

THE WHITE HOUSE ***BULLETIN***

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SUBJECT: TODAY'S BRIEFING

DATE: FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2010

OFF THE WIRES:

- **New Home Sales Stall.** The Department of Commerce reports this morning that new home sales were unchanged in August at a 288,000 unit annual rate, tying the second lowest level on record. Economists had expected sales to rise to a 295,000 unit annual rate. Year-over-year, August's sales were 28.9 percent over August 2009. The median price of a new home sold in August was \$204,700, 1.2 percent below August 2009. August's median sales price was the lowest in more than six years.
- **Dragged Down By Transportation, Durable Goods Orders Dropped Last Month.** The Department of Commerce reports this morning that durable goods orders fell 1.3 percent in August, more than the 1.0 percent drop expected by economists. Excluding the volatile transportation sector, orders were up 2.0 percent, well above the 1.0 percent increase expected by economists.

IN THE WHITE HOUSE AND AROUND TOWN:

- **Obama Condemns Ahmadinejad 9/11 Comments.** President Obama responded to Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's suggestion yesterday that the US orchestrated the 9/11 attacks. In an interview with BBC Persia today, Obama said the suggestion was offensive and "hateful" and added, "For him to make a statement like that was inexcusable."
- **Reid Expected To Seek Cloture On Anti-Outsourcing Bill Today.** With major legislation such as the fate of the Bush tax cuts on the back burner, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid is looking to advance a bill giving tax cuts to companies that bring back previously outsourced workers. Reid is expected to seek a cloture vote on the bill today, but its fate is not certain, as many Republicans (and possibly some moderate Democrats) believe the bill will reduce the ability of US firms to compete with foreign companies. The bill, called the Creating American Jobs and Ending Offshoring Act, would end tax loopholes that encourage outsourcing of jobs overseas. In addition, if a business can certify that a new US-based hire is replacing an employee who had been performing similar duties elsewhere, the proposal would waive the company's portion of that employee's payroll tax for up to 24 months.
- **CNN Fires President.** CNN has apparently fired Jonathan Klein, its president. The network, which kicked off the cable news boom but has struggled badly in recent years, will now be run by Ken Jautz, the current head of sister station HLN. Under Jautz's leadership, HLN moved away from its Headline News roots and became more celebrity and crime oriented. Jim Walton, CEO of CNN Worldwide, did not indicate the reason Klein was leaving.
- **Small Business Poll Suggests Deep Concerns About Health Care Costs.** Most small business owners are worried that President Obama's health care reforms will boost their costs, prompting them to cut benefits and freeze hiring, according to a new U.S. Chamber of Commerce poll. Eight in 10 of 590 small businesses told Chamber pollsters that they expect their health care costs to surge. "At least amongst those who create jobs in our economy there really is little debate about whether health care reform has

negatively impacted their ability to expand employment. Anytime nearly 80% of small business owners say they expect costs to increase as a result of the new law, there will be a negative economic impact and unfortunately right now, it also means fewer Americans are employed,” said Randy Johnson, senior vice president of labor, immigration, and employee benefits for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. The poll of 590 small business leaders was conducted September 18-20 by Frank Luntz and Doug Schoen. “It’s tragic when the profession people respect most, the small business owner, is so ignored by Washington,” said Luntz, president and CEO of The Word Doctors. “Small business owners are sending Washington a wake-up call: If you want us to hire more, stop making our lives so difficult.” The pollsters said that perceptions about the new health care legislation is dragging down small business hopes as the firms struggle with an already troubled economy. Among the major findings:

- 56% of small business leaders oppose the new health care law.
- 60% of small business leaders say that, as a result of the new health care law, they are more likely to consider reducing health care benefits to their employees.
- 55% of small business owners believe their businesses will be less likely to hire new employees as a result of the new health care law.
- 29% of small business owners are more confident about adding new employees and investing in their business.
- 52% of small business leaders are either “somewhat more” or “much more discouraged” about the future based on current policies from Congress and the White House.
- 46% of those leaders are uncertain that they will still exist five years from now. -- *Bulletin exclusive from U.S. News*

- **Three Journalists Freed In Afghanistan.** Three journalists detained by coalition forces and Afghan intelligence agents for allegedly spreading Taliban propaganda have been freed, NATO officials said today. Their arrest sparked an outcry from journalists and human rights groups. NATO had arrested two of the journalists, while Afghan intelligence agencies took the other. Afghan President Hamid Karzai had demanded their release yesterday.
- **Panetta Picks New Spokesman.** CIA Director Leon Panetta has picked a new public affairs director, elevating deputy spokesman George Little to the top slot. He replaces Paul Gimigliano who announced the change yesterday afternoon. In a statement he said that Little “is, of course, an exceptionally talented veteran of this unit, someone who has built an impressive reputation for candor and responsiveness. He’s been a superb deputy.” Reviewing his time at the agency, Gimigliano said, “To me, six years of dealing with the press seems like a very long time. For those who dealt with me, it may have seemed even longer. The CIA is no stranger to controversy -- it comes with the mission -- and this period was by no means a quiet one. But it was always a privilege to represent the tremendous men and women of this organization, who, in anonymity, do the difficult work of national security.” He added that reporters shouldn’t see any changes. “With George at the helm, apart from countless improvements, you shouldn’t notice any change at all. Great things are happening at this agency. While most depend on secrecy, it’s critical that we try to convey to the American people at least a sense of what is done on their behalf, and for their safety.” -- *Bulletin exclusive from U.S. News*
- **NRSC Launches Ad Offensive Against Manchin.** Sensing an opportunity to put another seat in play, the NRSC announced today that it is making a \$1.2 million ad buy in the West Virginia special election. The ads look to tie Gov. Joe Manchin (D) to President Obama and the national Democratic agenda. A Public Policy Polling (D) survey earlier this week showed John Raese (R) leading Manchin 46%-43% in the race to fill out the term of deceased Sen. Robert Byrd (D).
- **Senate Poll Roundup.** A look at polls in key Senate races:
 - CA: Boxer Up 6 In Field Poll.** A new [Field Poll](#) shows California Sen. Barbara Boxer (D) leading challenger Carly Fiorina (R) 47%-41%. The poll surveyed 599 likely voters from September 14-21.
 - KY: DSCC Poll Has Conway Down 3.** A new poll by the [Benenson Strategy Group](#) for the DSCC shows Rand Paul (R) leading Jack Conway (D) 45%-42%. A similar poll at the beginning of the month showed Paul up 47%-45%. The poll surveyed 700 likely voters from September 20-22.
 - NV: Angle, Reid Tied At 43%.** A [Las Vegas Review-Journal](#)/Mason-Dixon poll of 625 Nevada voters conducted Sept. 20-22 shows Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D) and ex-Assemblywoman

Sharron Angle (R) in a dead heat – tied at 43% apiece. According to the poll, 8% remain undecided, while 4% chose the “none of these” candidates option. The survey also found that independents favor Angle by 20 points. Mason-Dixon pollster Brad Coker said of the poll results, “The independents have shifted to her [Angle] by the biggest margin since the primary. If she goes on to win this, maybe this is the first sign that at the end of the day Angle might nose it out.”

NY: Polls Paint Decisively Different Picture Of Race. In the wake of a SurveyUSA poll showing New York Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D) leading challenger Joe DioGuardi (R) by a single point, a [Siena](#) poll portrays a distinctly different race. The survey of 801 registered voters taken September 16-17 shows Gillibrand up 57%-31%.

WA: Murray Edges Rossi In New Poll. A new [SurveyUSA](#) poll shows Washington Sen. Patty Murray (D) leading challenger Dino Rossi (R) 50%-48%. In a similar survey a month ago, Rossi lead 52%-45%. The poll surveyed 609 likely voters from September 19-21 for KING-TV Seattle.

- o **Governors Poll Roundup.** A look at polls in key gubernatorial races:

AL: Bentley Up 20 Over Sparks. A [Rasmussen Reports](#) poll of 500 likely voters taken September 21 shows Robert Bentley (R) leading Ron Sparks (D) 55%-35% in the open Alabama gubernatorial race. A similar survey taken a month ago showed Bentley up 58%-34%. Gov. Bob Riley (R) is term-limited.

FL: Polls Split On Race. A [Mason-Dixon](#) poll of 625 likely voters taken September 20-22 shows state CFO Alex Sink (D) leading businessman Rick Scott (R) 47%-40% in the open Florida gubernatorial race. Pollster Brad Coker said, “In what is likely to be a very strong year for Republican candidates throughout the country, why is Scott struggling in a GOP-leaning state like Florida? The clear answer is he is hampered by a very high negative rating that is the result of his brutal primary race.”

Meanwhile, a [Rasmussen Reports](#) poll shows Scott leading Sink 50%-44%. Earlier this month, Rasmussen had Sink leading Scott 48%-47%. That poll surveyed 750 likely voters on September 22.

MN: Emmer Takes Lead In Rasmussen Poll. A new [Rasmussen Reports](#) poll shows Tom Emmer (R) moving into the lead in the open Minnesota gubernatorial race. Emmer now leads Mark Dayton (D) 42%-41% with Tom Horner (I) at 9%. In a similar survey a month ago, Dayton led Emmer 45%-36%. Gov. Tim Pawlenty (R) is not seeking another term. The poll surveyed 500 likely voters on September 22.

NY: Poll Shows Cuomo Crushing Paladino. While several polls in recent days have shown Carl Paladino (R) in striking distance of state Attorney General Andrew Cuomo (D) in the open New York gubernatorial contest, a new poll out from [Siena](#) suggests the contest is shaping up to be a blowout. The survey of 801 registered voters taken September 16-17 shows Cuomo up 57%-24% over Paladino. Siena College pollster Steven Greenberg said, “In campaign terms, 40 days is a lifetime so there’s time for Paladino to connect with voters and turn this race around, as his Republican primary performance proves. However, he has a very big hill to climb.” Splitting the difference between the polls showing a tight race and the Siena poll is a new survey from Marist College. The Marist survey of 915 registered voters taken September 19-22 shows Cuomo up 52%-33%.

SC: Haley Up 17 Over Sheheen. A [Rasmussen Reports](#) poll out this morning shows Nikki Haley (R) leading Vince Sheheen (D) 50%-33% in the South Carolina gubernatorial race. Last month, a similar poll showed Haley up 52%-36%. The poll surveyed 500 likely voters on September 22.

TX: White Cuts Gap With Perry. A new [Rasmussen Reports](#) poll shows Texas Gov. Rick Perry (R) leading challenger Bill White (D) 48%-42%, down from a 49%-41% lead a month ago. The poll surveyed 500 likely voters on September 22.

- o **Political Notes. President.** On its front page, the [New York Times](#) reports that “a shadow army of benignly titled nonprofit groups...devoted to politically charged ‘issue advocacy,’ much of it negative,” have so far spent “more than \$100 million – mostly for Republicans” this year following a Supreme Court ruling lifting federal limits on corporate political spending. ... The [AP](#) reports Senate Republicans “on Thursday stood fast in blocking legislation requiring special interest groups running campaign ads to identify their donors,” calling Democratic efforts to move the bill “an attempt to win political points before the midterm elections.” ... [The Hill](#) reported that **Vice President Biden**, “speaking at a fundraiser in Chevy Chase, Md., for Sen. Barbara Mikulski,” yesterday “offered a ‘guarantee’ that Democrats will defy predictions and maintain control of the House” and Senate.

Governors. The [New York Times](#) reports that New York Democratic gubernatorial candidate **Andrew Cuomo**, “leaving little doubt that he is concerned about” GOP foe **Carl Paladino**, “unleashed his first direct attack on” his opponent yesterday with a TV ad “that criticized him for his donations to Albany politicians and for his failure to create jobs after winning tax breaks intended to promote economic development.” Meanwhile, the [New York Times](#) also reports that ex-New York Gov. Eliot Spitzer, “now a television commentator, took a swipe on Thursday at his former Albany rival,” saying Cuomo “was ‘the dirtiest, nastiest political player out there.’” ... The [Dallas Morning News](#) reports Texas **Gov. Rick Perry** (R) “has declined to meet with newspaper editorial boards in Texas in his re-election run,” but “his self-imposed embargo apparently does not extend to the national press” as yesterday he “spoke to a conference of editorial writers from across the nation.”

Senate. [Politico](#) reports Delaware **Rep. Mike Castle** (R) “is planning on polling a potential three-way Senate race to test his chances as a write-in candidate” following his loss to **Christine O’Donnell** earlier this month in the GOP primary. ... The [AP](#) reports a judge in Florida yesterday refused to grant class-action status to a suit by Republicans seeking a refund of donations given to Florida **Gov. Charlie Crist** (I) for his Senate campaign prior to his bolting from the Republican party. ... The [AP](#) reports that Kentucky Senate hopefuls **Rand Paul** (R) and **Jack Conway** (D) “have committed to a fourth political debate, this one on Fox News in early October.”

House. [Roll Call](#) reports **Doug Hoffman**, “the conservative turned de facto Republican nominee in last fall’s special election in New York’s 23rd district, conceded defeat Thursday in last week’s closely fought GOP primary against businessman” **Matt Doheny**, but “in the next breath, he announced that he would pursue a bid as a Conservative Party candidate and had secured a place on the ballot.” ... A new [Rasmussen Reports](#) poll of 500 likely voters taken September 20-21 shows challenger **Rick Berg** (R) leading **ND-AL Rep. Earl Pomeroy** (D) 48%-45%, down from a 53%-44% lead last month. ... [Politico](#) reports a new Franklin & Marshall poll of 379 likely voters taken September 14-19 shows former Rep. **Mike Fitzpatrick** (R) leading **PA8 Rep. Patrick Murphy** (D) 49%-35%.

POLL WATCH:

Obama Approval At 47% In Pew Poll. A Pew Research Center poll of 3,509 adults taken August 25-September 6 shows:

Obama Approval

- 47% said they “approve” of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as president; 44% said “disapprove”; 9% don’t know.
- 27% said Obama’s “economic policies” have “made economic conditions better”; 32% said “worse”; 36% said “no effect so far”; 6% don’t know.
- 25% said they are “satisfied with the way things are going in this country today”; 71% said “dissatisfied”; 5% don’t know.

Congressional Approval

- 42% said they “approve” of the way their own Representative in Congress is doing their job; 40% said “disapprove”; 17% don’t know.
- Among registered voters, 49% said they would like to see their Representative in Congress reelected; 33% said they would not; 1% volunteered their Rep is retiring; 17% don’t know.
- 33% said they would like to see “most members of Congress” reelected; 56% would not; 11% don’t know.

Generic Congressional Ballot

- Among registered voters, 44% said that if the elections were held today, they would vote for the Republican candidate; 47% said the Democratic candidate; 9% were undecided.
- Among registered voters, 25% said their vote for Congress this year will be a vote “for Barack Obama”; 30% said “against Barack Obama”; 42% said Obama is not a factor in their vote; 3% don’t know.

Party Favorables

- 8% said they have a “very favorable” opinion of the Republican Party; 35% said “mostly favorable”; 28% said “mostly unfavorable”; 21% said “very unfavorable”; 8% don’t know.
- 13% said they have a “very favorable” opinion of the Democratic Party; 36% said “mostly favorable”; 24% said “mostly unfavorable”; 20% said “very unfavorable”; 7% don’t know.

Republicans Vs Democrats

- 41% said that the Republicans “can better manage the federal government”; 41% said the Democrats; 3% volunteered both; 8% volunteered neither; 7% don’t know.
- 35% said that the Republicans “can bring about the kind of changes the country needs”; 46% said the Democrats; 4% volunteered both; 8% volunteered neither; 6% don’t know.
- 33% said that the Republicans are “more concerned about the needs” of people like them; 53% said the Democrats; 2% volunteered both; 7% volunteered neither; 5% don’t know.
- 39% said that the Republicans can do a better job “improving the job situation”; 41% said the Democrats; 6% volunteered both equally; 8% volunteered neither; 7% don’t know.
- 43% said that the Republicans can do a better job “reducing the federal budget deficit”; 36% said the Democrats; 5% volunteered both equally; 9% volunteered neither; 7% don’t know.
- 36% said that the Republicans can do a better job “dealing with health care”; 46% said the Democrats; 5% volunteered both equally; 7% volunteered neither; 6% don’t know.

Attitude Towards Washington

- 21% said they are “basically content” with the federal government; 52% said “frustrated”; 23% said “angry”; 4% don’t know.
- 3% said they can “trust the government in Washington to do what is right” “just about always”; 21% said “most of the time”; 65% said “only sometimes”; 10% volunteered never; 1% don’t know.
- 61% agree with the statement “government is almost always wasteful and inefficient”; 35% said “government often does a better job than people give it credit for”; 2% volunteered neither or both; 2% don’t know.
- 29% agree with the statement “most elected officials care what people like me think”; 68% said they don’t care; 2% volunteered neither or both; 2% don’t know.
- 50% said they would rather have “a small government providing fewer services”; 42% said a “bigger government providing more services”; 3% volunteered it depends; 5% don’t know.

Economy

- 10% said the economy “is now recovering”; 37% said it is “not yet recovering, but will soon recover”; 52% said “it will be a long time before the economy recovers”; 2% don’t know.

Health Care

- 44% said they “approve” of the health care legislation “passed by Barack Obama and Congress in March”; 46% said “disapprove”; 10% don’t know.

Guns

- 46% said it is “more important” to “protect the right of Americans to own guns”; 50% said “to control gun ownership”; 4% don’t know.

Gay Marriage

- 43% said they “favor” “allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally”; 47% said “oppose”; 10% don’t know.

Afghanistan

- 52% said the US made the “right decision” in “using military force against Afghanistan”; 38% said the “wrong decision”; 10% don’t know.

Iraq

- 41% said the US made the “right decision” in “using military force against Iraq”; 51% said the “wrong decision”; 7% don’t know.

Political Affiliation

- 24% described themselves as a Republican; 32% as a Democrat; 39% as an independent; 4% don’t know.

LAST LAUGHS:

Late Night Political Humor.

Jay Leno: “The Iranian president” is “visiting the United States. You know, every time he flies to the United States, he gets to fly for free? Did you know that? It’s because he’s so little, he fits in the overhead bin. He’s classified as a carry-on.”

Jay Leno: “Larry Summers, President Obama’s top economic adviser, is stepping down. So finally some good economic news.”

Jay Leno: “Summers didn’t want to leave. Apparently, he was out of bad ideas.”

Jay Leno: “Summers is actually the third Obama economic adviser to leave the White House since July. The only jobs opening up these days are White House economic advisers.”

David Letterman: “Earlier today, President Obama was speaking at the UN and no one could tell if it was a calm, measured address or an angry tirade.”

David Letterman: “Christine O’Donnell” is “going to be the senator from Delaware and today, she promised if she’s elected, she’ll cast a spell on healthcare.”

Jon Stewart: “Many foreign dignitaries” are currently in New York City “for the 65th session of the United Nations General Assembly,” which on Thursday was addressed by Barack Obama, the “secret Kenyan ambassador to these United States.”

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