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# September 30, 2011

## Anzalone Liszt Research

### National Polling Summary

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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.

With the debt super committee's deadline less than two months away, we thought it would be a good time to review what the public would like to see the committee propose, their initial reactions to its creation, and their thoughts on its prospects for success.

Most notably, polling from the past two months reveals that President Obama's proposal to raise taxes on the wealthy and his commitment to protecting Medicare from any significant changes reflect the opinions of the vast majority of Americans. As a result, the GOP's polar opposite positions on these two issues puts the party significantly out of step with the public.

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

John Anzalone and Jeff Liszt

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#### **STORY THIS WEEK: Attention: Deficit Disorder**

##### **Americans oppose big Medicare cuts, but are divided on defense cuts**

Make no mistake, Americans are eager to see the deficit addressed in a serious way. In April, a [Washington Post/Pew poll](#) found that 81% of Americans felt that the federal budget deficit was a problem that needs to be addressed now, with just 14% saying that it should be addressed when the economy improves.

But this desire for action does not mean that Americans welcome just any deficit reduction proposal. Recent polls are consistent in terms of the type of deficit reduction proposals Americans strongly support (raising taxes for the wealthy and big corporations), strongly oppose (major changes to Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security) and are ambivalent about (cuts to defense spending).

An August [NBC/WSJ poll](#) found that 78% of Americans felt that cuts to Medicare were an unacceptable way of reducing the deficit, with 51% saying they were *totally* unacceptable. A recent [CNN/ORC poll](#) also found strong opposition to the super committee proposing such cuts, with 64% saying that the committee's proposal should not include major changes to Medicare or Social Security.

The public is not completely shut off to some minor changes to Medicare (though what constitutes a minor change is obviously highly subjective). While just 13% believe a proposal should include "major spending reductions" to Medicare, an additional 35% say they would support minor reductions. That leaves a narrow majority of 51% opposed to any reductions at all. Meanwhile, opposition to Medicaid cuts is only slightly lower, with 46% against

cuts of any kind to that program. The public is less keen on cuts to Social Security, with 58% opposing cuts of any kind to the program.

Americans are more divided when it comes to the role that defense spending cuts should play in any deficit reduction plan. According to the [CNN/ORC survey](#), the public opposes major cuts in military spending by a 6-point margin (47% should include cuts / 53% should not). The findings in the [NBC/WSJ poll](#) are nearly identical, with 46% saying significant reductions in defense spending are acceptable, while 51% say they are not. Much of this opposition is driven by Republicans, 78% of whom oppose major cuts in military funding. Among independents, the percentage opposed to such cuts falls to 49%.

There is an openness to minor cuts here as well, as the latest [Kaiser Family Foundation poll](#) finds that just 28% of Americans are against any reductions in military spending, while over two-thirds (67%), are open to at least minor ones. This openness to minor cuts extends to conservatives, as strong majorities of both Republicans (60%) and Tea Partiers (57%) are open to at least limited reductions defense spending.

**Strong support for raising taxes for the wealthy**

As we've seen repeatedly in public polling over the past year, no potential source for reducing the deficit is more popular than new tax revenue from wealthy Americans and large businesses. The [CNN/ORC poll](#) found that 63% of Americans (and 62% of independents) believe that higher taxes for businesses and wealthy Americans should be part of the super committee's proposal. And while Republican Congressman John Fleming might think [otherwise](#), families earning \$250,000 a year or more clearly fall into the public's definition of "wealthy," as 60% of respondents in the [NBC/WSJ poll](#) felt that raising this group's taxes was acceptable to reduce the deficit.

Such findings demonstrate that support for President Obama's recent tax reform proposals extend far beyond the Democratic base, as they earn strong backing from independents as well.

Just in case that data doesn't demonstrate just how out of step with the public Republicans are in their opposition to raising taxes for the wealthy and big corporations, here is some more evidence: According to the [Kaiser poll](#), less than one in five Americans agree with the dominant Republican positions that higher taxes for wealthy Americans (19%) or closing tax loopholes for large businesses (10%) should not be part of a deficit reduction plan. Meanwhile, the most recent [NBC/WSJ poll](#) finds that 60% of the public believes that it is *unacceptable* to reduce the deficit through spending cuts alone.

So while Republicans might point to the fact that 57% of Americans say that major cuts in domestic spending should be part of the super committee's proposal, they should keep in mind that on virtually every other aspect of the budget fight - from higher taxes for the wealthy, to closing corporate tax loopholes, to major changes to Medicare and Medicaid - their current positions are significantly out of step with both the public overall and independents.

**A note on language for the tax debate**

Though not particularly surprising, we thought it was worth noting that Americans are even more supportive of raising taxes on the wealthy and big businesses when such proposals are framed as eliminating "tax loopholes," a term that applies to many of the deductions that President Obama wants to eliminate and that Republicans want to protect. The [Kaiser poll](#) reveals that when the proposal is framed as "*closing tax loopholes* for wealthy Americans," 60% believe it should play a major role in reducing the deficit, but when it is framed as "*increasing taxes* for wealthy Americans," the share believing it should play a major role drops 12 points to 48% (though 78% still say it should play some role in deficit reduction). Framing the tax hike for the wealthy as "repealing the Bush tax cuts" is slightly more popular (52% major role) than the more generic description, though not as popular as closing tax loopholes.

	Major Role	Total Role	No Role at All
<i>Closing tax loopholes</i> for wealthy Americans	60%	86%	12%
<i>Repealing the Bush tax cuts</i> for wealthy	52%	78%	19%

Americans

*Increasing taxes* for wealthy Americans

48%

78%

19%

[Kaiser Family Foundation Health Tracking Poll](#), Sept. 7-12, N=1,207, MOE=3%

### **Americans think a Super Committee is a good way to approach deficit problem...**

According to the latest [Kaiser poll](#), Americans generally support the creation of the super committee after hearing a description of it. By a 12-point margin (50% to 38%), the public believes that this approach to deficit reduction was a good idea.

Americans also clearly want to see the committee succeed. After hearing that a failure to reach an agreement would mean significant cuts to Medicare and defense spending, 60% of respondents in a [USA Today/Gallup poll](#) said that they want the committee to agree to a compromise plan, *even if* they don't support the plan that the committee agrees on. Just a third (35%) of respondents wanted the committee to hold out for a plan that they would support, even if it meant no agreement.

It's worth noting that this desire for an agreement extends across party lines, with strong majorities of Democrats (67%), Republicans (55%), and independents (57%) all wanting the committee to agree on a compromise plan, regardless of whether it's a plan they agree with. The desire for compromise among Republicans does not extend to Tea Partiers however, as they oppose a compromise plan by a 12-point margin (41% support / 53% oppose).

### **...But they don't have much hope it will succeed**

Though Americans clearly want the super committee to succeed, they are not holding out much hope that it will. The latest [Kaiser poll](#) finds that just 36% of adults are even somewhat confident that the committee will be able to reach an agreement before their November deadline. And if the committee does agree on a proposal, 56% think it's *unlikely* that the proposal will get enough support from both parties in Congress to pass.

A recent [Democracy Corps poll](#) found similar pessimism, with 55% of likely voters saying they did not expect the committee to produce a good result after hearing a description of their task, compared to just 32% who expected a positive conclusion to the process.

When asked how much they trusted the super committee to make the right recommendations on the deficit, just 33% of respondents in the [Kaiser poll](#) expressed even a fair amount of trust. That puts the level of trust in the committee to handle the deficit at the same low level as Republicans in Congress (31% trust them a great deal/fair amount on the deficit), and well below President Obama (52% trust) and Democrats in Congress (43% trust).

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

**Cyber bullying and digital abuse:** MTV and the AP recently released the findings of an interesting [poll](#) of teens and young adults on cyber bullying and digital abuse.

**Video that you won't see the last of if Chris Christie runs:** Nate Silver drew our attention to this 2009 Chris Christie [campaign video](#) that attempts to link him - in a positive way - to President Obama.

**HuffPost says Republican activists souring on Perry, warming to Romney:** A [survey](#) of 160 Republican activists in key early states has bad news for Rick Perry.

**Strong support for "Buffett rule" across party lines:** A new [SEIU/Daily Kos/PPP poll](#) finds that over three-quarters of Americans support the Buffett rule, including 66% of Republicans, 73% of independents and even a majority of Tea Partiers.

**Romney regains lead among GOP primary voters nationally:** A new [Fox poll](#) shows Romney recapturing the lead while Perry's support has fallen by 10 points over the last month. Herman Cain comes in just 2 points shy of

Perry at 17% and just 3% support Bachmann.

**Concerning enthusiasm gap for Democrats:** A recent [Gallup poll](#) finds that the percentage of Democrats who say they are more excited about voting than usual (45%) is 13 points below the share of Republicans who say the same (58%).

**Twitter reveals what makes us happy:** A new [study](#) of 500 million twitter messages in 84 countries, shows that regardless of where in the world we live, we are happiest on weekends, during the morning, and when the days are longer.

**The economy and the Electoral College:** The *National Journal's* Ronald Brownstein and Scott Bland [examine](#) the latest data from the American Community Survey and conclude that while virtually every state has struggled in the recession, the states Obama will need the most in 2012 have been the hardest hit.

**The loss of a friend:** The polling world [lost](#) one of its own with the passing of Andre Pineda earlier this week. The staff at ALR sends its sincerest condolences to Pineda's family, friends and coworkers.

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

## **PUBLIC POLLING**

<b>PRESIDENT OBAMA'S JOB RATING</b>				
<b>Polling Firm</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Approve</b>	<b>Disapprove</b>
CNN/ORC	9/23-25/11	Adults	45%	52%
ARG	9/17-20/11	Adults	41%	56%
YouGov/The Economist	9/17-20/11	Adults	36%	56%
CBS/New York Times	9/10-15/11	Adults	43%	50%
Marist/McClatchy	9/13-14/11	Registered Voters	39%	52%

<b>PARTY SELF ID</b>					
<b>Polling Firm</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Dem</b>	<b>Rep</b>	<b>Ind / other</b>
Pollster.com Trend	9/29/11	Adults	31.0%	23.5%	41.4%

<b>GOP NATIONWIDE PRIMARY</b>			
<b>Polling Firm</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Sample</b>	
FOX News	9/25-27/11	Republicans Primary Voters	
Romney		23%	
Perry		19%	
Cain		17%	
Gingrich		11%	
Paul		6%	
Huntsman		4%	
Bachmann		3%	
Santorum		3%	

## **DIRECTION OF THE COUNTRY**

<b>Polling Firm</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Right Direction</b>	<b>Wrong Track</b>
YouGov/The Economist	9/17-20/11	Adults	14%	72%
CBS/New York Times	9/10-15/11	Adults	23%	72%

### GENERIC HOUSE BALLOT

<b>Polling Firm</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Dem</b>	<b>Rep</b>	<b>Unsure</b>
GWU/Politico Battleground	8/28-9/1/11	Likely voters	41%	40%	18%

### OBAMA POPULAR VOTE SHARE

<b>Polling Firm</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Polly Vote</b>	<b>Polls</b>	<b>Iowa Electronic Markets</b>	<b>Econometric Models</b>	<b>Index Models</b>
PollyVote	9/29/11	50.7%	50.0%	47.7%	50.2%	54.9%



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