Insight

Unpopular, Not Mysterious

DOUGLAS HOLTZ-EAKIN | JULY 13, 2010

The Washington Post is reporting today that confidence in President Obama continues to dwindle. The president's spinmeisters continue to argue that it is, somehow, all George Bush's fault. More generally, the media seems baffled. Even the inestimable Peggy Noonan wrote:

Mr. Obama won on more than health care; he won on the stimulus package and the Detroit bailout. And yet his poll numbers continue to float downward. He is not more loved with victory.

What's the big mystery? On stimulus, every president would have acted – Obama gets no credit for doing the obvious. Then Democrats botched the bill, and the public knows it.

On health care, not every president would have acted – and Obama gets blame in some quarters for action alone. Then Democrats botched both the process and the substance of the bill, and the public is letting the president know it.

On the auto bailout, no president should have done it – and Obama gets lumped with the widely reviled George Bush for lack of principle and fuzzy economics. In this case, there wasn't even a bill, and the public hates that even more.

There is a simple explanation for the president's woes, and those of his predecessor. The public has principles – America remains a center-right country – and sure would like its president to both possess principles and show the backbone to stick to them. And most Americans get up every day, start checking off their to-do lists, and don't stop until the sun sets. They would like to see that kind of effort and competence in Washington.

This article originally appeared in The Daily Caller on July 13, 2010