

THE TARRANCE GROUP

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JANUARY 23, 2012

TO: PUBLIC NOTICE

FROM: NICHOLAS THOMPSON & BRIAN TRINGALI

RE: KEY FINDINGS FROM NATIONAL SURVEY

The Tarrance Group is pleased to present Public Notice with the key findings from a survey of N=805 registered “likely” voters across the country. Interviews were conducted January 15-19, 2012. In 95 out of 100 cases, the margin of error on a sample of this type is +/- 3.5%.

KEY FINDINGS

- As President Barack Obama prepares to deliver his next State of the Union address, new polling shows voters believe his speech should focus on economic issues, yet voters are doubtful that President Obama will reveal new solutions to the nation’s economic problems. When provided with a list of topics, a majority says the most important topic for the speech is jobs (23%), the economy (20%) and government spending (14%). Of less importance to voters are issues like health care costs (6%), education (6%), government reform (5%), energy (3%), and taxes (2%).
- This concern over the economy is in the context of voters also believing that the federal government hurts (56%) rather than helps (34%) economic growth, and that the economy is extremely/very impacted by the federal debt (66%). At the same time, voters show no desire to add new regulations to businesses, as a mere 21% say businesses need more federal government regulation (46% say less are needed and 27% say the level should stay the same).
- While a majority (62%) are extremely or very interested in the State of the Union address, a majority (52%) say he is likely to propose the same type of solutions, while just over one third (38%) say he is likely to propose new solutions.
- President Obama’s State of the Union address comes at a time when the American electorate is deeply divided on several fundamental values underlying public policy and politics. This is likely a key reason Congress has switched from Republican to Democratic control, and back to Republican control, in recent years.

- First, a look at where voters are divided:
 - **Generic Congressional ballot:** 41% support the Republican candidate for Congress, while 43% support the Democrat. 16% are undecided.
 - **Presidential ballot:** While the general election field is not yet established, the “Republican nominee” receives 45% of the vote, while President Obama receives 43%.
 - **Views of Occupy Wall Street and the Tea Party:** While fewer Americans are familiar with Occupy Wall Street, a plurality of voters have an unfavorable view of both movements (46%).
 - **Future of the next generation:** 43% believe the next generation will realize the American dream, while 44% believe they will not.
 - **Federal government’s impact on me:** 43% say the federal government helps their quality of life, while 42% say it hurts their quality of life.
 - **Control of government:** While not a perfect split, many voters are unaware who controls the federal government, with 41% saying the Democratic Party and 35% saying the Republican Party.

- What is striking in the results is the large number of basic areas where Americans are virtually split down the middle. However, not all groups are divided. On nearly every issue on the previous page, Independents, in contrast to committed partisans, are the only group that is consistently in the middle. Below are a few examples that highlight this trend:
 - **Generic Congressional ballot:** 90% of Republicans support their party’s candidate, 93% of Democrats support their candidate, but Independents are split between the two — 35% for the Republican, 31% for the Democrat, and 34% undecided.
 - **Presidential ballot:** While 93% of Republicans support the GOP nominee and 88% of Democrats support President Obama, Independents are divided – 40% support the Republican and 35% support President Obama.
 - **Views of Occupy Wall Street and the Tea Party:** While 71% of Republicans have an unfavorable view of Occupy Wall Street and 73% of Democrats have an unfavorable view of the Tea Party, an equal 45% of Independents have an unfavorable view of each movement.

- At the same time that voters are divided on many key issues, there are two key areas where they find agreement. First, two-thirds (66%) of voters say the country is on the wrong track, while only 28% say things are moving in the right direction. Roughly three-quarters of Independents (73%) say things are on the wrong track.

Second, 59% prefer that their Member of Congress compromise so that more things will get done, while 31% prefer their Member press hard for principles he or she believes in even if that means some things won’t get done. A majority (56%) of Independents prefer that their Member compromise.