being thoughtful and intelligent about the recovery, he went right along with the big-money, big-business, elite. Bush would have done the same thing. We wanted change. Not status quo.

Saturday, November 07, 2009 7:07:00 PM

[Recommend \(1\)](#)[Report abuse](#)**Chris Maciel (everyone)** wrote:

It's important to remember that Obama has been president for 11 months so he could not possibly be responsible for the economic crisis that some say has been coming since the '80s.

We must maintain a sense of realism if we are going to behave like mature adults.

The opposition will say anything and do anything to sway voters: will we allow ourselves to be misled as voters were in 2004 by Bush and Cheney saying Americans would 'safer' with his continued leadership.

If it makes any difference please remember we now have a leader who is a thoughtful, intelligent person, dedicated to serving the country.

When you hear him speak you can hear a human voice, not because he's a good speaker and charming as opponents claim but because he is a Good Person.

Surely this is better than the leadership we've had in the recent past.

The president is not, and never can, give people jobs.

What he can do is encourage Congress to create programs across the country that will provide incentives for private companies to create projects and hire new employees: he's already doing that in ways that are good for all, including the environment.

Saturday, November 07, 2009 6:46:22 PM

[Recommend \(1\)](#)[Report abuse](#)**Sam Adams (SamAdams)** wrote:

Real unemployment is 17.5%.

The CBO just came back today with a 3trillion figure for Pelosicare.

The dollar is at all time lows relative to world currencies and we are having to literally print money to buy our own bonds because they are being shunned around the world. Only the Chinese have to keep buying and when they stop, we are done.

Wake up fellow liberal NPR readers. This is not about party, this is about going down the toilet.

Saturday, November 07, 2009 6:24:04 PM

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Michael Difani (emdee) wrote:

Anyone recall the CETA program under Pres Ford in the fall of 1974, 35 long years ago? The UI rate was over 11 percent then and again under Reagan in the fall of 1982. I thought the Comprehensive Education Training Act was very effective and put many to work. It could be 2011 before the rate gets below 7 or 8 percent. Yikes.

Saturday, November 07, 2009 6:07:57 PM

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John Durgin (MoshupTrail) wrote:

Dear Mr. Obama,

Remember the stimulus package that you didn't pass? The one that involved rebuilding infrastructure by funding so-called shovel-ready projects. Remember how the bankers said it would take too long - maybe 6 months or more to take effect? Now we are 10 months down the road and the banks have gobs of money, but no one can qualify to borrow it because they don't have jobs. Now those shovel-ready projects are looking pretty good! Don't give a more money to the bankers - pay it to honest hard working people. You'll get more for your money.

Saturday, November 07, 2009 5:01:28 PM

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