



July 19, 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.

The past week has been a busy one for news junkies. Michelle Bachmann is catching fire (and flak) in the Republican Presidential Primary, and the NewsCorp scandal that has enveloped Great Britain is threatening to cross the pond. However, the continued negotiations over extending the debt ceiling are soaking up almost all of the political oxygen in Washington. Recent polling shows voters are apprehensive about extending the debt limit, but are increasingly supportive of efforts to lift it as potential repercussions to the economy, interest rates, and Social Security checks come into focus. The politics of the debt ceiling are volatile and voters aren't happy with any individual leader or either political party. Republicans seem poised to bear the brunt of voter discontent, though - which might portend a renewed GOP push in the coming days to get a deal done.

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

John Anzalone and Jeff Liszt

STORY THIS WEEK: Taking it to the Debt Limit

The debate over extension of the debt ceiling has produced real, unscripted political theater of the type the public rarely sees. Predictably, the media has focused more on the political calculus than on what the result will mean for the economy or working Americans. Obama vs. the GOP, Boehner vs. Cantor, and House vs. Senate are storylines that obscure the impact inaction could have on the American economy. However, Wall Street, Main Street, and real voters seem to be increasingly aware - and concerned - of the consequences of forcing the government into default.

The Policy

The debt ceiling debate has been difficult to follow even for policy wonks, so it's not surprising public opinion has evolved as different pollsters ask their own questions in a dynamic political environment. However, as the default deadline draws near, there is reason to think the American public is increasingly concerned about the prospect of the federal government not being able to meet its obligations.

It shouldn't be a surprise that "raising the debt ceiling" is not verbiage that tests well in opinion polls. Recent AP/GFK numbers show roughly twice as many voters want their member of Congress to oppose raising the debt

ceiling as prefer their member support it (22% Support / 42% Oppose). Though it does bear noting that a majority either support the extension (22%) or aren't sure (35%).

However, a basic favor / oppose measure only tells part of the story. Even as pluralities generally oppose extension in a vacuum, there has been a consistent trend toward greater support for lifting the ceiling. Polling from Pew / Washington Post has found an uptick in voter concern toward NOT raising the debt ceiling, while concern over raising the ceiling has remained static.

A thirteen point plurality in mid-May was more concerned about raising the ceiling (35% NOT raising the ceiling / 48% raising the ceiling) than letting it lapse, but the same question has since tightened to just a 5-point plurality (42% NOT raising the ceiling / 47% raising the ceiling). Similar polling from Gallup and the Wall Street Journal / NBC confirms the trend of more voters favoring lifting the debt limit as the national debate progresses.

Also, when voters are provided with more context, the issue becomes more competitive. Gallup finds support for raising the limit running at roughly 1:1 with opposition when pro and con arguments are provided (46% Should Raise the Ceiling / 49% Should Not). When AP/GFK asked voters if they support or oppose raising the debt limit to "avoid defaulting on U.S. Government debts", voters were again split virtually down the middle with 38% supporting raising the limit to 41% in opposition. Similarly, recent Quinnipiac numbers show a fuller picture of the situation leading to an evenly divided public. Roughly as many voters are concerned that "not raising the debt limit would force the government into default and hurt the economy" (43%) as are concerned that "raising the debt would lead to higher government spending and make the debt bigger" (45%).

AP/GFK also finds only minimal support for the extreme Bachmann-esque position that the debt ceiling shouldn't be raised under any circumstance. Their mid-June results found 34% of voters believe Congress should raise the debt limit then deal with spending cuts separately, 43% believe Congress should raise the limit only with significant spending cuts, and only 18% believe Congress should not raise the debt limit under any circumstance. Gallup also shows that Americans prefer a deficit reduction approach that includes both spending cuts and tax increases. More than seven in ten voters prefer a plan that either includes "equal spending cuts and tax increase" (32%), "mostly spending cuts" (30%), or "mostly / all tax increases" (11%). Only 20% of Americans insist on deficit reduction through spending cuts alone. Even 68% of Republicans prefer some element of tax increases to cut the deficit, compared to just 26% of Republicans who want tax increases completely off the table.

Fundamentally, the Republican position in the debt ceiling debate (spending cuts only) is not only out of step with the broader electorate, but also even among self-identified Republicans.

The Politics

Fresh CBS News polling reveals that Americans are eager for their leaders to compromise and focus on the real issues facing families. By more than 5:1, voters nationwide would prefer a compromise that they don't fully support (76%) to not reaching an agreement and having the U.S. default on its debts (14%). Support for a compromise spans party affiliation, as overwhelming majorities of Democrats (80%), Republicans (78%), and Independents (72%) prefer even an unsatisfying compromise to government default. Even 64% of self-identified Tea Party supporters would rather see a compromise they don't fully support, compared to only 28% who prefer no compromise and a government default.

Gallup polling out this week shows a similar phenomenon. A better than 2:1 margin would prefer their representatives "agree to a compromise plan, even if it's one they disagree with" (66%) than "hold out for the basic plan they want, even if the debt ceiling is not raised by the deadline" (27%). Clear majorities of Democrats (69%), Republicans (57%), and Independents (72%) are ready for a compromise, even if it is not their preferred plan.

As the details of a debt ceiling-compromise evolve, so do the politics behind it. Spin is rampant on both sides, but over the past couple of weeks the dynamic seems to have shifted against Republicans. John McCain's public critique of the GOP's House leadership that Republicans are "not winning the battle" is symptomatic of a growing sentiment that Republicans are poised to receive the brunt of voter anger if a deal is not reached. The most recent polling on the issue seems to confirm that public opinion is indeed gelling against Republicans.

As the President has repeatedly said, the debt ceiling debate represents what many Americans believe is wrong with Washington: profligate spending, political gamesmanship, and a failure of political leaders to come together in good faith to solve real problems. Given that, it shouldn't be a surprise that voters don't give any of the actors high marks for their role in the debt ceiling debate. However, a CBS News poll out this week shows President Obama's rating for his handling of the debt ceiling negotiations (43% Approve / 48% Disapprove) - while note stellar - is dramatically higher than those of Congressional Republicans (21% Approve / 71% Disapprove). Congressional Democrats are also in the red (31% Approve / 58% Disapprove), but receive a net-disapproval rating roughly half the 50-point disapproval rating of Congressional Republicans.

No matter what Americans may think of the details of the different plans, President Obama is seen as operating in good faith while Republicans are not. Gallup shows that 60% of Americans feel the President is trying to find a solution, while a similar 62% believe Congressional Republicans are NOT. The perception that President Obama is working to find common ground, while Republicans play politics certainly contributes to the critical 19-point edge the President receives on who respondents believe is more concerned about doing what is best for their families in the debt ceiling debate (51% Obama / 32% Congressional GOP).

Gallup finds a 20-point margin of Americans blame Republicans for the current crisis (29% Obama / 49% Congressional Republicans), and July Quinnipiac numbers show voters more likely to blame Congressional Republicans (48%) than President Obama (34%) if the government defaults on its debt obligations. In June, Pew found similar results, with 42% blaming Republicans and 33% blaming the President.

The politics of the debt ceiling are certainly volatile, and while it may be difficult for any side of the debate to come out better than they entered, the Republicans' current trajectory could inflict real political damage on a party struggling to prove it can govern and to find its political identity heading into a crucial election year.

OTHER NEWS FROM THE POLLING AND POLITICAL WORLD

ALR's Jeff Liszt continued his cable news ubiquity this week. Jeff was a guest on CNN's *John King, USA* this Monday...[watch this clip of Jeff](#) analyzing the GOP Presidential field.

Rachel Maddow calls recent Envision Communications Wisconsin recall spot "Best of 2011". Congrats to Jennifer Burton and our friends at Envision! Check out the ad [here](#).

Roughly six in ten Republicans don't have a favored candidate in an open-ended question. [Gallup](#) recently probed Republican voters on their presidential primary preference without providing candidate names, and only 42% were able to name the specific candidate they currently favor. The public polling round up below includes the latest results on the GOP primary, both nationally and in critical early states.

Americans increasingly prefer non-interventionist foreign policy. [Recent Quinnipiac polling](#) finds majorities believe the U.S. shouldn't be involved in Libya (56%) or Afghanistan (55%).

Quinnipiac is the latest to confirm the dramatic trend in favor of marriage equality. Fresh polling [show voters split roughly down the middle on legalizing same-sex marriage](#) (46% Favor / 48% Oppose) - a 15-point swing in support from 2009. A recent [ALR newsletter focused on the trend toward marriage equality](#).

[The Pew Center releases new smart phone study](#). According to Pew, 35% of Americans own a smart phone and 25% of smart phone owners are more likely to access the internet via their smart phone than a computer.

Our thoughts go out to ALR friend and client Congressman Leonard Boswell and his family. [The Boz, a decorated Vietnam vet, recently helped fight off a home-invasion attempt](#) at his Iowa family farm.

The [BBC provides a handy resource](#) to follow the ever-expanding NewsCorp scandal.

Don't miss a fun [NPR quiz](#), matching each folksy piece of advice to the President who uttered it. For example, which president said "Every man has a right to a Saturday night bath"?

InVocus media center runs down [the most read magazines in America](#).

Follow John Anzalone on Twitter next week as he [rides 500 miles across the state of Iowa for his second RAGBRAI](#)

PUBLIC POLLING

PRESIDENT OBAMA'S JOB RATING				
Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Approve	Disapprove
Ipsos / Reuters	7-8 -11/11	Adults	49%	46%
Quinnipiac	7-5 - 11/11	Registered Voters	47%	46%
Gallup	6/28-30/11	Adults	44%	47%
Fox	6/26-28/11	Registered voters	46%	46%

PARTY SELF ID					
Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Dem	Rep	Ind / other
Pollster.com Trend	7/12/11	Adults	32.6%	27.2%	35.9%

GENERIC HOUSE BALLOT					
Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Dem	Rep	Unsure
Democracy Corps	6/18 - 21/11	Likely Voters	44%	47%	7%
GWU/Politico Battleground	5/8-12/11	Likely voters	42%	41%	16%
CNN/Opinion Research Corp.	4/29- 5/1/11	Registered voters	50%	46%	1%
Quinnipiac	3/22- 28/11	Registered voters	37%	40%	20%

DIRECTION OF THE COUNTRY				
Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Right Direction	Wrong Track
YouGov/Polimetrix	7/9-12/11	Adults	17%	68%

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CONGRESSIONAL DEMOCRATS' JOB RATING				
Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Approve	Disapprove
AP-GfK	6/16-20/11	Adults	35%	62%

CONGRESSIONAL REPUBLICANS' JOB RATING

Polling Firm	Date	Sample	Approve	Disapprove
AP-GfK	6/16-20/11	Adults	29%	68%

OBAMA POPULAR VOTE-SHARE

Polling Firm	Date	Polly Vote	Polls	Iowa Electronic Markets	Econometric Models	Index Models
PollyVote	7/18/11	51.9%	50.5%	52.2%	50.7%	54.3%

GOP Nationwide Primary

Polling Firm	Date	Sample
<i>Quinnipiac</i>	<i>7/5 - 11/11</i>	<i>Likely GOP Primary Voters</i>
Romney	25%	
Bachmann	14%	
Palin	12%	
Perry	10%	
Cain	6%	
Gingrich	5%	
Paul	5%	
Pawlenty	3%	
Santorum	1%	
Huntsman	1%	
Don't Know	18%	

State-level GOP Primary / Caucus Polling

State	Iowa	New Hampshire	South Carolina
Polling Details	<i>Mason Dixon; 7/13/11; Likely GOP Caucus Voters</i>	<i>ARG; 7/12-17/11; Likely GOP Primary Voters</i>	<i>ARG; 7/19-13/11; Likely GOP Primary Voters</i>
Bachmann	32%	12%	13%
Romney	29%	29%	25%
Palin	n/a	8%	16%
Pawlenty	7%	5%	0%
Santorum	6%	2%	2%
Paul	3%	4%	2%
Gingrich	2%	7%	3%
Cain	1%	4%	10%
Huntsman	0%	0%	0%
Don't Know	18%	16%	15%

