



September 22, 2011

Anzalone Liszt Research

National Polling Summary

Friends,

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

It's been a couple of weeks since President Obama proposed the American Jobs Act to Congress, and this week we take a look at Americans' thoughts on the bill and how the bill has influenced their thinking about the President.

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

John Anzalone and Jeff Liszt

STORY THIS WEEK: American Jobs Act: Initial Perceptions

American Jobs Act: Key Policy Points

As you probably know, President Obama's [American Jobs Act](#) has many facets, but the key job-creating ideas are:

1. A payroll tax cut for workers (\$1,500 per year for the average American family, with the middle and working classes seeing the largest percentage increases in their take-home pay).
2. A business payroll tax cut that is heavily targeted towards small businesses.
3. A temporary end to all business payroll taxes on new hires or employee pay raises.
4. Prevention of hundreds of thousands of teachers, cops, and firefighters from being laid off.

The Jobs Act would be fully paid for by tax increases on incomes over \$250,000 per year.

Voter Opinions on American Jobs Act

So far, the limited up-or-down polling on the American Jobs act finds Americans modestly supportive. Gallup found [last week](#) that a plurality of Americans wanted their member of Congress to vote for the bill (45% for / 32% against)-however, 23% of people were undecided. The more people were paying attention to the bill, the more supportive they were-the 56% of Americans who were following news about the bill very closely supported the bill by a large margin (57% for / 36% against), while those who were following it not too closely (43% for / 26% against) and not at all (18% for / 25% against) were the least supportive of the bill. The bill had strong support from Democrats (70% for / 9% against), a double-digit lead among Independents (44% for / 32% against), and was backed by a non-trivial amount of Republicans (19% for / 60% against).

Opinions on Specific Items in the Bill

Gallup and the New York Times have also [both found](#) that the key features of the bill are popular. The New York Times found the following support levels for specific items in the bill:

	Good Idea	Bad Idea
Significantly cut taxes for small businesses	81%	14%
Spend money on the nation's infrastructure such as bridges, airports, and schools	80%	16%
Significantly cut payroll taxes for working Americans	56%	30%
Provide money for state governments so they can avoid layoffs of public employees	52%	40%

And Gallup found these results:

	Favor	Oppose
Providing tax cuts for small businesses, including incentives to hire new workers	85%	13%
Providing additional funds to hire teachers, police officers, and firefighters	75%	25%
Tax breaks to companies who hire people who have been unemployed for >6mo	73%	26%
Providing additional funds for public works projects, including making repairs to more than 30,000 schools	72%	27%
Extending unemployment insurance benefits	56%	41%
Reducing Social Security taxes for workers and employees	47%	49%

The polls found generally the same results, with two exceptions. First, there was a difference in support for reducing payroll taxes (56%) and reducing Social Security taxes (47%). We believe "reducing Social Security taxes" is bad framing—we have seen in other research that it confuses people on whether this means benefit cuts or not. We advise supporters of the bill to stick to talking about a "payroll tax cut" (the benefit workers and companies will see) rather than a "Social Security tax cut" (confusing, not 100% accurate, and needlessly specific).

Second, there was a big difference in talking about "providing funds to hire teachers, police officers and firefighters" (75%) and "providing money to state governments so they can avoid layoffs of public employees" (52%). The first frame focuses on the benefit to regular people (more teachers, cops, and firefighters); the second highlights state government spending, and it gives a more nebulous description of some public employees that doesn't highlight any benefits.

Voters are also supportive of the broad concepts by which Obama wants to pay for this job creation, according to Gallup:

	Favor	Oppose
Increasing taxes on some corporations by eliminating certain tax deductions	70%	26%
Increasing income taxes on individuals earning at last \$200,000 and families earning at least \$250,000	66%	32%

Do Voters Think the Bill Will Work?

Most voters believe that the bill will help at least some. Gallup found that 66% of Americans think it will help at least a little to create jobs, including 27% who think it will help a lot. A similar percentage feel that the bill will

help improve the economy (23% help a lot / 60% help a little or a lot). Only 30% and 36% respectively think the bill will not help at all to create jobs or improve the economy.

In fact, if anything, voters don't believe the plan goes far enough. [Marist](#) found a majority of voters think the plan will do more good than harm (51% good / 38% harm), just as Gallup did. However, they also found 63% of Americans-including 78% of Democrats, 59% of Independents, and 54% of Republicans-don't think the plan goes far enough, compared with 18% who think it goes too far. We are inclined to take this with a grain of salt: first; they did not offer an "about right" option, and second; only a bare majority of voters have followed news about the bill very or somewhat closely. However, this does show the broader desire Americans have for Obama to think big with respect to the economy.

Effects on Obama and Democrats

It is early to tell, but Democrats seem to be benefitting politically from Republicans' opposition to the job-creation proposal. The same New York Times poll has found a double-digit uptick in people believing Obama has a clear plan for creating jobs. While in January only 33% of voters believed he had a clear plan, now 43% believe so. These numbers aren't ideal, but they compare favorably with Republicans in Congress, both in January (28%) and now (24%). The Democratic Party also now holds an 8-point lead on which party voters think is more likely to create jobs (40% Democrats / 32% Republicans), compared to a 2-point deficit in October 2010 (37% Democrats / 39% Republicans).

Bloomberg Poll: Not a Good Read on Jobs Act, but Useful Insights on Obama's Negotiating Style

The media (especially conservative sources) has given a decent amount of attention to a [Bloomberg poll](#) this week that shows massive skepticism about the American Jobs Act. Their numbers show that people think Obama's plan will not help by a substantial margin (40% will help / 51% will not help), which some have pointed to as Obama's plan being dead on arrival with voters. However, we are skeptical of this question for a couple reasons:

- *Question order effect*: The question was asked after multiple questions that primed people to express economically-skeptical responses and responses that make people worry about more spending, including questions about:
 - Whether people want "spending cuts and tax cuts", current levels of spending, or more spending to grow the economy
 - When homes in their area will hit pre-recession values
 - A 13-question block, immediately preceding the question, about the debt and deficit
- *Question wording*: Obama's plan was described in the question as "tax cuts, spending on public works, and aid to local governments at an estimated \$447 billion." We believe the plan would have tested better with a more full description of it, or without any description as [Gallup did](#) last week. This question highlights very specifically the \$447 billion price tag but gives almost no details on the benefits:
 - "Public works" and "aid to local governments" are far less concrete (and popular) than investing in schools, infrastructure, and keeping firefighters and police officers at work.
 - Not all tax cuts are created equal: the tax cuts to small businesses in the bill are particularly popular, but this question doesn't specify those

With that said, the poll (which is generally well-conducted) contains a nugget about Obama's conciliatory negotiating style. A majority of voters disapprove of Obama's negotiating style with House Republicans (37% approve / 52% disapprove)-these numbers are heavily weighed down by the fact that only 58% of Democrats approve of his negotiating style. We shall see if the stronger tack Obama's taken with this bill is able to move that number, but there's clear evidence that people are looking for a more aggressive posture from him.

OTHER NEWS FROM THE POLLING AND POLITICAL WORLD

New U.S. Census Survey finds Marylanders have the longest commute of anyone: In a finding that will surprise no one that sits on I-270 every morning, the annual American Community Survey (which has far more information than this tidbit) [finds](#) Marylanders have the longest average commute in the nation at 31.8 minutes. New York state residents were second at 31.3 minutes, while the Dakotas clocked in at a speedy 16.1 minutes (North Dakota) and 16.8 minutes (South Dakota), giving those states' residents the shortest average commute.

Spoken like someone who trails badly in polls: [Sarah Palin](#), on polling: "usually I'll say polls, eh, they're for strippers and cross-country skiers"

From the "Get the government out of my Medicare" department: While these results are old, they bear printing. A 2008 Cornell Survey Research poll [finds](#) that 57% of Americans believe they have never used a government social program, but when asked individually about 21 different federal policies, 94% of respondents had used at least one and the average respondent had used four. Many of these programs in question ([as shown in this chart](#)) are tax credits, but even among people who say they haven't used a government program, many report having received a direct federal benefit such as a student loan (53% of self-described non government-benefit receivers say they have received), a Pell Grant (43%), veterans benefits (42%), Medicare (40%), and Medicaid (28%).

Young families are facing poverty at higher rates than in almost 20 years: Since Bill Clinton presided over eight years of economic prosperity, young people have not faced a tougher time than they do right now. Northeastern University [finds](#) that 37% of young families with children (i.e. parents under 30) are living below the poverty line.

Better spring for that unlimited text message plan: Of the 73% of Americans who send and receive text messages, [according to Pew](#), the average text message sender sends or receives 41.5 texts per day, compared to an average of 12 calls per day. The average text sender 18-24 years old sends or receives 109.5 messages a day (or about 3300 text messages in the average month).

Perry and Romney have very different supporters: We've seen Perry's huge leads settle down a little in recent days, and USA Today [finds](#) him leading Mitt Romney by a narrow margin (31% Perry / 24% Romney). While Perry wins a head-to-head matchup against Romney (49% Perry / 39% Romney), he fares far worse against Obama: Gallup has him losing to Obama by five points (50% Obama / 45% Perry) while Romney leads him by two (47% Obama / 49% Romney). Bachmann's support has plummeted since July as she only gets 5% of the vote nationally.

Nate Silver analyzes the geography of college football fans: [Silver](#) combines media market data and self-reported fandom within those markets to calculate schools' national fan bases. The Big Ten comes out on top in his calculation, with Ohio State, Michigan, and Penn State having the top three fanbases nationally.

Do polls underestimate female candidates' vote shares? Two political scientists [find](#) that polls underestimate female candidates' vote share by a little more than two percent on average, and that this effect "is more common in states with culturally conservative views of gender issues."

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

PUBLIC POLLING

PRESIDENT OBAMA'S JOB RATING				
Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Approve	Disapprove

CBS/New York Times	9/10-15/11	Adults	43%	50%
Bloomberg	9/9-12/11	Adults	45%	49%
Ipsos/Reuters	9/8-12/11	Adults	47%	48%
CNN/ORC	9/9-11/11	Adults	43%	55%
ABC News/Washington Post	8/29-9/1/11	Adults	43%	53%

PARTY SELF ID					
Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Dem	Rep	Ind / other
Pollster.com Trend	9/22/11	Adults	31.0%	23.5%	41.4%

GOP NATIONWIDE PRIMARY		
Polling Firm	Date	Sample
Gallup	9/15-18/11	Republicans and Republican-leaning independents
Perry	31%	
Romney	24%	
Paul	13%	
Bachmann	5%	
Gingrich	5%	
Cain	5%	
Santorum	2%	
Huntsman	1%	

DIRECTION OF THE COUNTRY				
Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Right Direction	Wrong Track
Marist/McClatchy	9/13-14/11	Adults	22%	73%

OBAMA POPULAR VOTE SHARE						
Polling Firm	Date	Polly Vote	Polls	Iowa Electronic Markets	Econometric Models	Index Models
PollyVote	9/22/11	50.7%	49.7%	48.1%	50.2%	54.7%

