

## Tepid Support for VP Pick Paul Ryan, but Room for Improvement

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Recent polls from USA Today/Gallup and the Washington Post/ABC News and recent coverage of these polls demonstrate tepid support for Republican Vice Presidential nominee and House Rep. Paul Ryan. However, a closer look at these polls suggests the Ryan narrative has not yet solidified.

Among those who have heard of Paul Ryan, slightly more Americans think Ryan is an “only fair” or “poor” Vice Presidential choice, compared to a “pretty good” or “excellent” choice by a margin of 42 to 39 percent. Although this is a slim margin, vice presidential candidates typically enjoy a much wider margin of support. For instance, Sarah Palin enjoyed a +9 point margin, Joe Biden a +14 point margin, and John Edwards, Joe Lieberman, and Dick Cheney enjoyed margins of +36, +25, and +21 respectively.

According to Gallup a clear majority, 58 percent, of Americans has never heard of Paul Ryan. Although John Edwards, Dick Cheney, Jack Kemp, and Al Gore had a great deal more support than Ryan, only about a third of the country had never heard of them. This suggests that both the Romney and Obama campaigns have a clear incentive to take great efforts to shape the initial public perception of Ryan as a means to reposition the presidential debate.

Although Ryan does not carry a spectacular or distinctive amount of support overall compared to other Democratic and Republican Vice Presidential picks, his favorability did increase after the announcement. As the Washington Post/ABC News poll demonstrates, Paul Ryan’s margin of favorable-to-unfavorable leapt from -10 percent to positive 6 percent. For Republicans, this margin jumped from +34 to +49. For Independents, the margin shifted from negative to positive, from -9 to +7. In other words, Ryan favorability among Independents doubled. These shifts do not likely result from changing minds, but rather more Americans who had not previously heard of Ryan, passing a positive judgment of him.

While NBC’s David Gregory, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities’ President Robert Greenstein, and MSNBC’s Rachel Maddow condemn Paul Ryan’s proposals as “draconian,” “radical,” or “extreme,” others such as Reason’s Nick Gillespie and Jesse Walker and the Cato Institute’s, Gene Healy have argued Paul Ryan’s plans are neither radical nor draconian when put

into context. Nevertheless others such as RedState's Erick Erickson and the Wall Street Journal's editorial board applaud Ryan's efforts and audacity to propose concrete solutions to real problems. Over the next few months, these arguments will continue, amplify, and evolve and will likely shape the 2012 presidential narrative.

*Emily Ekins is the director of polling for Reason Foundation where she leads the Reason-Rupe public opinion research project, launched in 2011. Follow her on Twitter [@emilyekins](#).*