



## **Democratic poll analysis: Jobs Plan Key to Obama Win**

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A little more than a year out from the 2012 Presidential election, President Barack Obama and the Democratic Party find themselves in competitive standing. Getting out from under a defensive crouch regarding government spending and the budget deficit and instead driving aggressive plans to fight for the middle class and address voters' higher priorities of the economy and jobs represents the best way for the President and Democrats to seize the offensive, control the debate, and position themselves for success.

A 54% majority of voters would either definitely vote or consider voting for Obama in 2012. The Republicans are a weak, flawed alternative. All the Republican candidates have serious problems with high ratios of unfavorable feelings and more or equal numbers of voters who would definitely not for them. None has a base equal to that of the President. The outcome of the debt ceiling fight left a stain on the Tea Party, and only 22% of voters identify with them today. Tying the Republican candidates to the Tea Party is key. However, to win, Obama must act aggressively, starting with strong leadership on the economy and solid opposition to cuts in Social Security and Medicare.

Today, Democrats have a one-point lead on the generic Congressional trial heat (41% to 40%) as they did in May. Both Parties are consolidating their partisans, with 83% of Democrats and 84% of Republicans supporting their respective tickets, and the enthusiasm gap that was a major storyline of 2010 has disappeared (78% of Republicans and 77% of Democrats say they are extremely likely to turn out in 2012). While independent voters negligibly lean toward the GOP today: 29% to 26%, with a 45% plurality undecided, it is a far cry from the Republicans' 19-point lead among independents in the 2010 election. Democrats can take back the House and should not miss this opportunity.

Currently, voters are statistically tied over to whom they give the critical advantages of turning the economy around and creating jobs, loosely affording the Republicans a marginal advantage over Obama on the issues (+2 GOP and +1 GOP, respectively). President Obama leads the Republicans when it comes to standing up for the middle class (+22 Obama), safeguarding America from terrorism (+14 Obama), sharing voters' values (+7 Obama), handling health care (+4 Obama), and Social Security (+11 Obama). Republicans maintain an advantage on controlling the deficit (+15 GOP), but their ability to forge a fault line on the issue as they were able to do in 2010 is less probable this time around, as it's paled in its primacy and because Republicans have the wrong approach. Also, recent news reports say the Republicans want to critique the President's foreign policy—good luck—his job performance on foreign

policy and terrorism outside the context of the opposition Party are also solidly positive (+14 and +42, respectively).

Trends underneath also point out the opportunity Democrats and the President have on the economy, but they must rein it and stay on it. Independents, like most other Americans, prioritize jobs and the economy far more than deficits and spending. More significantly, independents award the President advantages over Congressional Republicans on his ability to create jobs (+9 Obama), turn the economy around (+6 Obama), and stand up for the middle class (+34 Obama).

The President and Democrats are not without a solution. Cast in objective—bordering unfavorable—terms, a majority (51%) supports a large-scale, federally-subsidized construction program to put Americans back to work building roads, bridges, schools, and hospitals, including 40% of voters who support it strongly. Fifty-two percent of independent voters and a majority of blue-collar voters support this proposal. Opposition stands at just 21%, 16% among independents.

Further signifying this proposal's ability to serve as the fulcrum of 2012, solid majorities of the Democratic base including liberals (73%), African Americans (69%), Latinos (67%), voters under 30 (58%), and women (56%) all favor this proposal. And with voters demanding action on their priorities, such an effort also has the critical ability to win over key swing groups and help rectify voters' uncertainty regarding Obama's ability to deliver on jobs and the economy. Majorities of voters who are unsure of the job Obama is doing on economy (82%), voters who would consider voting for Obama (66%), voters who are unsure of the job Obama is doing on jobs (61%), voters who are unsure of the job Obama is doing as President (61%), and, as mentioned earlier, independents (52%) also all staunchly support this bold action to put Americans back to work.

Currently, the Republicans have a substantial advantage over Obama and the Democrats on the deficit. Jobs and the economy are the Democrats' opening. However, stunningly, the Democrats have the better approach on the deficit. Most Americans are looking to taxes—closing loopholes and raising rates on the wealthiest and corporations—(53%) rather than spending or entitlement cuts (40%). Only 11% pick entitlement reform even without pointing out that this includes Social Security and Medicare. Independents' views reflect those of voters overall.

In comparing the two Parties, Democrats' advantages come on the issues of health care (+14 Dem), Social Security (+11 Dem), and standing up for the middle class (+27 Dem)—on the last of these dimensions Democrats post a lead that exceeds their President's. That the Republican Party can be seen by so few Americans as fighting for the middle class and still draw favorable comparisons vis-à-vis the Democrats on creating jobs and turning around the economy is stunning and points to a fundamental lack of substantive profile for the Party in power on the issue that has animated the electorate for the better part of a decade. Democrats and the President have also come back from disadvantages on Social Security and health care. It is critical that they stand firm on avoiding cuts to these two programs, which are wildly popular with the public.

Winning in 2012 is predicated on winning credibility and the communications battle on jobs and the economy. Currently, 57%-59% of voters give the President bad marks on jobs and the economy, including 70% of blue-collar voters when it comes to the economy. Economic anxiety plagues voters and with greater intensity than in May, and the mood of the electorate remains bleak. Hope for improvement has sunk to a new nadir as the electorate is racked with worry over jobs, the economy, and the plausibility of another substantive economic downturn. Nearly three-quarters of voters (72%) are pessimistic in their outlook on the future, with a solid majority (57%) very worried that the U.S. will suffer another economic downturn that will negatively affect them and their families, representing a spike in the intensity of concern since May (39% very worried).

Yet, for much of the past two years, voters have heard little in the way of concrete plans for fixing the unemployment crisis as Washington has mired itself and the electorate in spending and the budget deficit. A 43% plurality points to jobs and the economy as the dominant items on the issue agenda (18% and 25%, respectively), and these concerns are far more salient than government spending and the budget deficit (20%). While concern for spending remains unchanged since May, there has been a 15-point jump in the importance of jobs and the economy (43% today compared to 28% in May), a clarion call for immediate action.

The President's address to the nation this week on job creation offers an enormous opportunity to recast the debate and with it the Obama presidency. The President and Democrats in Congress need to lay out a bold plan on jobs and have room to find it with a tax-fairness proposal. They also need to stay on it for the next 14 months.