

For Obama, a struggle with appeal

Americans increasingly view president unfavorably.

By Jennifer Agiesta and Julie Pace
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama's personal favorability ratings have served as a political firewall that sustained him through the Great Recession, grueling fights with congressional Republicans and his re-election campaign.

But after a rough start to Obama's second term, Americans increasingly view the president unfavorably, and an analysis of public polling shows it has become more difficult over time for Obama to fully rebound from dents in his ratings.

"It's a slow cumulative effect," Republican pollster David Winston said, adding that personal favorability "is a much harder number to move if it starts to go south."

Though he is barred from running for re-election, Obama still needs a strong connection with the public in order to rally Americans around his policy proposals and, in turn, to show Congress he remains political-

OBAMA'S NUMBERS

NBC News/Wall Street Journal polls showing President Barack Obama's positive and negative ratings for October in each year since he took office.

	Positive	Negative	Neutral
2009	56%	33%	11%
2010	47%	42%	11%
2011	56%	40%	4%
2012	49%	43%	8%
2013	41%	45%	14%

ly relevant.

The president's advisers need only look at Obama's predecessor, George W. Bush, to see the impact of a crumbling relationship with the public. Positive impressions of the Republican trailed off in the beginning of 2005 amid public frustration with the Iraq war and the government's flawed response to Hurricane Katrina. Bush's favorability rating never recovered and he struggled to fulfill significant policy goals throughout the rest of his presidency.

A series of recent polls show Obama's personal favorability now leaning negative, including an NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll released last week that found positive views of Obama at the lowest point of his presidency and down 6 points from earlier in October. The drop follows the 16-day government

shutdown, the cascade of problems during his health care law's rollout, and another flood of revelations about U.S. government spying.

Throughout Obama's presidency, his job approval and personal favorability ratings have generally risen and fallen in tandem. But his favorability numbers, which often reflect the public's gut-level reaction to a politician, generally remained the more positive of the two measures.

His strong likability was seen as a particular asset during his 2012 re-election campaign, when most polls showed that voters saw him in a more favorable light than his Republican rival Mitt Romney.

"For the president, it's meant that people have cared about what he had to say because they liked him," said Celinda Lake, a Democratic pollster.



The president's advisers need only look at Obama's predecessor, George W. Bush, to see the impact of a crumbling relationship with the public. EVAN VUCCI / ASSOCIATED PRESS

The question for the White House now is whether that dynamic will hold if the public's personal opinions of the president continue to sour. An Associated Press-GfK poll in early October found that 52 percent of Americans didn't think Obama was very honest and were split on whether he was even likable.

The president's favorability has taken hits during other points in his presidency. Although his rating improved somewhat after each decline,

it never fully recovered, with each rebound peaking below earlier average favorability ratings.

Past presidents have also struggled to recover from dips in their favorability ratings.

Bush left office with majorities saying they had both a negative impression of him personally and disapproved of his job performance. And former President Bill Clinton's favorability numbers never recovered after a fall in 1998 as the Monica Lewinsky story unfolded.

Hackathon debuts at OSU

Winning app produces playlist tailored to a crowd.

By Ben Sutherly
The Columbus Dispatch

Soon after you show up at a party, a friend puts you in an awkward spot. You're in charge of the music, but clueless about everyone's tastes.

A team of two Ohio State University students during the weekend developed an app for that, dubbing it "Atmosphere."

It produces a playlist tailored to a crowd after aggregating the songs and musical genres that partygoers have "liked" through their Facebook pages. All the app needs to know is who's there.

Ross Johnstal and Ritvik Vasudevan, both 19-year-old sophomores from Cincinnati, took first place for their work Sunday at the conclusion of Ohio State's first Hackathon. As prizes, each received a Wifi-connected drone.

"I really wanted to end up with a functioning pro-

gram, something that would be useful at the end of the day," said Johnstal, an electrical engineering major who sees commercial potential in Atmosphere. "The whole concept of a hackathon forces you to really focus on one application and get it done and make it work."

The event, sponsored by Hortonworks and Teradata, whose software supports the "big data" needs of businesses — pitted more than 100 students against one another. The students, who formed doz-

ens of teams, wrote code for 22 hours straight, from 4 p.m. Saturday to 1 p.m. Sunday, in the basement of the university's 18th Avenue Library. Their work was judged on its creativity, technical depth, degree of difficulty and "real-world" usefulness.

"Hacking" might bring to mind troublemakers who are trying to breach a computer system. But it also refers to a process of cobbling together code, said Arnab Nandi, an Ohio State assistant professor of computer science.

"Hacking is about conveying this awesome vision," Nandi said. "To be able to get it running to the point where you can see the result, that's what we want in 24 hours. Hopefully these students will go back and say, 'Let's make it perfect.' It doesn't have to be perfect to start off."

Nandi hopes the Hackathon, a sleep-depriving experience fueled by caffeinated drinks and pizza, gives students a new appreciation for the computer applications they use.