



# September 15, 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.

Rick Perry's entrance into the GOP presidential primary, and subsequent ascent, have placed the longtime Texas governor under the political microscope. It didn't take a veteran opposition researcher to suspect that Perry's 2010 tome "Fed Up" might provide ammunition for his new opponents. Much of the focus on "Fed Up" has centered on Perry's full frontal assault on the institution of Social Security, which he derides as a "Ponzi scheme" and "monstrous lie" that "violently tosses aside any respect for our founding principles". While Presidential candidate Perry has tried to ratchet down the level of rhetoric initially employed by Polemicist Perry, he has largely remained steadfast in his criticism of Social Security. Perry even doubled down on the "Ponzi scheme" label in a recent debate. Perry's bold treading on this political minefield has some Republicans apprehensive about the new GOP frontrunner's general election appeal. At the same time, many Democrats are licking their chops.

This week, we'll look deeper into the response to Perry's comments on Social Security and consider the extent to which Americans are willing to consider changing a very popular program.

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: One Man's Ponzi Scheme...**

##### **Americans - even Republicans - part ways with Perry's "Fed Up" Social Security invective.**

Virtually the first question of Perry's first debate gave the Texas Governor an opportunity to respond to the media maelstrom provoked by his harangue of Social Security. [CNN quickly pumped out national numbers](#) on the topic and their polling of Americans released this week does not find much sympathy for Perry's harsh critique of Social Security. Only 27% of Americans agree that describing Social Security as a "failure" and "monstrous lie" is accurate (72% Not Accurate). Even among Republicans, a better than 2:1 margin dispute the labels Perry's book affixed to the program (31% Accurate / 69% Not Accurate). Numbers like this demonstrate why Perry's hard-right stance on Social Security has many Republicans wondering if Perry is not just out of the mainstream of the general electorate, but also of a Republican primary universe comprised disproportionately of Social Security beneficiaries.

##### **Voters support reforming Social Security, but not replacing it.**

To be fair to Perry, CNN also finds that some of the rhetoric employed by Perry (and others looking to change Social Security) is more in synch with voters on the program's needs moving forward. Perry's problem is that voters do not want to radically overhaul Social Security.

The same [CNN polling released this week](#) shows a majority of Americans (55%) believe Social Security's "problems are serious and can be fixed only with major changes to the system". An additional 28% believe "minor changes" are necessary, to just 4% who believe no changes are necessary. Only 12% believe "Social Security's

problems are so bad that the system should be replaced". Similarly, [June polling from Pew](#) found that three in four Americans believe Social Security needs either "major" (34%) or "minor" (41%) changes, but only 18% believe it should be "completely rebuilt" (18%). These numbers prove why it is imperative for Perry, or any candidate, to be perceived as offering constructive changes to strengthen and secure the existing system, and not to be pigeon-holed as an ideologue looking to scrap Social Security in favor of a new system.

### **Voters would rather increase spending or increase taxes rather than cut Social Security benefits.**

Polling surrounding the debt ceiling debate demonstrated how protective voters are of the basic social safety net for seniors. [National Journal polling](#) found that twice as many Americans are concerned about steep cuts to Social Security / Medicare (39%) than are concerned with too much spending (19%), higher taxes (17%), or a government default (17%). In addition, [Pew](#) found that a roughly 2:1 margin said it was more important to keep Social Security / Medicare benefits static (60%) than to take steps to reduce the deficit (32%).

[Pew polling](#) also clearly shows Americans place a high priority on maintaining benefits for seniors (62%), even when given the option of just asking "well off seniors" to give up some of their benefits (33%). Similarly, Americans would rather avoid any cuts in Social Security benefits (56%) than avoid "tax increases for workers" (33%).

### **Americans may support the concept of Social Security reform in the abstract, but are less enthused about the specific components of reform.**

This March, [ABC News / Washington Post tested](#) potential components of Social Security reform. By roughly 2:1 Americans oppose cutting "guaranteed benefits for future retirees" (32% Support / 66% Oppose) or "increasing the Social Security tax rate" (35% Support / 61% Oppose). The only concept earning majority support is eliminating the pay-roll tax cap (currently at \$107,000) and collecting Social Security taxes on all income (53% Support / 43% Oppose). Americans show less enthusiasm for raising the retirement age (42% Support / 57% Oppose), a further reduction of benefits for those who retire early (46% Support / 52% Oppose), or changing the way Social Security benefit increases are calculated (45% Support / 58% Oppose).

These numbers again demonstrate voters may be open to small-scale reforms, like raising or eliminating the payroll tax cap, but will be hostile to politicians advocating whole-scale, fundamental changes to a program that remains very popular among Americans.

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

**Slight bump in Obama job rating following last week's "Jobs Speech":** [Reuters latest polling](#) shows the President's job rating increasing to 47% this month, from 45% in August. They also find the President leading all potential Republican opponents, from a 6-point margin over Romney to an 18-point margin against Bachman.

**Majority expects another 9/11-style attack in their lifetime:** [Angus Reid Public Opinion](#) released recent numbers that show 58% of Americans expect an attack similar in scope and magnitude to 9/11 will take place in the U.S. in their lifetime. They also find none of the various 9/11 conspiracy theories are seen as credible by more than 16% of Americans.

**Extensive new numbers on global warming:** [Yale and George Mason](#) teamed up for an in-depth of analysis on public opinion toward global warming and relevant public policy. Most fundamentally, they find 78% of Democrats, 71% of Independents, and 53% of Republicans believe global warming is happening. Comparatively, just one in three Tea Party members believe it is occurring (34%).

**In a not altogether unrelated story... :** [USA Today reports](#) on new data from the National Climatic Data Center that finds this summer as the hottest in seventy-five years.

**Changing television habits making it more difficult for candidates to communicate with voters:** [Say Media](#) has compelling new research that shows just how greatly the television landscape is changing. In a field where television is most often the medium of choice, political campaigns have to cringe when learning that 40% of Americans have DVR, and 90% percent of them skip ads when watching pre-recorded programming.

**Procter & Gamble betting the middle-class squeeze will endure:** [The Wall Street Journal](#) had an interesting report this week highlighting how American institution Procter & Gamble is skewing its product lines toward

higher and lower income consumers - in contrast to their historical trend of targeting a broad American middle class.

**Among those most benefitting from corporate tax breaks? Video game developers. :** [The New York Times recently reported](#) that video game makers are making use of government incentive programs, which means public tax dollars are being used to combat the virtual plague of alien zombies.

## 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>
Gallup	9/9-11	Adults	42%	49%
Gallup	9/1-3/11	Adults	42%	50%
GWU/Politico Battleground	8/28-9/1/11	Likely Voters	45%	50%
ABC/Washington Post	8/29-9/1/11	Adults	43%	53%
FOX	8/29-31/11	Registered Voters	44%	47%
YouGov/Polimetrix	8/27-30/11	Adults	38%	54%
Public Policy Polling	8/25-28/11	Registered Voters	42%	54%

<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	9/14/11	Adults	31%	24%	40%

<b>GENERIC HOUSE BALLOT</b>					
<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	38%	36%	18%
Quinnipiac University	8/16-27/11	Registered Voters	38%	38%	19%
Pew	8/17-21/11	Registered Voters	48%	44%	8%
Democracy Corps	8/6-10/11	Likely Voters	46%	47%	5%
Gallup	8/4-7/11	Registered Voters	51%	44%	6%

<b>DIRECTION OF THE COUNTRY</b>				
<b>Polling Firm</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Right Direction</b>	<b>Wrong Track</b>
Bloomberg	9/9-12/11	Adults	20%	72%
YouGov/Polimetrix	9/3-6/11	Adults	15%	70%
GWU/Politico Battleground	8/28-9/1/11	Likely Voters	19%	72%

<b>REPUBLICAN PRIMARY NATIONAL POLLING</b>				
<b>Polling Firm</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Support %</b>

PPP	9/8 -11/11	Usual GOP Primary Voters	<b>Perry</b>	31%
			<b>Romney</b>	18%
			<b>Paul</b>	11%
			<b>Gingrich</b>	10%
			<b>Bachmann</b>	9%
			<b>Cain</b>	8%
			<b>Santorum</b>	2%
			<b>Huntsman</b>	2%

OBAMA POPULAR VOTE SHARE						
Polling Firm	Date	Polly Vote	Polls	Iowa Electronic Markets	Econometric Models	Index Model
PollyVote	9/14/11	50.8%	49.7%	48.6%	50.2%	54.7%

