

February 6, 2012  
Anzalone Liszt Research  
National Polling Summary

Friends,

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

This week, we turn our attention to SuperPACs and their impact on the 2012 election cycle, plus public opinion regarding these groups, and what it means politically going forward.

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

John Anzalone and Jeff Liszt

**STORY THIS WEEK: PACs Americana**

Last Tuesday in Florida, Mitt Romney was landing the finishing punches in the latest bitter and bruising stage of the Republican primary gauntlet. Meanwhile, the “SuperPACs” that support him, Newt Gingrich and others were busy filing their final 2011 FEC reports, disclosing exactly who has been bankrolling the onslaught of ads in primary battlegrounds like Florida. Two years after the U.S. Supreme Court’s momentous [ruling](#) in *Citizens United v. FEC*, the superpowers of SuperPACs are changing the calculus of political campaigns.

Consider this graph from the Center for Responsive Politics’ OpenSecrets database, which measures outside groups’ spending in election cycles on a year-to-date basis.

**Outside Spending by Cycle thru February 1st of election year, Excluding Party Committees**

🕒 See [entire cycle](#) | **Year-to-date**



The ramp-up from 2008 to 2012 is striking, and the disparity is even bigger than the chart suggests: this

year's exorbitant spending is the product of just one party's primary, while 2008 included both the Democratic and Republican nominating contests.

SuperPACs have spent [\\$45.8 million](#) on the 2012 elections. Moreover, outside money comprises a greater share of overall spending than it has before. According to the [Wesleyan Media Project](#), candidates' spending in the GOP Presidential primary has actually *decreased* in this cycle relative to 2008. At this point four years ago, the candidates had already spent over \$48 million in advertising; this year, that figure is a more modest \$13 million. But it is outside groups that have seen their ad buys skyrocket. In January 2008, interest groups had aired \$1.1 million in ads in the 2008 GOP Presidential primary; by January 2012, interest groups had aired more than \$15 million worth of Presidential primary ads.

Focused on a single state, the combined tonnage of ad money from a candidate and his supporting SuperPAC can overwhelm the opposition. Restore Our Future – the pro-Romney PAC – spent \$14.7 million in Florida, [92%](#) of which was spent on negative ads attacking Gingrich and Rick Santorum. Of its \$17 million in total fundraising, the group has spent 95% of it on attack ads. To put these numbers into perspective, John McCain spent [\\$11 million](#) on ads for the whole 2008 primary season. The Romney and Gingrich SuperPACs spent [\\$10.4 million](#) *in one week*, the vast majority of it on negative ads.

And despite what voters might say in focus groups, negative ads work and have been effective this cycle. Florida and South Carolina offer good [examples](#): in South Carolina, the pro-Gingrich SuperPAC spent approximately \$3 million on anti-Romney commercials, slightly outpacing the pro-Romney SuperPAC's \$2.5 million in anti-Gingrich commercials. Gingrich emerged from the Palmetto State with a surprising victory. But in Florida, the Romney SuperPAC responded by outspending Gingrich and his allies by a margin of 4 to 1 on television. Romney won the state easily. But SuperPAC ads don't have to be negative to move voters: looking back to New Hampshire, the Jon Huntsman-aligned Our Destiny PAC spent over a [quarter of a million dollars](#) in the week preceding the primary. This provided Huntsman a late surge, even though it was ultimately too little too late.

But where does public opinion – and awareness – stand? According to a recent Pew Research [poll](#), only 54% of registered voters say they have heard about “a 2010 Supreme Court decision allowing corporations and individuals to spend as much as they want on political ads for or against candidates as long as they don't coordinate with the candidates or campaigns”. However, those who have heard about the ruling don't like it and think it has had a negative effect on the 2012 Presidential campaign (65% negative / 16% positive / 10% no effect). And greater awareness brings greater concern: 58% of voters who have heard “a little” about *Citizens United* believe it is having a negative impact on the 2012 presidential campaign, while that number rises to 78% among those who have heard “a lot” about the case.

Awareness and opinion about the new rules seems to defy the usual partisan boundaries. Roughly half of Republicans, Democrats and independents alike have heard of the court's decision; and among those who have, a majority of each partisan group says it is having a negative effect on the campaign cycle. Voters have remained overwhelmingly anti-*Citizens United* after being exposed to its effects, too: a [Granite State Poll](#) preceding the New Hampshire primary found that 74% of all NH adults believe outside groups should not be able to spend unlimited and undisclosed contributions on political campaigns, including

73% of likely GOP primary voters.

Voters' concerns about SuperPACs seem to feed on the long-standing mistrust of big money's influence on government. The newly-released SuperPAC filing reports do little to assuage those worries: for example, the pro-Romney Restore Our Future PAC raised [82%](#) of its money with donations of \$100,000 or more. A recent Democracy Corps [poll](#) finds that 65% agree that they are "fed up with the big donors and secret money that controls which candidates we hear about." In another [poll](#), two-thirds of small business owners say that *Citizens United* is bad for business, and 88% of them have a negative view of the role money plays in politics.

### **What do people want to do about it?**

Well, giving to Stephen Colbert is an option. His Americans for a Better Tomorrow, Tomorrow PAC raised over a million dollars (announced in a [gloating letter to the FEC](#)) by relying on small donations from his many admirers. Through the end of 2011, Colbert's PAC received exactly 1 contribution in excess of \$5,000. Compare this to the PACs that Colbert is mocking: [99%](#) of donations to the conservative American Crossroads PAC have been in amounts of \$25,000 or more, and 82% of Restore Our Future's \$17.9 million came from just [58 checks](#) averaging more than \$250,000.

Another option is for the candidates themselves to denounce SuperPAC spending, as Sen. Scott Brown and Elizabeth Warren have done in the Massachusetts Senate race. Their calls for a SuperPAC [ceasefire](#) came in response to outside attack ads launched by the League of Conservation Voters and Crossroads GPS. Neither of them want to eliminate PACs from the campaign altogether, though: Brown has so far earned 13% of his fundraising from PAC contributions, while Brown has received 2% of her total in PAC money (see complete fundraising data [here](#)).

Though there isn't much polling on specific policy proposals to curb SuperPACs, the public is very supportive of campaign finance reform: [Democracy Corps](#) finds that 81% of likely voters agree that "there is too much big money spent on political campaigns and elections today and reasonable limits should be placed on campaign contributions and spending." Lawmakers might also take note that two-thirds of independents surveyed in the poll agree that "reducing the influence of money in politics and special interest lobbyists is a very important factor in my vote."

### **More to come**

Even though SuperPACs have already spent \$45 million this cycle, it is important to note that that is just the tip of the iceberg compared to what we'll see in the general election, where there will be much more money and many more states in play. With SuperPACs poised to serve as a glaring example of people's concerns about the influence of corporate and special interest money in politics, politically savvy state legislators and members of Congress might be poised to take another swing at reform. would be wise to take another swing at reform.

However, large-scale campaign finance reform looks highly unlikely, and we don't expect to see either side unilaterally disarm. Voters may gripe about money in politics to pollsters, but they have yet to show a propensity to inform themselves about poorly-funded, reform-minded candidates. The small amount of credit voters might give a candidate for refusing money from secretive big donors is typically cold

comfort when those candidates are overwhelmed by a barrage of negative advertisement against them, paid for by those same donors.

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

**New Washington Post/ABC News poll.** In addition to its Obama vs. Romney matchup, shows Americans' increasing frustrations with income inequality and the tax code. The highlights: Americans favor raising taxes on millionaires (72% support / 24% oppose), they think the current tax code favors the wealthy (68% wealthy / 9% middle class), and they don't think Mitt Romney is paying his fair share of taxes at 14% (66% not fair / 30% fair). Charts below.

**Jobless rate falls.** America added 249,000 jobs in January, an unambiguously great number. Besides the overall number, there were encouraging signs in this month's employment [report](#): November and December's reports were also revised upwards, and the overall numbers for January include large unemployment drops among the African-American and Hispanic communities. Chart below.

**Romney struggles in Midwest.** PPP [finds](#) Mitt Romney leading big in Colorado with 40% of the vote, but as of right now he is struggling in Minnesota after losing its neighbor to the south to Rick Santorum in January. Santorum leads him (Santorum 29% / Romney 27%) with Gingrich in a close third (22%). He is also trailing badly in Missouri (Santorum 45% / Romney 34%)

**Americans Split on Legalized Sports Gambling in Their States.** Voters are split (42% favor / 53% oppose) on whether to allow sports betting in their state, Fairleigh Dickinson [finds](#) Men are more supportive of the proposal (49% support / 37% oppose) while women are on balance against it (35% support / 47% oppose).

**Pop, Coke, or Soda?** A county-level [map](#) shows what Americans call the fizzy stuff around the country.

**Missed a past newsletter?** They can be found on our website, [here](#).

<b>PRESIDENT OBAMA'S JOB RATING</b>				
<b>Polling Firm</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Approve</b>	<b>Disapprove</b>
<i>Washington Post / ABC News</i>	Feb.1-4	Adults	50%	46%
<i>Rasmussen</i>	Jan. 31-Feb.2	Likely Voters	46%	52%
<i>Gallup</i>	Jan. 30-Feb.1	Adults	46%	47%
<i>YouGov/Polimetrix</i>	Jan.28-31	Adults	44%	48%

## **OBAMA VS ROMNEY GENERAL ELECTION**

[anzalonerresearch.com](http://anzalonerresearch.com)

WASHINGTON, DC

NEW YORK, NY

MONTGOMERY, AL

Polling Firm	Date	Sample
Washington Post / ABC News	Feb.1-4	Reg. Voters
Obama	51%	
Romney	45%	

More from *Washington Post / ABC News* survey.

Do you think the current U.S. tax system favors the middle class, favors the wealthy, or treats both groups about equally?						
Middle class NET	Middle class Strongly	Middle class Somewhat	Wealthy NET	Wealthy Somewhat	Wealthy Strongly	Both Equally
9%	5%	4%	68%	12%	56%	19%

Do you support or oppose raising taxes on Americans with incomes over one million dollars a year?						
Support NET	Support Strongly	Support Somewhat	Oppose NET	Oppose Somewhat	Oppose Strongly	No opinion
72%	59%	14%	24%	9%	16%	3%

Romney paid about a 14 percent federal tax rate on income of about 22 million dollars last year. Do you think he is paying his fair share of taxes?						
Fair share NET	Fair share Strongly	Fair share Somewhat	Not fair NET	Not fair Somewhat	Not fair Strongly	No opinion
30%	15%	15%	66%	16%	50%	4%

From Bureau of Labor Statistics unemployment report.

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE TREND			
Group	Nov. 2011	Dec. 2011	Jan. 2012
Overall	8.7%	8.5%	8.3%
White	7.6%	7.5%	7.4%
African-American	15.5%	15.8%	13.6%
Hispanic	11.4%	11.0%	10.5%

PARTY SELF ID					
Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Dem	Rep	Ind/ other

[anzalonersearch.com](http://anzalonersearch.com)

WASHINGTON, DC

NEW YORK, NY

MONTGOMERY, AL

<i>Pollster.com</i>	Feb. 6	Adults	30.2%	24.8%	41.8%
---------------------	--------	--------	-------	-------	-------

OBAMA POPULAR VOTE SHARE						
Polling Firm	Date	Polly Vote	Polls	Iowa Electronic Markets	Econometric Models	Index Models
<i>PollyVote</i>	2/4/12	51.3%	50.0%	50.9%	49.8%	54.6%

DIRECTION OF THE COUNTRY					
Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Right Direction	Wrong Track	
<i>YouGov/Polimetrix</i>	Jan.28-31	Adults	26%	58%	
<i>NBC/WSJ</i>	Jan.22-24	Adults	30%	61%	
<i>CBS/Times</i>	Jan.12-17	Adults	29%	66%	