Poll: Americans' pessimism on economy is growing

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WASHINGTON — Americans are growing more pessimistic about the economy and handling it remains President Barack Obama's weak spot and biggest challenge in his bid for a second term, according to a new Associated Press-GfK poll.

And the gloomier outlook extends across party lines, including a steep decline in the share of Democrats who call the economy "good," down from 48 percent in February to just 31 percent now.

Almost two-thirds of Americans — 65 percent — disapprove of Obama's handling of gas prices, up from 58 percent in February. Nearly half, 44 percent, "strongly disapprove." And just 30 percent said they approve, down from 39 percent in February.

These findings come despite a steady decline in gas prices in recent weeks after a surge earlier in the year. The national average for a gallon of gasoline stood at $3.75, down from a 2012 peak of $3.94 April 1.

U.S. presidents have limited ability to affect gas prices, which are determined in international markets. However, the party out of power always blames whoever is president at the time for high gas prices, as Republican Mitt Romney is doing now and as Democrat Obama did in 2008 when George W. Bush sat in the Oval Office.