



Wednesday, May 27, 2009

## Poll: Obama car involvement gets mixed grade

**Charlie Cain and Mark Hornbeck / Detroit News Lansing Bureau**

Michiganians appear evenly divided in their belief that President Barack Obama's heavy involvement in restructuring the auto industry is doing more harm than good, a Detroit News/WXYZ survey shows.

With Chrysler LLC in bankruptcy proceedings and General Motors Corp. apparently ready to follow suit, 42 percent of poll respondents say Obama's role has hurt the domestic automakers while 39 percent say he's been helpful. The poll's margin of error is plus or minus 4 percentage points.

Under pressure from the federal government, GM will close 16 plants, the iconic Pontiac brand is disappearing and thousands of auto dealerships across the nation will shut their showrooms.

"The federal government is overstepping what it is supposed to be doing with private business," said Katrina Hopkins, 48, a stay-at-home mom from Pontiac who participated in the survey conducted last week by EPIC-MRA in Lansing. "The government helped to create the auto crisis."

But Tom Sorrell, 56, an unemployed tool-and-die maker from Hillsdale, said the government's role in restructuring "is helping a little bit. I don't put much faith in big business making the right decisions anymore."

Among Metro Detroiters, 43 percent said he has helped the industry compared to 36 percent in the rest of the state. Also, 56 percent of Democrats, 40 percent of independents and 19 percent of Republicans say the president's involvement has been helpful.

While Obama gets questionable grades on dealing with Michigan's signature industry, his overall approval ratings are climbing. Sixty-one percent give the president a favorable job grade, up 7 percentage points from a poll conducted two months earlier. His 37 percent negative rating is slightly better than the 39 percent in March.

Nearly two-thirds of women give him good grades compared to 56 percent of men. By party, 88 percent of Democrats, 51 percent of independents and 28 percent of Republicans give him high marks.

Michigan voters are more optimistic that the country is headed in the right direction. The surveys show 37 percent thought the U.S. was moving in the right direction in March compared to 45 percent in the latest poll. Nearly half of respondents thought the country will be in better shape a year from now, while 19 percent said things will be worse.

Among issues facing the state, 62 percent identified the No. 1 problem as improving Michigan's economy and providing jobs, well ahead of improving education, at 10 percent -- the only other issue that made double digits. The state's 12.9 percent jobless rate in April remains the nation's highest.

[mhornbeck@detnews.com](mailto:mhornbeck@detnews.com) (313) 222-2470

**Find this article at:**

<http://www.detnews.com/article/20090527/METRO/905270346/Poll-Obama-car-involvement-gets-mixed-grade>

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

© Copyright 2008 The Detroit News. All rights reserved.