



President Obama's Attacks on Free Speech Opposed by Most Americans, Zogby/O'Leary Poll Finds

Voters think recent moves by the White House and Congress are a threat to First Amendment rights.

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Washington, D.C. — A majority of American voters view recent actions by President Barack Obama and Democratic leaders in Congress as threats to our First Amendment rights, according to a recent Zogby International/O'Leary Report Poll. Independents, Hispanics and small business owners are among the key voting blocs that disagree with the President's moves to curtail free speech. The Poll surveyed 3,544 American voters on October 23-26 and has a margin of error of plus-or-minus 1.7 percentage points.

Obama's War on Fox News

Several Obama administration officials recently declared war on Fox News, claiming the leading news network is an anti-Obama mouthpiece and deserves to be marginalized as such.

Zogby/O'Leary asked:

The Obama administration recently declared that the White House would treat the Fox News Channel as an "opponent," and declared that Fox News is not a "legitimate news organization." Do you agree or disagree that this is an attempt by the Obama administration to silence dissent?

A majority of Americans (53 percent) agree that it is an attempt by Obama to silence dissent; only 40 percent disagree. Even a plurality of Democrats (48 percent) think Obama and his staff are trying to silence dissent, while 43 percent of Democrats disagree. Fifty percent of Independents agree while 43 percent disagree. Majorities of

Hispanics (54 percent) and small business owners (57 percent) also agree. Surprisingly, among those who voted for President Obama, 43 percent agree he is attempting to silence dissent and 46 percent disagree.

Obama Supports U.N. Resolution that Threatens Free Speech

Obama recently helped Egypt pass a long-sought U.N. resolution that encourages governments worldwide to clamp down on free speech when it is used to criticize certain religions. The move was widely viewed as a victory for Muslims worldwide.

Zogby/O'Leary asked:

The Obama administration recently supported and helped pass a United Nations resolution that suggests nations exclude certain criticisms of religion from free speech protection. Do you support or oppose an international law that protects religions from criticism?

A strong majority of American voters (59 percent) oppose any international law that protects religions from criticism, while only 21 percent support such a law. Strong majorities of Independent voters (65 percent), young voters age 18-29 (66 percent), and small business owners (71 percent) also oppose a law that removes free speech protections in order to guard religions from criticism. Fifty-one percent of union members and Hispanics oppose such a law, while only 26 percent and 35 percent, respectively, would support it. Pluralities of both Democratic voters (43 percent) and Obama voters (45 percent) also oppose such a law, while just 30 percent from each group support it.

Speaker Pelosi Uses Power of Congress to Silence Corporations

The health insurance industry recently released a study that is critical of President Obama's health care reform plan. House Speaker Pelosi, in turn, expressed "tremendous interest" in revoking the industry's decades-old antitrust exemption, and last week, the Democrat-run House Judiciary Committee passed a bill to do exactly that.

Zogby/O'Leary asked:

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi recently condemned the health insurance industry for releasing an unflattering analysis on the Obama administration's proposal to create a government-run "public option" health insurance plan. Pelosi also threatened to revoke the industry's anti-trust exemption which has been in place since 1945. Do you agree or disagree that Pelosi is using the power of congress to try to limit the free speech of private corporations?

A majority of American voters (53 percent) agree that Pelosi is trying to use the power of congress to limit the free speech of private industry, and only 39 percent disagree. Fifty-five percent of Independent voters also agree, while just 39 percent

disagree. Majorities of Hispanic voters (52 percent), union members (51 percent), and small business owners (58 percent) agree as well.

Obama's "Diversity Czar" Threatens Radio Stations

It was recently discovered that President Obama's "Diversity Czar" at the Federal Communications Commission made the following statement at the 2005 Conference on Media Reform: Racial Justice:

"This... there's nothing more difficult than this. Because we have really, truly good white people in important positions. And the fact of the matter is that there are a limited number of those positions. And unless we are conscious of the need to have more people of color, gays, other people in those positions we will not change the problem.

"We're in a position where you have to say who is going to step down so someone else can have power."

Zogby/O'Leary asked:

Federal Communications Commission Chief Diversity Czar Mark Lloyd wants the FCC to force good white people in positions of power in the broadcast industry to step down to make room for more African-Americans and gays to fill those positions. Do you agree or disagree that this presents a threat to free speech?

A majority of American voters (51 percent) agree that Lloyd's desire to force white people out of radio jobs to make room for African-Americans and gays presents a threat to free speech, and only 31 percent disagree. A strong majority of Independents (61 percent) agree that it's a threat, as do majorities of young voters age 18-29 (54 percent) and small business owners (59 percent).

Obama Campaign's Attempt to Control Media

President Obama's Communications Director Anita Dunn recently revealed that the Obama campaign's "strategy" is to speak to the press through video messages "without having to actually talk to reporters."

Zogby/O'Leary asked:

Recently, White House Communications Director Anita Dunn revealed that during the presidential campaign, President Obama's strategy was to limit his actual exposure to the press by only communicating through pre-taped videos and press releases. According to Dunn, "Very rarely did we communicate through the press anything that we didn't absolutely control." Do you think the Obama campaign's strategy is good or bad for free speech?

A majority of American voters (52 percent) think that the Obama campaign's strategy of not talking to reporters is bad for free speech, while only 20 percent think it is good for free speech. Fifty-four percent of Independent voters think it's bad for free speech, while just 16 percent think it's good. A strong majority of small business owners (63 percent) think the Obama campaign's strategy is bad for free speech, and only 15 percent think it is good.

House Passes Hate Crimes Bill

The U.S. House of Representatives recently passed a "Hate Crimes" bill, supported by President Obama, that threatens to criminalize certain speech directed at special classes of protected citizens.

Zogby/O'Leary asked:

The U.S. House of Representatives recently passed a "Hate Crimes" bill that would make assault based on sexual orientation or perceived gender identity a felony. As it is currently written, the bill would also allow the prosecution of people whose speech allegedly influences others to commit hate crimes. Some experts believe this could lead to serious infringements on free speech, as well as the prosecution of religious preachers, talk show hosts or political activists who speak against homosexuality or transsexuals. Others say the bill is an effort to try and stop people from committing such crimes in the future. Do you agree or disagree with the Hate Crimes bill?

A plurality of Americans (47 percent) disagree with the Hate Crimes bill, while only 38 percent agree with it. A majority of Independent voters (55 percent) disagree with the bill, and just 29 percent agree with it. Fifty-eight percent of small business owners disagree with the Hate Crimes bill, while only 30 percent agree with the bill.

Brad O'Leary is publisher of "The O'Leary Report," a bestselling author, and is a former NBC Westwood One talk show host. His book, "Shut Up, America! The End of Free Speech," is now in bookstores and available at www.EndOfFreeSpeech.com.

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