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**NEWS** Release

1615 L Street, N.W., Suite 700 Washington, D.C. 20036 Tel (202) 419-4350 Fax (202) 419-4399

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

Andrew Kohut, Director Michael Remez, Senior Writer

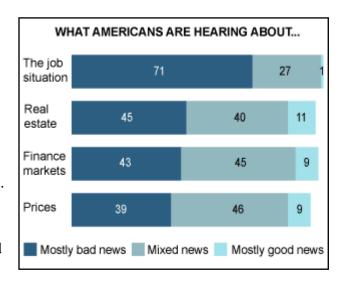
# Health Care Reform Debate Gets Noticed EMPLOYMENT NEWS SEEN AS OVERWHELMINGLY BAD

Americans by a wide margin say they are hearing mostly negative news about the nation's job situation, though they are more likely to sense a mix of good and bad news about other elements of the economy.

With the jobless rate climbing, sevenin-ten (71%) say they are hearing mostly bad news about the employment picture. About a quarter (27%) say they are hearing a mix of good and bad news, while just 1 percent say they are hearing mostly good news.

Perceptions of news about prices, financial markets and real estate values are more mixed.

Looking at what people are hearing about the economy as a whole, 2009's upward trend toward a greater mix of good and bad



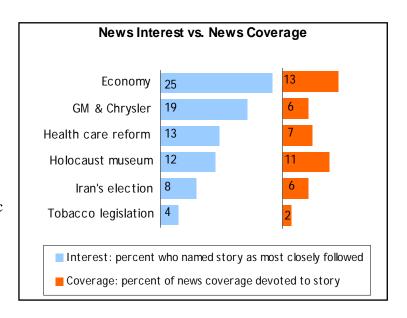
economic news has come to a stop. Six-in-ten (59%) say they are hearing a mix of good and bad news, down from 64% in May. In December 2008, shortly after the fall financial meltdown, just 19% said they were hearing a mix of good and bad news.

In addition, the latest weekly News Interest Index survey, conducted June 12-15 by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, shows that the share that says they are hearing mostly bad news is up from 31% in May to 37%. In December, 80% said they were hearing mostly bad news.

Meanwhile, Americans continue to track news about the still-struggling economy closely. A quarter say this was the story they followed more closely than any other last week. Another

19% say they followed the continuing financial troubles of U.S. automakers General Motors and Chrysler most closely.

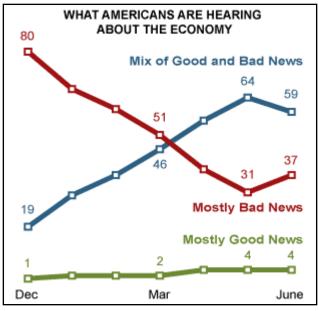
The media also maintained their focus on the economy. According to a separate analysis by the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism, reporting on the economic crisis accounted for 13% of the newshole last week. That made it the leading story, though coverage of the horrific shooting at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington was not far behind (11%).



## Shifting Mix of Economic News

The share of the public that says they are hearing a mix of good and bad economic news fell from 64% in May to 59%, while the share that says they are hearing mostly bad news increased from 31% to 37%. The percentage that says they are hearing mostly good news remains small and did not change (4%).

Before President Obama took office, Democrats and Republicans had similar takes on the mix of economic news, but since February, Democrats have been more upbeat in their assessments. That continues in the latest survey. Almost two-thirds of Democrats (65%) say they are hearing a mix of good and bad news, compared with 55% of Republicans and 57% of independents. Meanwhile, 43% of Republicans say they are hearing mostly bad news, compared with 28% of Democrats and 39% of independents.



While the public clearly sees the employment picture as bleak, attitudes are more mixed about news on prices, the financial markets and real estate values. A plurality (46%) says they are hearing a mix of good and bad news about prices for food and consumer goods, while 39%

says they are hearing mostly bad news. Almost one-in-ten (9%) say they are hearing mostly good news.

Perceptions of news about the financial markets are divided between those hearing a mix of good and bad (45%) and those hearing mostly bad news (43%). Another 9% say they are hearing mostly good news.

On real estate values, 45% say they are hearing mostly bad news, compared with 40% who say they are hearing a mix of good and bad and 11% who say they are hearing mostly good news.

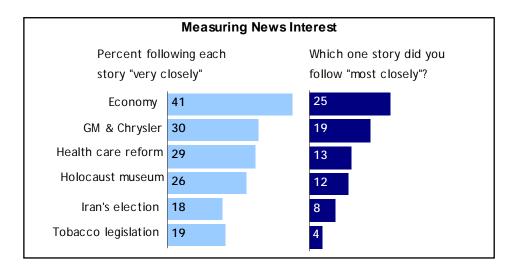
# **Economy Remains Top Story**

About four-in-ten (41%) Americans say they followed news about the economy very closely last week, about the same level of attention measured since early May. For 25%, this was the story they followed most closely.

Three-in-ten say they followed news about continuing troubles of GM and Chrysler very closely, about the same level as the previous week when GM filed for bankruptcy. Those stories were followed most closely by 19% and the automakers' troubles took up 6% of the newshole as measured by PEJ.

Almost three-in-ten (29%) very closely followed the early debate in Washington over health care reform. That's comparable to the 27% that very closely followed reports in August 1993 about the workings of a White House task force on health care reform headed by Hillary Clinton. Interest spiked the next month (49% followed very closely) as President Clinton detailed his plans in an address before Congress.

Today, 13% say they followed the health care debate more closely than any other major story. Stories about these early discussions and differing proposals filled 7% of the newshole analyzed by PEJ.



About a quarter (26%) say they very closely followed news about the deadly shooting at the Holocaust Museum allegedly by an 88-year-old white supremacist and anti-Semite. For 12%, this was the story they followed most closely. The story accounted for 11% of coverage, just behind reporting on the economy. It was the top story of the week for the cable news stations, according to PEJ.

About two-in-ten (19%) very closely followed news about Congress passing legislation placing new restrictions on the tobacco industry. For 4%, this was the story they followed most closely.

And a similar share (18%) say they very closely followed news about the presidential election in Iran, though attention to that story grew by Sunday as reports began emerging about potential irregularities, growing protests and increased government efforts to shut them down. This was the most closely followed story for 8%. According to PEJ, the Iranian elections took up 6% of the newshole.

## Transition to Digital TV Widely Known

Most Americans say they heard a lot about the transition from analog to digital

broadcasting for the nation's television stations that went into effect on Friday, June 12. Three-quarters of the public (75%) say they heard a lot about the digital transition and

What the Public's Hearing About						
How much have you heard about  TV stations changing from analog to digital North Korea sentencing two U.S. journalists Palin/Letterman feud over jokes about family Stephen Colbert performing for U.S. troops in Irag	A lot % 75 44 35 13	A little % 18 29 36 33	Nothing <u>at all</u> % 7 26 29 54	<u>DK</u> % * * *		
Stephen Colbert performing for 0.5. troops in fraq	13	33	54			

another 18% say they heard a little about this. Just 7% of Americans say they had heard nothing about the change.

In early February, the federal government delayed the TV transition, initially set for Feb. 17, to give people more time to prepare. The public was also well aware of the impending change at that time. A poll conducted Jan. 30-Feb. 2 found that 81% had heard a lot about plans for the digital switch.

The story of two American journalists sentenced by North Korea to 12 years hard labor also registered widely with the public. About three-quarters of the public heard either a lot (44%) or a little (29%) about the jailing of the journalists. One-in-four (26%) say they had heard nothing at all about this.

Seven-in-ten Americans say they heard at least something about the feud between Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin and late night comedian David Letterman over jokes he told on his CBS show about Palin and one of her daughters (35% say they heard a lot, 36% heard a little). Last week, Palin and supporters criticized Letterman, who ultimately apologized this week. About half of all Republicans (49%) reported hearing a lot about this story compared with a third of Democrats (34%).

More people had heard about Palin and Letterman than about Comedy Central star Stephen Colbert taking his show, "The Colbert Report," to Iraq to perform for U.S. troops. More than half (54%) say they had heard nothing at all about this. Overall, 13% say they heard a lot about Colbert doing his show in Iraq and another 33% say they heard a little about it. Democrats were more likely than Republicans to say they heard something about Colbert entertaining U.S. troops (55% vs. 42%, respectively).

These findings are based on the most recent installment of the weekly News Interest Index, an ongoing project of the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press. The index, building on the Center's longstanding research into public attentiveness to major news stories, examines news interest as it relates to the news media's coverage. The weekly survey is conducted in conjunction with The Project for Excellence in Journalism's News Coverage Index, which monitors the news reported by major newspaper, television, radio and online news outlets on an ongoing basis. In the most recent week, data relating to news coverage were collected from June 8-14, 2009 and survey data measuring public interest in the top news stories of the week were collected June 12-15, 2009 from a nationally representative sample of 1,026 adults.

#### About the News Interest Index

The *News Interest Index* is a weekly survey conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press aimed at gauging the public's interest in and reaction to major news events.

This project has been undertaken in conjunction with the Project for Excellence in Journalism's *News Coverage Index*, an ongoing content analysis of the news. The News Coverage Index catalogues the news from top news organizations across five major sectors of the media: newspapers, network television, cable television, radio and the internet. Each week (from Monday through Sunday) PEJ compiles this data to identify the top stories for the week. The News Interest Index survey collects data from Friday through Monday to gauge public interest in the most covered stories of the week.

Results for the weekly surveys are based on telephone interviews among a nationwide sample of approximately 1,000 adults, 18 years of age or older, conducted under the direction of ORC (Opinion Research Corporation). For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling is plus or minus 3.5 percentage points.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls, and that results based on subgroups will have larger margins of error.

For more information about the Project for Excellence in Journalism's News Coverage Index, go to www.journalism.org.

## About the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press

The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press is an independent opinion research group that studies attitudes toward the press, politics and public policy issues. We are sponsored by The Pew Charitable Trusts and are one of seven projects that make up the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan "fact tank" that provides information on the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world.

The Center's purpose is to serve as a forum for ideas on the media and public policy through public opinion research. In this role it serves as an important information resource for political leaders, journalists, scholars, and public interest organizations. All of our current survey results are made available free of charge.

All of the Center's research and reports are collaborative products based on the input and analysis of the entire Center staff consisting of:

Andrew Kohut, Director
Scott Keeter, Director of Survey Research
Carroll Doherty and Michael Dimock, Associate Directors
Michael Remez, Senior Writer
Juliana Menasce Horowitz, Robert Suls, Shawn Neidorf, Leah Christian and Jocelyn Kiley
Research Associates
Kathleen Holzwart, Alec Tyson and Jacob Poushter Research Analysts

#### PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS JUNE 12-15, 2009 NEWS INTEREST INDEX OMNIBUS SURVEY TOPLINE N=1026

Q.1 As I read a list of some stories covered by news organizations this past week, please tell me if you happened to follow each news story very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely. First, [INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE] [IF NECESSARY "Did you follow [ITEM] very closely, fairly closely, not too closely or not at all closely?"]

		Very <u>closely</u>	Fairly <u>closely</u>	Not too closely	Not at all closely	DK/ <u>Refused</u>
a.	The debate in Washington over health care reform	29	26	18	26	*
	TREND FOR COMPARISON:1					
	May 15-18, 2009: Debate over Obama's health					
	care plans	25	30	20	24	*
	March 6-9, 2009: Obama proposing a					
	\$630 billion fund for overhauling health care	41	32	13	14	*
	September, 1994: The Clinton					
	Administration's health care reform proposals	32	41	18	9	*
	June, 1994	34	40	19	7	*
	May, 1994	37	37	16	9	1
	January, 1994	38	38	15	9	*
	Early January, 1994	40	40	14	6	*
	December, 1993	45	35	12	7	1
	October, 1993	44	32	17	6	1
	September, 1993	49	34	11	6	*
	August, 1993: Reports about the White House					
	task force on health care reform headed by					
	Hillary Clinton	27	32	25	15	1
	June, 1993	28	38	19	15	*
	May, 1993	30	30	25	14	1
b.	A deadly shooting at the Holocaust Memorial					
	Museum in Washington, D.C.	26	34	17	23	*
c.	The continuing financial troubles of GM and					
	Chrysler	30	37	18	16	*
	TREND FOR COMPARISON: <sup>2</sup>					
	June 5-8, 2009: GM declaring bankruptcy	29	37	19	14	*
	May 29-June 1, 2009: Reports that GM may					
	go into bankruptcy	34	40	17	9	*

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May 15-18, 2009 asked about: "Debate over Barack Obama's health care plans." March 6-9, 2009 asked about: "Barack Obama proposing a \$630 billion fund for overhauling the U.S. health care system." September, 1993 through September, 1994 asked about: "The Clinton Administration's health care reform proposals." May, 1993 through August, 1993 asked about: "Reports about the White House task force on health care reform headed by Hillary Clinton."

May 29-June 1, 2009 asked about: "Reports that General Motors may go into bankruptcy." February 20-23, 2009 asked about: "U.S. automakers seeking billions of dollars in federal loans to avoid bankruptcy." December 19-22, 2008 asked about "The Bush administration's plan to provide billions in emergency loans to U.S. automakers." December 12-15, 2008 asked about "The debate over a government bailout for the U.S. auto industry." November 21-24, 2008 and December 5-8, 2008 asked about "The debate in Congress over a government bailout for the U.S. auto industry." November 14-17, 2008 asked about: "News about problems facing U.S. automakers." October 31-November 3, 2008 asked about: "The possible merger of automakers General Motors and Chrysler." May 18-21, 2007 asked about: "DaimlerChrysler's decision to sell Chrysler to a private equity firm." January, 1992 and December, 2005 asked about: "The major job cuts announced by General Motors." June, 1998 asked about: "The merger of the Chrysler Corporation and Daimler Benz." September 28-October 1, 2007 asked about "An agreement between General Motors and the United Auto Workers union that ended a two-day strike over wages and job security."

Q.I CC		Very <u>closely</u>	Fairly <u>closely</u>	Not too closely	Not at all closely	DK/ <u>Refused</u>
N	May 1-4, 2009: Financial problems in the U.S.					
	auto industry	32	42	17	8	1
	April 24-27, 2009	30	39	16	15	*
	April 3-6, 2009	31	35	16	18	*
	February 20-23, 2009: U.S. automakers seeking					
	pillions in federal loans to avoid bankruptcy	33	34	22	11	*
	December 19-22, 2008: Bush administration					
	plan for emergency loans to U.S. automakers	37	33	16	13	1
	December 12-15, 2008: Debate over a					
	government bailout for U.S. auto industry	40	33	18	9	*
	December 5-8, 2008: Debate in Congress over					
	a bailout for U.S. auto industry	34	38	17	11	*
	November 21-24, 2008	41	26	17	15	1
	November 14-17, 2008: Problems facing U.S.					
	nutomakers	30	35	20	15	*
	October 31-November 3, 2008: Possible		• 0			_
	nerger of GM and Chrysler	16	28	24	31	1
	May 18-21, 2007: DaimlerChrysler sells	0	20	2.5	4.5	
	Chrysler	8	20	25	46	1
	September 28-October 1, 2007: Agreement		20	20	20	at.
	between GM and UAW ending strike	14	28	28	30	*
	December, 2005: General Motors job cuts	22	30	26	21	1
	June, 1998: Chrysler/Daimler Benz merger	12	22	27	38	1
J	January, 1992: General Motors job cuts	35	38	18	9	*
d. Co	ngress passing legislation placing new					
	trictions on the tobacco industry	19	24	22	34	*
	REND FOR COMPARISON: <sup>3</sup>					
I	December, 1998: Settlement between tobacco					
	companies and states restricting sales and					
	narketing	19	39	25	17	*
	April, 1998: Debate in Washington over					
	egislation to regulate tobacco	20	37	25	18	*
	April, 1997: Settlement in which Ligett tobacco					
	admitted that cigarettes are addictive	20	40	22	18	*
	September, 1996: The Administration's efforts					
	o regulate tobacco sales to children	32	36	20	11	1
	March, 1996: Investigations and lawsuits					
ŀ	brought against tobacco companies	20	32	27	21	*
e. Re	ports about the condition of the U.S. economy	41	35	12	12	*
	June 5-8, 2009	41	34	11	14	*
	May 29-June 1, 2009	43	37	11	8	*
	May 21-24, 2009	44	35	13	9	*
	May 15-18, 2009	44	35	12	8	*
	May 8-11, 2009	42	34	12	12	*
	May 1-4, 2009	47	36	11	5	1
	•					

December 1998 asked about: "A settlement reached by four major tobacco companies and 46 states to restrict the sale and marketing of tobacco products." April, 1998 asked about: "The debate in Washington over legislation to regulate the tobacco industry." April, 1997 asked about: "A legal settlement in which the Liggett tobacco company admitted that cigarettes are addictive." September, 1996 asked about: "The Administration's efforts to regulate tobacco sales to children." March, 1996 asked about: "Investigations and lawsuits being brought against tobacco companies."

oor (III (old ))	Very	Fairly	Not too	Not at all	DK/
	closely	closely	closely	closely	Refused
April 17-20, 2009	52	30	10	7	1
April 9-13, 2009	48	29	13	10	0
March 27-30, 2009	48	32	10	10	*
March 20-23, 2009	52	34	8	6	*
March 13-16, 2009	48	33	9	10	*
February 27-March 2, 2009	56	30	8	6	*
February 13-16, 2009	55	29	10	6	*
January 30-February 2, 2009	52	31	12	5	*
January 23-26, 2009	57	30	8	5	0
January 16-19, 2009	43	35	13	9	*
January 2-4, 2009	42	36	15	7	*
December 12-15, 2008	51	33	9	7	*
December 5-8, 2008	42	38	13	7	*
November 21-24, 2008	59	24	9	8	*
November 14-17, 2008	56	29	9	6	*
November 7-10, 2008	54	31	8	7	*
October 31-November 3, 2008	63	27	6	4	*
October 24-27, 2008	52	35	7	5	1
October 17-20, 2008	62	29	6	3	*
October 10-13, 2008	65	25	7	3	*
October 3-6, 2008	69	23	5	3	*
September 26-29, 2008	70	22	5	3	*
September 19-22, 2008	56	27	12	5	*
September 5-8, 2008	44	33	16	7	*
August 29-31, 2008	41	34	13	11	1
August 15-18, 2008	39	36	15	10	*
August 8-11, 2008	39	35	16	10	*
August 1-4, 2008	47	34	11	8	0
July 25-28, 2008	46	32	10	12	*
July 18-21, 2008	45	33	13	9	*
July 11-14, 2008	44	33	12	10	1
June 27-30, 2008	49	31	12	7	1
June 13-16, 2008	42	33	14	11	*
May 9-12, 2008	45	31	13	11	*
May 2-5, 2008	43	31	15	10	1
April 18-21, 2008	41	35	13	10	1
April 4-7, 2008	39	37	12	12	*
March 28-31, 2008	42	36	14	8	*
March 20-24, 2008	45	33	13	9	*
February 29-March 3, 2008	38	35	15	11	1
February 15-18, 2008	37	36	11	16	8
February 1-4, 2008	40	37	14	8	1
January 18-21, 2008	42	31	16	11	*
January 11-14, 2008	36	32	15	16	1
November 2-5, 2007	27	37	16	19	1
October 19-22, 2007	25	34	20	21	*
August 10-13, 2007	28	36	18	18	*
Mid-November, 2006	31	40	17	11	1
December, 2005	35	35	18	11	1
Early November, 2005	35	39	17	9	1 *
Mid-May, 2005	30	39	19	11	1
January, 2005	35	39 41	17	7	1 *
Mid-October, 2004	30	43	16	10	1
1110 0010001, 2007	50	73	10	10	1

	Very	Fairly	Not too	Not at all	DK/
	closely	closely	closely	closely	Refused
Early September, 2004	39	34	15	11	1
Mid-January, 2004	37	41	15	7	*
December, 2003	35	38	14	11	2
November, 2003	40	34	15	10	1
October, 2003	32	39	16	12	1
September, 2003	39	30	18	12	1
March, 2003	40	35	16	8	1
February, 2003	42	33	15	10	*
January, 2003	40	35	13	11	1
December, 2002	38	34	17	10	1
February, 2002	35	40	15	9	1
January, 2002	30	44	16	9	1
December, 2001	37	40	13	8	2
Mid-November, 2001	41	36	15	7	1
June, 2001	24	41	18	16	1
May, 2001	34	36	15	15	0
April, 2001	36	34	16	13	1
February, 2001	30	39	18	12	1
January, 2001	32	38	17	11	2
June, 1995	26	41	22	11	*
March, 1995	27	45	19	9	*
February, 1995	23	41	22	13	1
December, 1994	28	43	20	9	*
October, 1994	27	40	20	12	1
June, 1994	25	42	23	10	*
May, 1994	33	40	16	10	1
January, 1994	34	39	16	10	1
Early January, 1994	36	44	13	7	*
December, 1993	35	41	15	8	1
October, 1993	33	38	20	9	*
September, 1993	37	40	14	8	1
Early September, 1993	39	39	14	9	*
August, 1993	41	36	14	9	*
May, 1993	37	38	18	6	1
February, 1993	49	36	10	5	*
January, 1993	42	39	12	7	*
September, 1992	43	37	13	6	1
May, 1992	39	39	15	6	1
March, 1992	47	38	11	4	*
February, 1992	47	37	10	6	*
January, 1992	44	40	11	5	*
October, 1991	36	38	16	9	1

_		Very	Fairly	Not too	Not at all	DK/
		closely	closely	closely	closely	Refused
f.	The presidential election in Iran	18	26	23	34	*
	TREND FOR COMPARISON: <sup>4</sup>					
	May 21-24, 2009: Iran testing a missile that					
	could reach Israel	20	29	25	26	*
	July 11-14, 2008: The Iranian government					
	firing test missiles capable of striking Israel	25	29	22	23	1
	January 11-14, 2008: Encounter between					
	U.S. and Iranian ships	25	26	21	27	1
	December 7-10, 2007: Intelligence report					
	on Iran's nuclear weapons program	25	31	20	23	1
	October 26-29, 2007: Mounting tensions	26	34	21	18	1
	September 28 – October 1, 2007:					
	Ahmadinejad visit to U.S.	23	31	20	25	1
	June 1-4, 2007: US-Iranian talks	19	27	27	26	1
	February 23-26, 2007: Mounting tensions	29	37	18	15	1
	February 16-19, 2007: Iran supplying					
	weapons to Iraqi insurgents	28	32	20	19	1
	February 2-5, 2007: Mounting tensions	33	38	18	10	1
	Sept., 2006: Iran's nuclear research program	23	34	19	23	1
	August, 2006	24	34	20	20	3
	June, 2006	21	32	22	22	3
	April, 2006	26	30	23	20	1
	March, 2006	24	31	22	22	1

Q.2 Which ONE of the stories I just mentioned have you followed most closely, or is there another story you've been following MORE closely? [DO NOT READ LIST. ACCEPT ONLY ONE RESPONSE.]

- 25 Reports about the condition of the U.S. economy
- 19 The continuing financial troubles of GM and Chrysler
- 13 The debate in Washington over health care reform
- 12 A deadly shooting at the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.
- 8 The presidential election in Iran
- 4 Congress passing legislation placing new restrictions on the tobacco industry
- 8 Some other story

11 Don't know/Refused

May 21-24, 2009 asked about: "Iran testing a missile that could reach Israel." July 11-14, 2008 asked about: "The Iranian government firing test missiles capable of striking Israel." January 11-14, 2008 asked about: "News about a naval encounter between U.S. and Iranian ships." December 7-10, 2007 asked about: "A new intelligence report stating that Iran stopped its nuclear weapons program in 2003." October 26-29, 2007, February 23-26, 2007 and February 2-5, 2007 asked about: "Mounting tensions between the United States and Iran." September 28-October 1, 2007 asked about: "Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's recent trip to New York City where he spoke at Columbia University and the United Nations." June 1-4, 2007 asked about: "Recent talks between the United States and Iran." February 16-19, 2007 asked about: "Reports that Iran may be supplying weapons to insurgents in Iraq." March, 2006 through June, 2006 asked about: "Iran's nuclear research program."

#### On another topic...

Q.3 Are you hearing mostly good news about the economy these days, mostly bad news about the economy or a mix of both good and bad news?

		May	Apr	Mar	Feb	Jan	Dec
		8-11	9-13	13-16	13-16	16-19	5-8
		2009	2009	2009	2009	2009	2008
4	Hearing mostly good news about the economy	4	4	2	2	2	1
37	Hearing mostly bad news about the economy [OR]	31	39	51	60	67	80
59	A mix of good and bad	64	56	46	37	30	19
*	Don't know/Refused (VOL. DO NOT READ)	1	1	1	1	1	*

Q.4 Thinking about some specific aspects of the nation's economy... Please tell me if you are hearing mostly good news, mostly bad news or a mix of both good and bad news about each of the following. [READ and RANDOMIZE]

a.	The financial markets	Hearing mostly good news	Hearing mostly bad news 43	A mix of good and bad news 45	DK/ Refused 3
b.	Real estate values	11	45	40	3
c.	Prices for food and consumer goods	9	39	46	6
d.	The job situation	1	71	27	1

#### NO QUESTIONS 5 THROUGH 7

Q.8 How much if anything, have you heard about each of the following? Have you heard a lot, a little or nothing at all? [READ AND RANDOMIZE]

				Nothing	; DK/
		A lot	A little	at all	Refused
a.	Stephen Colbert performing for U.S. troops in Iraq	13	33	54	*
b.	North Korea sentencing two U.S. journalists to 12 years hard labor	44	29	26	*
c.	A feud between Sarah Palin and David Letterman over a joke he made about Palin's daughter	35	36	29	*
d.	TV stations around the country changing the way their signals are broadcast from analog to digital <b>TREND FOR COMPARISON:</b> <sup>5</sup>	75	18	7	*
	Jan. 30-Feb.2, 2009: Digital television transition	81	16	3	*

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For January 30-February 2, 2009 the question was worded: "On February 17th, television stations around the country are scheduled to change the way their signals are broadcast from what is called an analog signal to a digital signal. How much, if anything, have you read or heard about this upcoming change?"