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Anzalone Liszt Research

National Polling Summary

Earlier this month, President Obama delivered his fifth State of the Union, and first of his second term. Laying out his agenda for the next four years, Obama expanded on many of the ideas he discussed in his inaugural address, including immigration, climate change, the economy, education, and gun control. And those who were watching liked what they heard. An instant poll by [CNN/ORC](#) found that 77 percent of viewers had a somewhat or very positive view of the address.

Majority support for immigration reform

President Obama called on Congress to pass a comprehensive immigration reform bill, which would include both a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants and stronger border security. The proposed path to citizenship has strong support, with two-thirds (66 percent) of voters in a [Fox News poll](#) backing a path that would require paying back taxes, learning English and passing a background check. When no requirements are specified, support for a path to citizenship ranges from 55 percent ([ABC/Washington Post](#)) to 62 percent ([AP/GfK](#)). Support grows even stronger if a straight path to citizenship is combined with the option of [legal residency](#) (72 percent) or a [guest worker program](#) (74 percent). In short, despite the fervor of some anti-immigration activists, the vast majority of Americans support measures that allow illegal immigrants to become American citizens.

Support for stricter border security is also strong. An [ABC News/Washington Post poll](#) found that 83 percent of the American public supports stricter border control, while [Gallup](#) found that 68 percent of Americans favor such a measure, even if it would mean increased government spending.

Climate change legislation depends on the details

After resting on the back burner for several years, climate change came into focus in both the inaugural address and the State of the Union. And this Sunday saw the largest climate change rally in American history, with more than 35,000 activists descending on the Mall and calling for President Obama to take action. So has the tide turned?

A [Benenson Strategy Group poll](#) finds that 65 percent of American voters support “the President taking significant steps to address climate change now.” Similarly, a [PPP poll](#) finds that 58 percent think the country should take more action to address climate change. Both polls reveal that more than six in 10 American voters think that climate change is already a problem or will be in the near future. And according to a [Yale/George Mason poll](#), belief in global warming

is at its highest (70 percent) since 2008 – an increase of 13 percent from 2010. Additionally, 54 percent believe that global warming is caused mostly by human activities – also at its highest since 2008.

A study from [Duke University](#), however, shows that the devil is in the details. While nearly two-thirds of Americans support regulating greenhouse gas emissions, requiring automakers to build more fuel-efficient cars, and requiring utilities to produce more energy from clean sources, only 29 percent support a carbon tax. Meanwhile, a plurality of 37 percent is undecided on a cap-and-trade proposal, while the rest are divided (29 percent favor / 33 percent oppose).

More than two-thirds of Americans support increasing the minimum wage

In his speech, Obama declared, “In the wealthiest nation on Earth, no one who works full-time should have to live in poverty” and proposed raising the minimum wage to \$9 an hour. He argued “it could mean the difference between groceries or the food bank; rent or eviction; scraping by or finally getting ahead.” It was one of the few parts of the speech that the White House had managed to keep under wraps, and afterwards, the Republican talking heads were out in full force decrying the effect on businesses.

But Paul Krugman [explains](#) why a higher minimum wage is both good economics and good politics. And public support for an increase is strong: a 2010 report from the [Public Religion Research Institute](#) found that 67 percent of the American public supports increasing the minimum wage to \$10, while a 2012 survey from [Lake Research](#) found 73 percent support the same increase. This high level of support held in the 2012 survey even after respondents heard the opposition’s argument about slower job growth.

Most recently, a [Pew Research/USA Today poll](#) found that 71 percent of Americans favor increasing the minimum wage to the \$9 level Obama proposed. Interestingly, Republicans who do not associate themselves with the Tea Party also support this proposal by a [wide margin](#) – 60 percent to 36 percent. But among Republicans who agree with the Tea Party, the proposal is panned 32 percent to 64 percent.

Universal preschool faces an uphill battle

President Obama also made the case for investing in early childhood education, citing the statistic that for every dollar spent now, the government can save more than seven dollars down the line through increased graduation rates, reduced teen pregnancy, and less violent crime. It is a compelling argument, and there appears to be significant support for universal preschool. A [bipartisan survey](#) from Hart Research and American Viewpoint in 2008 found that almost seven in 10 voters want state and local governments to provide voluntary pre-kindergarten for all children. Another seven in 10 support a new federal grant to help states increase the quality and availability of their pre-k programs. In a 2007 [Democracy Corps poll](#), 50 percent of likely voters

said that it was *very* important to them that a presidential candidate “favor expanding and improving voluntary universal pre-school and improved Head Start.”

While public support for the basic idea of universal preschool programs is strong, implementation of such programs may be more [difficult](#). In 2006, California voters rejected Proposition 82, a ballot measure which would have provided for universal preschool by taxing high-income individuals. Although polling in January showed nearly two-thirds of voters supported the measure, just six months later on Election Day, only 39 percent voted for it. Supporters of the measure blame opponents for an aggressive campaign against tax increases and the idea that the funding would siphon off resources from K-12 schools for the defeat.

Debate over gun control emotional; meaningful action still questionable

After a policy-heavy speech, President Obama concluded with an emotional appeal to Congress to reduce gun violence. With a reminder that “in the two months since Newtown, more than a thousand birthdays, graduations, and anniversaries have been stolen from our lives by a bullet from a gun” and evoking the memories of other mass shootings in Aurora, Oak Creek, Tucson, and Blacksburg, Obama demanded that Congress vote on legislation to address the problem.

His call for background checks on all potential gun buyers has overwhelming support from Americans (91 percent favor in a [CBS News poll](#); 92 percent in a [Quinnipiac poll](#); 83 percent in a [Pew Research poll](#) that mentions “private gun sales”). Other proposals he alluded to, such as an assault weapons ban and a ban on high-capacity ammunition clips also have majority support, though less decisively. In those same three polls, support for an assault weapons ban ranges from 52 to 56 percent, and support for a magazine clips ban ranges from 53 to 59 percent. We cover the public’s attitudes towards guns more extensively in our previous newsletter, [here](#).

Looking ahead to the sequester

Now that the buzz from the inauguration and State of the Union has died down, Washington must face the fact that a series of federal spending cuts is looming large at its March 1 deadline. When asked how important it was for the president and Congress to act on an issue, [70 percent](#) of Americans said “passing major legislation to reduce the federal budget deficit” was essential this year, compared to only 51 percent for immigration reform, 46 percent for gun control and 34 percent for climate change legislation.

A [failure to reach a deal](#) would lead 49 percent of Americans to blame Republicans in Congress and only 31 percent to blame President Obama. And just 19 percent agree with the Republican agenda of passing a deal with no tax increases. But it is still early to say how it may all play out. With just a week left until the deadline, 72 percent of people say they have heard either “a little” or “nothing at all” about the sequester. Perhaps because of that, 4 in 10 say that if a deal cannot be reached, letting the sequester take effect would be preferable to a delay.

OTHER NEWS FROM THE POLLING AND POLITICAL WORLD

Real Clear Politics lists the [top 10](#) State of the Union Addresses in history, while Doris Kearns Goodwin compiles her [eight](#) most memorable moments

Gallup reminds us that the State of the Union has [little effect](#) on a president's job approval rating

Speaking of job approval ratings, did you know that [even the Pope](#) has one? And [favorability](#) ratings too!

Gallup surveys party supporters on [17 issues](#) and finds satisfaction level diverges most on gun laws

Nate Silver looks ahead to 2014 and, at this early stage, [predicts](#) Republicans will fall short of the Senate majority

Public Polling

PRESIDENT OBAMA'S JOB RATING

Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Approve	Disapprove
RCP.com Avg.	Feb. 20		51%	43%
USA Today/Pew	2/13 – 2/18	1504 A	51	41
Bloomberg	2/15 – 2/18	1003 A	55	40
Gallup	2/15 - 2/17	1500 A	52	42
Rasmussen	2/15 - 2/17	1500 LV	54	46
CBS News	2/6 - 2/10	1148 A	52	38
FOX News	2/4 - 2/6	1010 RV	49	45
Quinnipiac	1/30 - 2/4	1772 RV	46	45

PARTY FAVORABILITY

Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Democrats Fav/Unfav	Republicans Fav/Unfav
Bloomberg	2/15 – 2/18	1003 A	47 / 43	35 / 55
Purple Strategies	1/20 – 1/22	1420 LV	42 / 46	28 / 56
NBC/WSJ	1/12 – 1/15	1000 A	44 / 38	26 / 49
Pew	1/9 – 1/13	1502 A	47 / 46	33 / 58

PARTY SELF ID

Polling Firm	Date	Dem	Rep	Ind/Other
Pollster.com Trend	Feb. 22	35.4%	27.2%	31.5%

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