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Subject: In the Wake of Tucson - ALR's National Polling Summary

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Anzalone Liszt Research

National Polling Summary

Friends,

Below you will find the weekly Anzalone Liszt National Polling Newsletter, which provides a pollster's take on data and trends that affect political campaigns.

This week, in the wake of the horrific tragedy in Tucson, we review data on the public's attitudes toward what the shooting means about our safety and civility, and its impact on our country's gun laws.

Following our analysis are additional news items and data we thought you'd enjoy.

John Anzalone and Jeff Liszt

STORY OF THE WEEK: IN THE WAKE OF TUCSON

As the country struggles to make sense of the senseless acts of violence in Tucson, at least one thing is clear: regardless of their level of dissatisfaction with government, Americans have no tolerance for violence against it. According to a [CBS poll](#) taken days after the shooting, 76% of Americans believe violence against the government is never justified, while only 16% feel it is justifiable. This is unchanged from last spring.

The events last week - which 85% of Americans [heard "a lot"](#) (59%) or "some" (26%) about - raised questions about whether it could be repeated in the near future. Americans are divided, with 45% feeling a similar event could happen again in the next year or so, while 47% feel it is not likely to be repeated, according to [CBS poll](#). A new [Rasmussen poll](#) finds that 45% of likely voters are concerned that those opposed to President Obama's policies will resort to violence, though 52% do not share that concern.

Is Today's Political Rhetoric to Blame?

Amid the coverage of the attack, the media initially speculated that the nation's harsh political tone played a role in encouraging alleged shooter Jared Loughner's actions. The majority of Americans [reject this notion](#).

with 57% saying the tone had nothing to do with the Arizona shootings, compared with only 32% who believe that it did. A new [Washington Post poll](#) backs this up, finding 54% of Americans believe that the political discourse in the country did not contribute to the attack, only 40% believe it did. A [Quinnipiac poll](#) finds a plurality (40%) of Americans believe there was nothing that could have been done to prevent the situation and only 15% felt the political rhetoric was the main reason. A [Gallup poll](#) finds that while a plurality believe political rhetoric was not a factor in the attack (42%), 20% feel it was a major factor, and 22% believe it was a minor factor.

The public does, however, believe that while today's political tone did not incite violence in Arizona, it has escalated and political groups have gone too far. More than half (52%) of Americans believe members of Congress are [less civil](#) today than they were 10 years ago when debating political issues, and 49% believe Americans are less civil. The [Washington Post poll](#) finds that 82% of Americans feel that the tone of political discourse is negative. A [Gallup poll](#) finds that a majority of Americans believe that both parties have gone too far (53% Republicans, 51% Democrats); however, in the wake of the events in Tucson, [more than half](#) (53%) of Americans believe attempts to say conservative rhetoric contributed to the shooting is merely an attempt to make conservatives look bad; only 35% feel it is a legitimate point.

Will Stronger Gun Laws Prevent Future Attacks?

Americans do not believe changing our nation's gun laws would have prevented the attacks that took place in Tucson. A [Gallup poll](#) finds only 20% of Americans feel the attack could have been prevented with stricter laws, while 72% believe it would have occurred even if the laws were more strict. Gallup has tracked public attitudes towards gun laws for the last 20 years, and last November released [a report](#) showing support for stricter gun laws at an all-time low (only 44% supported stricter gun laws). The [CBS poll](#) conducted after the shooting finds that 47% of Americans support stricter gun laws, a seven-point increase in their polling since last April.

As [Nate Silver](#) and [Gary Langer](#) pointed out last week, the consistency in attitudes towards gun laws in the wake of tragedy is not anomalous, and in the days following the Columbine High School shooting in 1999 and the Virginia Tech attacks in 2007, the public similarly did not feel lax gun laws were to blame, or that stricter laws could have prevented the shootings. The [Washington Post](#) also released a poll finding 52% of Americans favoring stricter gun control laws and points out that this number is down from where it was after the Virginia Tech shootings. The same poll finds 57% support a nationwide ban on high-capacity magazine clips such as the one used by Jared Loughner.

Time will tell if the modest increase in support for stricter gun laws holds, or if our political discourse will adopt a more civil tone. For now, we mourn for the loss of the six Americans who died on January 8th, as President Obama said in [his speech](#) Wednesday night, "our hearts are broken by their sudden passing."

OTHER NEWS FROM THE POLLING AND POLITICAL WORLD

Good News for Obama - Eight polls on President Obama's job rating have come out since Christmas, all of them showing a modest boost in his standing - Mark Blumenthal writes an [interesting piece](#) in [pollster.com](#) discussing the trend. A [Quinnipiac poll](#) finds that 48% of registered voters approve of the job he's doing and 44% disapprove. This is an increase from November when only 44% approved, 49% disapproved. The [A confirms](#) this movement, showing 53% of Americans approving of the job he's doing.

Post Tucson bump: A new [Washington Post poll](#) taken after the Arizona shooting finds that Obama's approval

rating is at 54%, up 5 points from last month. Obama also gets high marks on his response to the Arizona shooting incident; the same poll finds that 78% of Americans approve of his handling.

Democrats Make Gains on Key Issues - An [AP-GfK poll](#) shows that Democrats are expanding their advantage over Republicans on key issues like the economy (45% believe Democrats will do a better job, 40% believe Republicans will), handling health care (49% Dem - 37% Rep), handling taxes (45% Dem - 42% Rep, up from 41% - 45% in November), and creating jobs (44% Dem - 40% Rep, up from 44% - 42% in November). Additionally, a [Pew Research Center study](#) finds that a plurality of Americans disapprove of Republican congressional leaders' policies and plans for the future (34% approve - 43% disapprove).

Debt Ceiling - Seventy-one percent of Americans oppose raising the debt ceiling, while only 18 percent support an increase, according to a new [Reuters/Ipsos poll](#).

Optimism about the Economy - A [Reuters/Ipsos poll](#) finds that optimism about the country's direction is improving, with 36% of Americans saying that things are headed in the right direction, up from 29% last month. Perhaps this improvement comes from a belief that the economy is getting better: A [Pew Research Center study](#) finds that Americans' perceptions of economic news was no longer "mostly bad", with only 18% saying they hear "mostly bad" news, down from 39% in December.

Health Care Repeal - As the House prepares to vote on repealing the health care reform law, a new [AP poll](#) finds that Americans' opposition to the health care bill is at an all-time low, since April of 2009. The poll finds that 40% of Americans currently support the law, and 41% oppose. Support for full repeal has also dropped - only 26% currently believe the law should be repealed, down from 31% in November, and 37% its all time high in October. The same poll finds that 43% want to change health care so that it does more. A [Marist poll](#) backs this up, showing that more Americans want to expand the health care law than repeal it. 35% want to change it so that it does more, while only 30% want to repeal it.

A [Gallup poll](#) conducted earlier this month finds that Americans narrowly favor repeal, though are close divided (46% favor - 40% oppose), and a [Rasmussen poll](#) finds that only 29% of Americans believe that repeal will increase the deficit.

Preexisting Conditions - According to the [study](#) by the Department of Health and Human Services finds 129 million Americans under the age of 65 have medical problems that are red flags for health insurers. Americans between ages 55 and 64 are at particular risk: 48 to 86 percent of people in that age bracket have some type of pre-existing condition.

PUBLIC POLLING

| PRESIDENT OBAMA'S JOB RATING | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|---------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Polling Firm | Date | Sample | Approve | Disapprove |
| Quinnipiac University | 1/4-11/11 | Reg Voters | 48% | 44% |
| AP-GfK | 1/5-10/11 | Adults | 53% | 46% |

| DIRECTION OF THE COUNTRY | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------|---------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| Polling Firm | Date | Sample | Right Direction | Wrong Track |

| | | | | |
|---------------|-----------|--------|-----|-----|
| Ipsos/Reuters | 1/7-10/11 | Adults | 36% | 59% |
|---------------|-----------|--------|-----|-----|

TRUST ON KEY ISSUES - OBAMA OR CONGRESS

| Polling Firm | | Obama | Congress | Both | Neither |
|--|------------------------------|-------|----------|------|---------|
| Washington Post/ABC News. Jan 13-16, 2011. 1,053 adults. MoE=3.5 percentage points | The economy | 46% | 41% | 3% | 7 |
| | The federal budget deficit | 44% | 41% | 4% | 8 |
| | The threat of terrorism | 45% | 39% | 5% | 6 |
| | The situation in Afghanistan | 52% | 31% | 4% | 9 |
| | Health care reform | 42% | 42% | 1% | 10 |
| | Helping the middle class | 51% | 37% | 1% | 8 |

POLITICAL RHETORIC INFLUENCING AZ SHOOTING

Did harsh political tone have anything to do with Arizona shootings?

| Polling Firm | Date | Sample | Yes | No |
|--------------|-----------|--------|-----|-----|
| CBS News | 1/9-10/11 | Adults | 32% | 57% |

COULD HARSHER GUN LAWS PREVENT ARIZONA SHOOTING

From what you know about the shootings, do you think this tragedy would have been prevented if the state of Arizona had stricter gun laws, or this tragedy would have occurred even if the state of Arizona had stricter gun laws?

| Polling Firm | Date | Sample | Would have been prevented with stricter gun laws | Would have occurred even with stricter gun laws | No opinion |
|--------------|---------|--------|--|---|------------|
| Gallup | 1/11/11 | Adults | 20% | 72% | 8% |

SUPPORT FOR HEALTH CARE LAW

In general, do you support, oppose or neither support nor oppose the health care reforms that were passed by Congress in March?

| Polling Firm | Date | Sample | Support | Oppose | Neither Support nor Oppose |
|--------------|-----------|--------|---------|--------|----------------------------|
| AP-GfK | 1/5-10/11 | Adults | 40% | 41% | 16% |

SUPPORT FOR HEALTH CARE LAW

What would you prefer Congress do with the new health care law?

| Polling Firm | Date | Sample | Leave it as is | Change it so that it does MORE to change the health care system | Change it so that it does LESS to change the health care system | Repeat complete |
|--------------|-----------|--------|----------------|---|---|-----------------|
| AP-GfK | 1/5-10/11 | Adults | 19 | 43 | 10 | 26 |

PARTY SELF ID

| Polling Firm | Date | Sample | Dem | Rep | Ind / other |
|--------------------|-----------|--------|-----|-----|-------------|
| Pollster.com Trend | 1/7-10/10 | Adults | 31% | 25% | 36% |

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