



October 30, 2009

**Could distrust in government be a good thing?**

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**Carol Costello** - Correspondent, CNN's American Morning  
Filed under: [Just Sayin'](#)

By Carol Costello and Ronni Berke

The latest public opinion polls do not bode well for our elected representatives: in some instances, they are suffering record low approval ratings.

In a Wall Street Journal/NBC poll this week, just 23-percent of Americans say they trust government to "do the right thing" all or most of the time. That's the lowest number since 1997.

A September Gallup poll showed public trust in Congress at a record low 45-percent. The executive branch, headed by President Obama, did better, with a 61-percent "trust" rating.

Despite Mr. Obama's campaign promises for hope and change, many Americans have lost faith in Congress to make the right judgments about issues facing the country. This has stymied Mr. Obama's legislative agenda, says CNN Political Analyst Gloria Borger.

"People have always had a kind of healthy skepticism about the bureaucracy. But what you find now is because people don't trust government, it provides a political opening for both parties to say – 'don't trust the other guy.' And depending on where you stand, you don't trust the other guy."

Watch: [Is government distrust good?](#)

Even the government's push to get the public vaccinated against H1N1 is being viewed with skepticism – despite the fact that the CDC reports 20-thousand Americans have been hospitalized and 1,000 have died from the illness. On the other hand, too much trust in government may have gotten the country in trouble in the past.

After 9/11, trust in government was high. According to a CNN/USA Today/Gallup Poll in October, 2001 – 60-percent trusted the government to do the right thing always or most of the time. That trust, some say, may have helped President Bush make the case for the Iraq War, which most Americans now oppose.

"When you have lower trust in government, you tend to get fewer foreign wars, you tend to get fewer expensive government programs, and you also tend to get fewer abuses of civil liberties, says Gene Healy of the conservative Cato Institute.

In other words, public distrust might be an informal but much needed way of exercising checks and balances.

*What do you think? Could distrust in government actually be a good thing?*

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- Ron** October 30th, 2009 6:35 am ET
- David R** October 30th, 2009 6:37 am ET

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Regarding the Poll about distrusting the Government. These polls always reflect the attitudes of the news people hear day in and day out on news channels like CNN. So does this poll mean that people are distrustful of the the Govt or that the message they receive from news channels tells them to distrust the Govt?
- w ramsey** October 30th, 2009 6:37 am ET

HEY CAROL ANY BODY WHO TRUST OUR GOVT.DEM. OR REPUBLICANS THEY R VERY STUPID ANDI HAVE A BRIDGE FOR THEM TO BUY.
- Russ in PA** October 30th, 2009 6:38 am ET

Distrust in the government is a necessary thing, as it must be obvious to all that government tends to overstep it's bounds in the name of "security", "investment", "general welfare". Just listen to how many politicians call our government a democracy, when it was intended to be a republic. Ron Paul is one of the few with the conviction to protect our rights and freedoms; the rest deserve our skepticism...
- splashy** October 30th, 2009 6:38 am ET

We needed it most when the Republicans were in power, since they have brought us most of the debt (starting with Reagan, who claimed the debt didn't matter), the spying on citizens, the wars THEY started, the financial disaster, the funding of wars as "emergencies" for over 7 years to hide the cost leading to the debt, and so many other things.

**American Morning**

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**Just Sayin'**