

# SPENDING — just got — PERSONAL

**A BIPARTISAN POLL CONDUCTED BY:**  
*THE TARRANCE GROUP & HART RESEARCH*

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## PUBLIC NOTICE

For Immediate Release:  
September 27, 2010

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### **POLL REVEALS GOVERNMENT SPENDING IS PERSONAL TO PENNSYLVANIA VOTERS**

#### **OVERWHELMING MAJORITY SAY GOVERNMENT SPENDING IS TOO HIGH 68% SAY IT'S AFFECTING THEM *PERSONALLY***

**Arlington, VA** – A bipartisan poll of likely Pennsylvania voters found concern over government spending second only to anxiety about the nation's economic situation. The series of surveys, sponsored by Public Notice and conducted by the Tarrance Group and Hart Research, found that a striking majority believes government spending is too high, and will make the issue a key consideration in their vote on November 2<sup>nd</sup>. The poll also revealed that an overwhelming majority believes government spending affects their own financial situation.

**Gretchen Hamel**, Executive Director of **Public Notice**, said the following:

"It's not just the economy people are so upset about, it's the spending. All of the waste, the irresponsible choices, the lack of accountability from those in Washington – voters have been seeing this behavior for the past decade; looks like they're finally fed up.

"This bipartisan poll not only confirms that voters will make government spending a top issue in deciding their vote, it also reveals that a striking majority believe it's a factor in their own financial situation. In other words...government spending has become *personal*."

#### Key findings:

- 71% of likely voters say government spending is too high; only 8% say it is too low.
  - The issue of government spending is important to voters of all political stripes: Republicans (90%); Independents (63%); and Democrats (54%).
- Over two thirds (69%) named government spending among the most important issues to their vote.
  - This finding reached across income levels, from voters making less than \$30,000 (64%) to those making \$100,000 or over (77%).
- Voters not only place a great level of concern and importance on the issue of government spending, they perceive it as having an impact on them personally.
  - More than two thirds (68%) say government spending is a factor in their own financial situation.



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- A plurality (43%) say government spending is very much a factor in their own financial situation; this received a higher number of responses than a number of other potential factors tested, including the high unemployment rate (38%).
- The perceived impact of government spending reaches across all income levels, from those making less than \$30,000 per year (59%) to voters making \$100,000 and over (73%).
- Controlling government spending (at 20%), was second only to creating jobs and growing the economy (at 38%) as the issue voters say should be the top economic priority.
- Voters are cynical about the nation's fiscal future: less than half (41%) believe they will see another federal budget surplus in their lifetime.

This survey was fielded September 12-15 and the results noted above are from 600 registered "likely" voters in this state.

*To view results from this poll, and a host of other poll-related information, [click here](#).*

**To interview Gretchen Hamel on the findings of this poll, please contact  
Kate Pomeroy at 571-970-6497 or [kate@thepublicnotice.org](mailto:kate@thepublicnotice.org).**

*Public Notice is an independent, non-partisan, non-profit, 501(c)(4) organization dedicated to providing the facts and insights on the effects public policy has on Americans' financial well being.*



## PENNSYLVANIA BY THE NUMBERS

Pennsylvania Unemployment Rate at the Beginning of the Recession (December 2007): 4.5%<sup>1</sup>

Pennsylvania Unemployment Rate Now: 9.2%<sup>2</sup>

Pennsylvania's Unemployment Rate Rank: 31<sup>3</sup>

Number of People Currently Unemployed in Pennsylvania: 584,897<sup>4</sup>

Amount of Stimulus Money Awarded to Pennsylvania: \$7,958,415,701<sup>5</sup>

Pennsylvania's Anticipated Budget Gap for FY2011: \$848.5 million<sup>6</sup>

Inflation-adjusted growth in Federal Spending Per Capita, 2000 to 2010: 50.4%<sup>7</sup>

Federal Government Deficit This Year: \$1.342 trillion<sup>8</sup>

Current Federal Government Gross National Debt: \$13.477 trillion<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics <[http://data.bls.gov/PDQ/servlet/SurveyOutputServlet?data\\_tool=latest\\_numbers&series\\_id=LASST42000003](http://data.bls.gov/PDQ/servlet/SurveyOutputServlet?data_tool=latest_numbers&series_id=LASST42000003)>

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics <[http://data.bls.gov/PDQ/servlet/SurveyOutputServlet?data\\_tool=latest\\_numbers&series\\_id=LASST42000003](http://data.bls.gov/PDQ/servlet/SurveyOutputServlet?data_tool=latest_numbers&series_id=LASST42000003)>

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics. Last Modified 9/21/2010. <<http://www.bls.gov/web/laus/laumstrk.htm>>

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics <[http://data.bls.gov/PDQ/servlet/SurveyOutputServlet?data\\_tool=latest\\_numbers&series\\_id=LASST42000003](http://data.bls.gov/PDQ/servlet/SurveyOutputServlet?data_tool=latest_numbers&series_id=LASST42000003)>

<sup>5</sup> Recovery.gov. Last Updated: 9/21/2010 <<http://www.recovery.gov/pages/textview.aspx?data=recipientHomeMap>>

<sup>6</sup> State Budget Solutions. Accessed, 9/23/2010 <<http://www.statebudgetsolutions.org/state/detail/pennsylvania>>

<sup>7</sup> Calculations based on historical data from the Congressional Budget Office and the U.S. Census Bureau.

<sup>8</sup> Congressional Budget Office, *The Budget and Economic Outlook: An Update*. August 2010. <[http://www.cbo.gov/ftpdocs/117xx/doc11705/2010\\_08\\_19\\_SummaryforWeb.pdf](http://www.cbo.gov/ftpdocs/117xx/doc11705/2010_08_19_SummaryforWeb.pdf)>

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Treasury Department, Treasury Direct, Debt to the Penny. Accessed, 9/23/10. <<http://www.treasurydirect.gov/NP/BPDLogin?application=np>>



**MEMORANDUM**

**TO: PUBLIC NOTICE**

**FROM: THE TARRANCE GROUP  
HART RESEARCH**

**RE: FINDINGS FROM BIPARTISAN STUDY OF PENNSYLVANIA VOTERS**

**DATE: SEPTEMBER 24, 2010**

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The Tarrance Group and Hart Research are pleased to present Public Notice with the key findings from a bipartisan survey of Pennsylvania voters. Responses to this survey of N=600 registered “likely” voters were collected September 12-15, 2010, and the margin of error on a sample of this type is +/- 4.1%.

**KEY FINDINGS**

- A new survey of Pennsylvania voters shows a great level of concern and importance is being placed on the issue of government spending. Voters clearly perceive that government spending has an impact on them personally, with approximately two thirds (68%) saying it is a factor in their financial situation. Driving this is a strong plurality (43%) saying government spending is very much a factor. This percentage saying government spending is very much a factor to their personal financial situation is higher than a number of other potential factors tested, including the high unemployment rate (38%).
- The perceived impact of government spending also reaches across all income levels, from those making less than \$30,000 per year (59%) to voters making \$100,000 and over (73%) saying it is a factor in their financial situation.
- Aside from creating jobs and growing the economy (38%), controlling government spending is the issue voters say should be the top economic priority (20%). This is more at least twice the percentage of such issues as cutting taxes (6%) and addressing the cost of health care (10%).
- With November elections fast approaching, 69% of Pennsylvania voters say government spending is among the most important issues to their vote. This also reaches across income levels, from voters making less than \$30,000 (64%) to those making \$100,000 or over (77%) saying it is among the most important. And while spending is particularly important to self-identified Republicans (90%) and Independents (63%), it is also important to a majority (54%) of Democrats.

- Indeed, Pennsylvania voters across political and demographic spectrums are more likely to agree that federal government spending is too high. 71% of voters say this is the case, while 8% describe federal spending as too low, and 18% say it is about right.
- Voters clearly express a strong concern for *how* their tax dollars are spent, as more than two thirds say the most important spending consideration is whether it will actually work (68%), while only 26% say the price tag of a program is most important. This view is bi-partisan, and is shared among Republicans (62%), Independents (67%) and Democrats (73%).
- When looking at areas to cut, a majority (59%) of voters support cutting spending on earmarks. However, echoing public polling and conventional wisdom, majorities oppose reduced spending on entitlements like Social Security and Medicare (68% oppose), defense and national security (59%), services like unemployment benefits and health care for the uninsured (56%), and infrastructure like roads and bridges (57%).
- In looking toward the future, less than half of voters (41%) believe they will see another federal budget surplus in their lifetime. However, two factors shape voters' views on this measure – age and partisanship. While 54% of 18-44 year old voters believe they will see another surplus, only 30% of 65+ voters feel the same. Also, only 36% of Republicans and 35% of Independents believe they will see another surplus, compared with 47% of Democrats.



# A Survey of Voter Attitudes in Pennsylvania



**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
**September 12-15, 2010**  
**N=600 Likely Voters**

THE TARRANCE GROUP

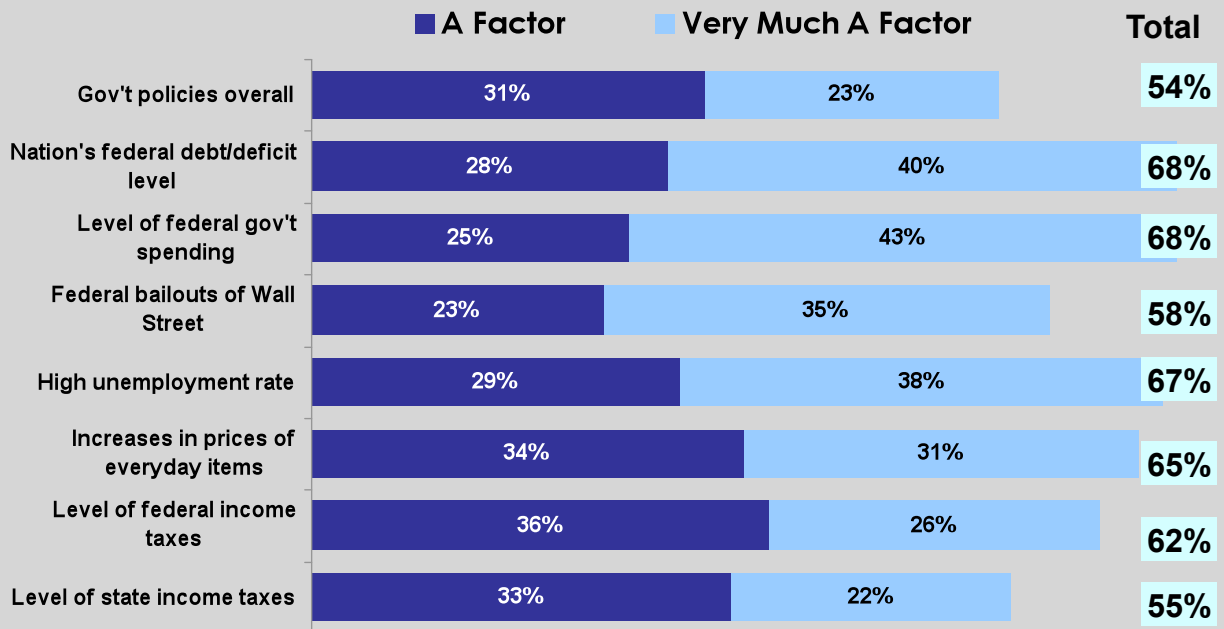
**HART**  
**RESEARCH**

ASSOCIATES

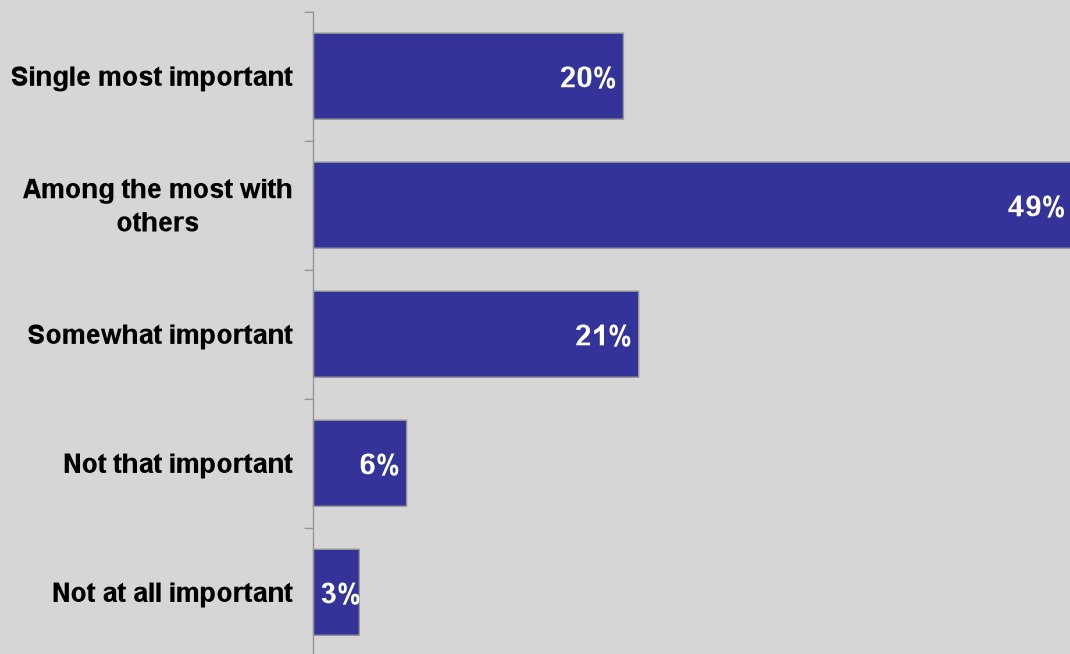


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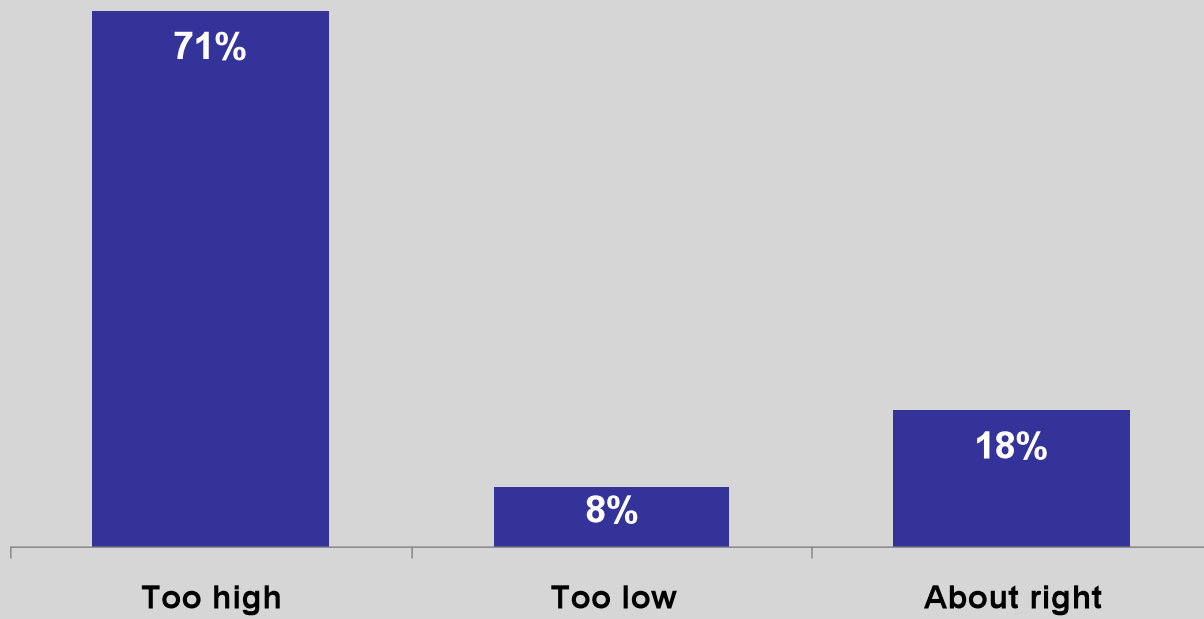
Please tell me, for each one, using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means it is "not a factor at all" and 10 means it is "very much a factor," how much of a factor each of these issues is to your own financial situation.



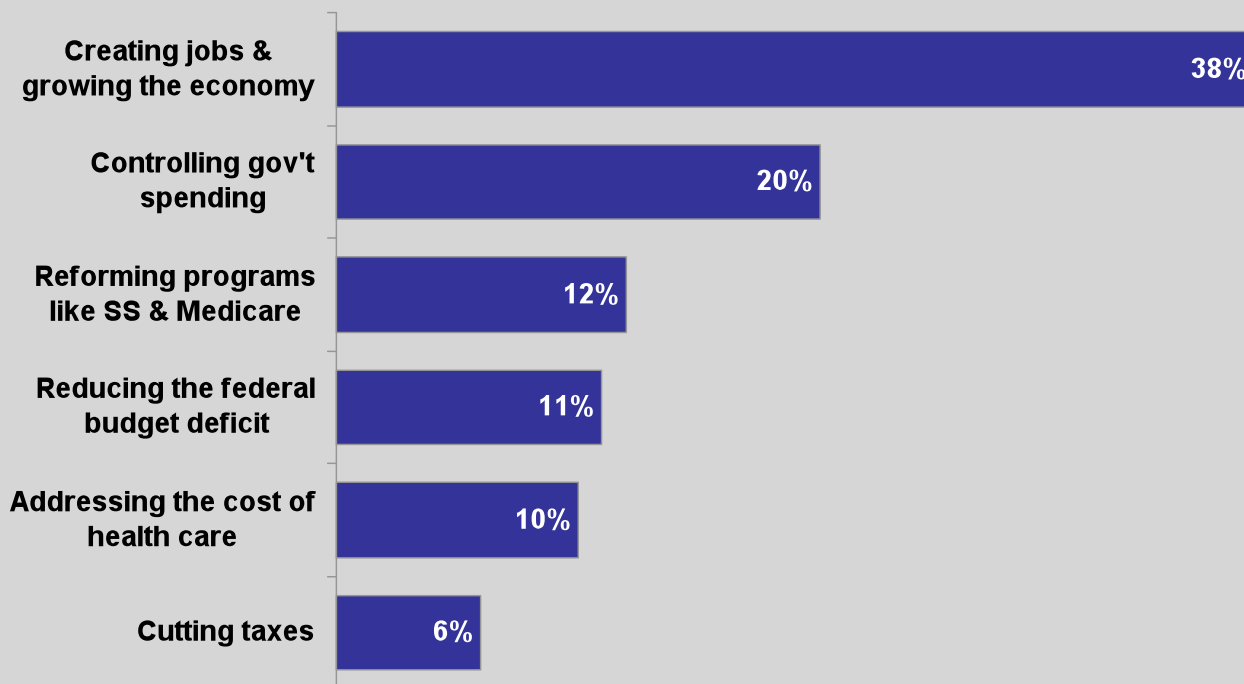
When thinking about all issues that you will consider when making your vote decision in November, how important would you say the issue of government spending is to your vote in the upcoming election for Congress? Would you say that this is:



Would you say that the overall amount of money the federal government spends is – TOO HIGH, TOO LOW, OR ABOUT RIGHT – for meeting the country’s needs?



Which of the following should be the most important priority for our leaders in Washington to focus on when it comes to the economy?

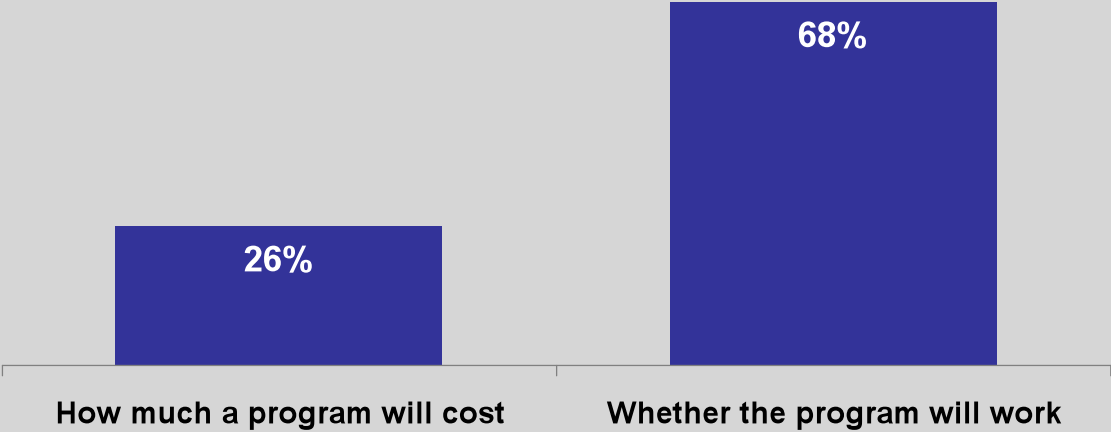


Still thinking about your views on federal government spending – I'd like to read you two viewpoints. Please tell me which one comes closest to your own.

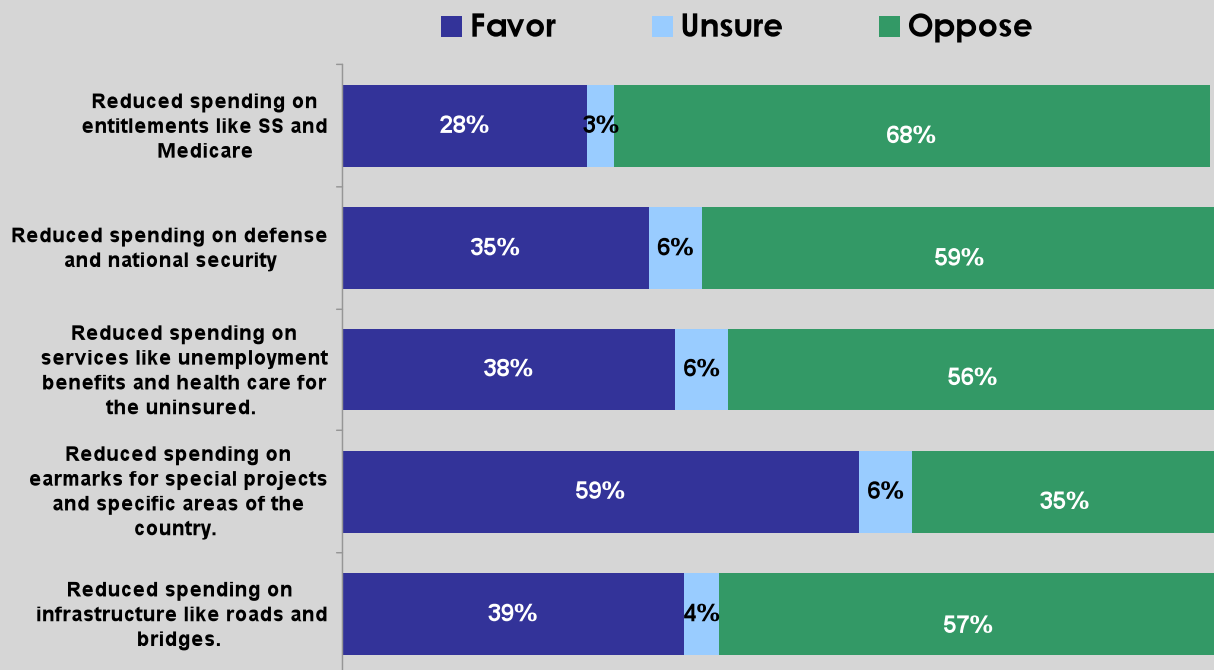
Some people say/ Other people say that the most important thing for Congress to consider when it comes to government spending is how much a program will cost.

OR

Other people say/ Some people say that the most important thing for Congress to consider when it comes to government spending is whether or not the program will actually work.



Now, I would like to read you a list of spending areas that some people have said should be cut. Please listen carefully as I read each one and tell me if you would favor or oppose reduced spending in this area.



As you may know, a budget surplus means the government brings in more money than it spends, and a deficit means the government spends more money than it brings in. From 1998 to 2001, the U.S. government had a surplus, and since 2002 the government has had a deficit.

Do you believe that the federal government will or will not have another surplus in your lifetime?

