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**Subject:** Viewers Give POTUS SOTU A+ - ALR's National Polling Summary

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## February 2, 2011

### 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, we take a look at viewers' response to the President's State of the Union. The President received almost universally high marks from those who viewed the speech. Presidents often enjoy a warm response to their State of the Union, but in President Obama's case, the strong reaction to the speech is only the latest evidence that his political standing is solid - and improving - as we enter the early phases of the Obama cycle.

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

John Anzalone and Jeff Liszt

#### **OBAMA STATE OF THE UNION EARNS HIGH MARKS FROM VIEWERS**

After a politically difficult (though legislatively successful) 2010, President Obama is starting off 2011 on a right foot. He's received high marks for his handling of the Tucson tragedy, almost universal praise for his State of the Union speech, and his numbers on important macro-measures like the presidential job ratio are improving. Additionally, most economic metrics continue to improve - which won't change the President's numbers overnight, but will certainly help expand and solidify his support as good economic news continues (as most experts believe it will) through 2011 and beyond.

Politics broadly - and polling numbers specifically - are especially volatile in the age of cable news, blogs, twitter, and no doubt the next 20 months will see their share of turmoil. However, the response to the of the Union and the broader numbers we're seeing in January 2011 could ultimately prove to have set course that determined the outcome in November 2012.

### ***State of the Union Reaction***

The 2011 State of the Union was one of the more memorable in recent history. Coming shortly after the Tucson shootings, many members of Congress chose to eschew the traditional partisan seating - and in: literally crossed the aisle to sit with a member of the other party. The juxtaposition of the relative colleg of the 2011 State of the Union with Congressman Joe Wilson's "You Lie!" outburst during President Obama's September 2009 speech to Congress is especially stark - and encouraging. Ideally, future SOTU speeches employ a similar bipartisan tone, and enjoy a similarly warm bipartisan response.

Traditional landline polling and online polling shortly after the SOTU found that viewers gave the speech high marks.

- A landline telephone poll conducted by CNN/ORC showed 84% of viewers had a positive reaction to President Obama's speech, with 52% identifying their reaction as "**very** positive". More than three-quarters (77%) of viewers feel the President's policies will move the country in the right direction. Solid majorities of viewers also believe President Obama's policies will "improve the economy" (68%), "create or save millions of jobs" (61%), "increase cooperation between Democrats and Republicans" (61%), and "reduce the federal budget deficit" (57%).
- An online poll sponsored by CBSNEWS found similar numbers. More than 9 of 10 (91%) viewers approved of the policies articulated in the SOTU speech, and 80%+ approved of his specific proposals on the economy (82%), the deficit (80%), and Afghanistan (83%). And 62% of viewers believe both parties will work together in a more effective way than in the recent past - a striking number give traditional cynicism voters display toward promises of bipartisanship.

The importance of an online poll of speech viewers shouldn't be overstated. The instant response from SOTU was extremely impressive, but similar measures in previous years have shown a similar phenomenon. As with most presidential speeches, supporters of the President are more likely to view a speech than detractors. That trend held this year, as Democrats comprised a disproportionate amount of viewers. However, a majority of viewers - according to both landline and online surveys - were either Republican or Independents. President Obama's ability to connect in such a potent way with this audience is a promising way for the President to symbolically turn the political page from the 2010 cycle to 2011.

### **OTHER NEWS FROM THE POLLING AND POLITICAL WORLD**

**The President's numbers continue to inch up** - Pollingreport.com finds the average of the eleven public released polls conducted in 2011 (51% Approve / 44% Disapprove) shows President Obama's job approval is over 50%, a key benchmark for any presidential re-election. Conversely, the last four polls conducted in 2011 revealed that more voters disapproved of the job the President was doing than approved of it. For example, an NBC/WSJ poll in early December had the President's job approval at 45% Approve / 48% Disapprove. The most recent NBC/WSJ poll (Jan 13-17) showed the President's job approval at 53% Approve / 41% Disapprove - an 8-point increase in the President's job rating, an impressive rise in just a few weeks. Few measures

as critical to the President's political health as his job rating - and it merits continued monitoring over the coming months - but it seems possible that the President's numbers turned the corner in the past few weeks.

**Investors also approve of the job the President is doing** - Bloomberg recently released their quarterly poll of 1,000 investors, and found a majority (53%) view the President favorably - up from 49% in November. A similar 53% of investors believe the U.S. economy is "improving".

**Voters send mixed messages on the debt** - A recent CNN/ORC poll found that, by a nearly 3:1 margin, voters favor "a legislative agenda that would reduce the size of the government" (71% Favor / 25% Oppose). Very strong majorities favor cutting "aid to foreign countries" (81%), "pensions and benefits for retired government workers" (61%), and "welfare programs in general" (56%), voters are more protective of social safety-net spending. Majorities would prefer to "prevent significant cuts" to veterans' benefits (85%), Medicare (81%), Social Security (78%), "education programs" (75%), Medicaid (70%), and "assistance to unemployed workers" (61%). Unsurprisingly, voters are much more enthusiastic about cutting spending in general than they are when specific programs are placed on the cutting block.

**Early Polling and Developments Offer Good News for Senate Dems** - Most Senate races won't fully get underway for several months, but there have been early developments that should make Senate Democrats more bullish on maintaining control. Recent polling shows Democratic incumbents Debbie Stabenow (MI), Bill Nelson (FL), Sherrod Brown (OH), Claire McCaskill (MO), and Joe Manchin (WV) leading possible Republican opponents. These polls are extremely early and not especially telling, but it is worth noting that Democrats were trailing in early 2010-cycle polling in states like Arkansas, Kentucky, Ohio, New Hampshire, and others in competitive races that went Republican on Election Day.

Perhaps more importantly, Republicans appear to have already missed on top recruits in Florida, Michigan, Missouri, Ohio, and Pennsylvania and may struggle to find a top tier candidate in Nevada and West Virginia. The Senate landscape ensures Democrats will mostly play defense this cycle, but the NRSC cannot be held back with the way many of the competitive races are shaping up thus far.

**DailyKos/PPP to release complete raw polling data** - The progressive website DailyKos is partnering with polling firm Public Policy Polling to conduct frequent 2012 polling, and will publicly release their full raw data online. John Anzalone is among those quoted in this Rollcall article, applauding the embrace of transparency but also pointing out their limited practical utility to the data dump.

**Rahm Emanuel back on ballot, in accord with public opinion** - Most political observers have followed the legal wrangling involved in the composition of the Chicago mayoral ballot. The Illinois Supreme Court resolved the issue last week, and ordered Emanuel's name to appear on the ballot. Late 2010 Anzalone Liszt polling found, that by a 3:1 margin, Chicago voters believe Rahm Emanuel should be allowed on the ballot (62% Yes / 20% No).

## PUBLIC POLLING

PRESIDENT OBAMA'S JOB RATING				
Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Approve	Disapprove
CNN/ORC	1/21-1/23	Adults	55%	44%
Fox/OD	1/18-1/19	RV	47%	44%
CBS/NYT	1/15-1/19	Adults	49%	39%
NBC/WSJ	1/13-1/17	Adults	53%	41%

**DIRECTION OF THE COUNTRY**

How well are things going in the country today: very well, fairly well, pretty badly or very badly?

Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Very / Fairly Well	Very / Pretty Badly
CNN/ORC	1/23/11	Adults	43%	56%
CNN/ORC	12/19/10	Adults	29%	71%
CNN/ORC	10/30/10	Adults	25%	75%

**CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL**

Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Approve	Disapprove	Unsure
CNN/ORC	1/23/11	Adults	26%	72%	2%

**PERCEPTIONS OF REPUBLICANS IN CONGRESS**

Do you think the policies being proposed by the **Republican** leaders in the U.S. House and Senate would move the country in the right direction or the wrong direction?

Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Right Direction	Wrong Direction	Unsure
CNN/ORC	1/23/11	Adults	46%	50%	4%

**PERCEPTIONS OF DEMOCRATS IN CONGRESS**

Do you think the policies being proposed by the **Democratic** leaders in the U.S. House and Senate would move the country in the right direction or the wrong direction?

Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Right Direction	Wrong Direction	Unsure
CNN/ORC	1/23/11	Adults	45%	52%	4%

**PARTY SELF ID**

Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Dem	Rep	Ind / other
Pollster.com Trend	1/17-1/20	Adults	31%	25%	36%

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