



2009 Vote Ratings

Key Interest Groups and Their Make-or-Break Issues

Many interest groups issue annual report cards on the extent to which members of Congress have voted for or against their policy goals. They assign percentages indicating each lawmaker's number of "correct" votes on 25 or fewer make-or-break issues. They aggressively publicize the scores and use them to determine which incumbents they will work to elect or defeat. Campaign contributions often go to high scorers.

The accompanying table shows how six of D.C.'s leading interest groups, three on the left and three on the right, rated the votes of U.S. House members in 2009. Here are notes on each group along with summaries of the issues it used to evaluate lawmakers.

On the Left

The **Americans for Democratic Action** was founded in 1947 by Eleanor Roosevelt and others "to keep the New Deal dream...alive for generations to come." The ADA describes itself as "the nation's most experienced organization committed to liberal politics, liberal policies and a liberal future."

According to the ADA, "correct" votes in 2009 were: To strengthen the federal law that bars pay discrimination based on gender; tighten rules for Troubled Asset Relief Program spending; pass an \$816 billion stimulus; renew the State Children's Health Insurance Program; allow bankruptcy judges to ease terms of distressed mortgages; reauthorize the Community Service law, and limit executive compensation at bailed-out firms.

Other "correct" ADA votes were: To expand the federal hate-crimes law; include federal workers in the 1993 Medical and Family Leave Act; allow funding to move Guantanamo Bay prisoners to the U.S.; pass a cap-and-trade energy bill; approve "cash for clunkers" vehicle trade-ins; approve \$680 billion for defense; tighten security at chemical plants; pass a health-care overhaul; oppose anti-abortion language in the health bill; regulate financial institutions, and fund additional weeks of jobless checks.

The **AFL-CIO** was formed in 1955 by the merger of the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations. The 11-million-member voice of organized labor says its mission is to promote "social

On the Right

The **American Conservative Union**, founded in 1964, is the nation's largest and oldest conservative lobbying organization. The ACU extols "a market economy, the doctrine of original intent of the framers of the Constitution, traditional moral values, and a strong national defense."

According to the ACU, "correct" votes in 2009 were: To oppose a bill giving plaintiffs more standing to file pay-bias suits; oppose renewal of the State Children's Health Insurance Program; repeal the Troubled Assets Relief Program; oppose a \$787 billion economic stimulus; oppose a \$410 billion catchall appropriations bill; oppose allowing bankruptcy judges to ease the terms of distressed mortgages; oppose expanding the hate-crimes law to cover offenses based on sexual orientation, gender or disability; put hiring restrictions on the community-service organization ACORN, and eliminate earmarked funding for an airport near Johnstown, Pa.

Other "correct" ACU votes were: To oppose including federal workers in the 1993 Medical and Family Leave Act; oppose a "cash for clunkers" vehicle-purchase program; cut Legal Services Corp. funding; increase National Missile Defense funding; oppose a cap-and-trade energy bill; impose discretionary-spending caps; cut housing and transportation budgets; oppose funding for Planned Parenthood family-planning programs overseas; oppose a health-care overhaul; support anti-abortion language in the health bill; permanently repeal the estate tax, and oppose a financial-regulations bill.

On the Left

and economic justice...by enabling working people to have a voice on the job, in government, in a changing global economy and in their communities."

According to the AFL-CIO, "correct" votes in 2009 were: To strengthen the federal law that bars pay discrimination based on gender; give plaintiffs more standing to file pay-bias suits; pass an \$816 billion stimulus; renew the State Children's Health Insurance Program; pass a \$410 billion catchall appropriations bill; allow bankruptcy judges to ease terms of distressed mortgages; retain Davis-Bacon wage standards; approve the Democrats' five-year budget plan, and expand the hate-crimes law to cover offenses based on sexual orientation, gender or disability.

Other "correct" AFL-CIO votes were: To impose new rules on credit cards; fund "green" construction projects in public schools; pass a Federal Aviation Administration budget including stronger workers' rights; include federal workers in the 1993 Medical and Family Leave Act; pass a cap-and-trade energy bill; pass the education, labor and health and human services budget; approve a "cash for clunkers" vehicle-purchase program; curb executive pay at bailed-out firms; fund extended jobless benefits; pass health-care reform, and pass a financial-regulations bill.

The **League of Conservation Voters**, founded in 1969, is the political arm of the environmental movement. The LCV says it runs "tough and effective campaigns to defeat anti-environment candidates and support those leaders who stand up for a clean, healthy future for America."

According to the League, "correct" votes in 2009 were: To pass a cap-and-trade energy bill; approve a \$787 billion stimulus including clean-energy funding; expand protection of public land; approve the Democrats' five-year budget plan; approve the Interior Department budget; fully fund the White House Council on Environmental Quality; fund "green" construction in public schools; increase clean-water funding; protect the Bay-Delta Estuary in coastal California; protect the Molalla River in Oregon; bolster forest-management programs; fund programs to protect rare cats, and tighten chemical-plant security.

On the Right

The **U.S. Chamber of Commerce**, founded in 1912, represents three million businesses of all sizes. The Chamber describes itself as "the world's largest business federation" whose "core purpose is to fight for free enterprise before Congress, the White House, regulatory agencies, the courts, the court of public opinion, and governments around the world."

According to the Chamber, "correct" votes in 2009 were: To oppose a financial-regulations bill; block creation of a Consumer Financial Protection Agency; curb derivatives regulations; deny bankruptcy judges authority to ease terms of distressed mortgages; increase Troubled Assets Relief Program transparency; oppose the Democrats' health-care overhaul, and oppose new rules for chemical-plant security.

Other "correct" Chamber votes were: To support more funding for research into solar technology and vehicle-fuel efficiency; create a public-private travel-promotion program; oppose a cap-and-trade energy bill; oppose curbs on executive compensation at bailed-out companies; support a \$787 billion economic stimulus, and oppose a strengthening of the law banning pay discrimination based on gender.

The **Eagle Forum** says it has been "leading the pro-family movement since 1972" with its mission to support "American Sovereignty...American identity...the Constitution (and)...traditional education," while also working to "expose the radical feminists."

The Eagle Forum's "correct" votes in 2009 were: To oppose a bill giving plaintiffs more standing to file pay-bias suits; oppose strengthening the law banning pay discrimination based on gender; oppose an extension of the State Children's Health Insurance Program; oppose an expansion of AmeriCorps; oppose the Democrats' five-year budget plan; oppose an expansion the hate crimes law to cover offenses based on sexual orientation, gender or disability; oppose an expansion of the Family and Medical Leave Act to cover federal workers; oppose a cap-and-trade energy bill; oppose giving the Department of Education total control over student loans, and oppose the Democrats' health-care overhaul.