

Distrust of regulation has surged recently, but in a one-sided and somewhat surprising way. Here's a graph from Gallup:



The Gallup folks speculate that this is due to the GOP reaction to regulatory actions under Obama. That does not seem to fit the graph.

You'll notice that the GOP antagonism toward regulation began under Bush at about the time that the Democrats took control of Congress. It has built ever since then, and it continued to build after 2010 when new regulatory legislation has ground to a halt. My hypothesis is that the "too much regulation" concern is closely related to trust in government, and this trust tends to wane and wax depending in part on whether the respondent's political party controls the government. (See this [Gallup report](#)). The difference may be that trust in government centers more on the White House, whereas feelings about regulation also involve Congress.

For instance, if you look at the graph, it seems likely that the issue of regulation simply became more salient when Republicans didn't control all three branches and party leaders needed an issue on which to attack the Democrats.

Another oddity is that Republican antipathy to regulation has significantly declined in 2012, for the first time since 2006. It's hard explain this. Clearly there has been no decline in federal regulation in the past year, and Republican politicians like Governor Romney have continued to link regulation with the weak economy. Maybe other issues have been distracting rank-and-file party members from this one, or maybe Republicans are simply anticipating that the regulations will go away once a Republican is back in the White House.

Also, it's interesting that the number of Democrats who thought there was too much regulation peaked just after Democrats regained control of Congress and then dipped. There weren't any real changes in regulatory policy in the last two years of Bush's Administration. This would fit the hypothesis that trust in government, feelings about regulation, and partisan control of government are all linked.