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Surveys Find Ohioans Share Common Ground on Federal Budget Priorities and Tax Measures

Despite D.C. Gridlock, Republican and Democratic Voters Agree

Ohioans Would Cut Deficit by Over \$200 Billion, Change Spending Priorities & Roll Back Recent Tax Changes

Washington, D.C.: In an innovative survey of Ohio voters that gave respondents the opportunity to make changes to the discretionary federal budget and federal taxes, a majority of Republicans and Democrats converged on steps to reduce the deficit by \$206.9 billion and make important changes to spending and tax policies.

The survey, part of a joint project of the nonpartisan organizations Voice of the People and Common Ground Solutions, was conducted by the University of Maryland's Program for Public Consultation with a representative sample of 836 Ohio registered voters.

Today in Cleveland, local voters gathered at *The Plain Dealer* to take the survey in person and be part of a discussion of the issues led by the leaders of the two organizations.

“With Congress so polarized that it cannot effectively negotiate, our tax and spending policies are hostage to gridlock,” said Howard Konar, director of Common Ground Solutions. “This survey shows our elected leaders that Republicans and Democrats can find common ground, and that it’s time for them to come together.”

How it Works

In the online survey, respondents reviewed discretionary spending levels for FY2017 & FY2018, current sources of general revenues, and proposals for new revenue sources. They were then given the opportunity to propose changes to spending and revenues in dozens of categories for FY2019 and see how their choices affected the projected deficit.

Anyone can participate in the interactive public simulation and make tax and spending choices by clicking on http://vop.org/budget_fy19/.

“This survey gives everyone a tool to make their voice heard,” said Konar, “and shows our leaders that there are common ground solutions to our hardest problems.”

Findings

Majorities of Republicans and Democrats converged on **\$57 billion in spending cuts**.

- The **biggest cut was a \$43.3 billion reduction in defense spending**, followed by reductions to Homeland Security (\$4 billion) and smaller cuts to the Department of Justice's enforcement of laws, military aid, the operation in Afghanistan and Iraq, subsidies to agricultural corporations, and aid to countries of strategic interest.

The **biggest changes, though, were on the revenue side, with Republicans and Democrats agreeing** on a total of \$149.9 billion in tax increases.

- These included several sources of revenue,
 - a **tax of 0.1% on financial transactions** (\$63 billion),
 - a **fee on the uninsured debt of large financial institutions** (\$10 billion),
 - a **tax of one half cent per ounce of sugary drinks** (\$10 billion).
 - **partial rollbacks of the recent reduction in corporate taxes and income taxes on incomes over \$1 million** (\$7.6 billion).
 - an **increase in the alcohol tax** (\$6.6 billion)
 - **repeal of "carried interest" treatment for hedge fund managers** (\$2.2 billion).

"Clearly Americans are concerned about the deficit and are ready to make some tough choices to bring it down—more than Congress is even ready to consider," said Steven Kull, President of Voice of the People.

The majority of survey respondents also took a number of additional steps, including:

- **rolling back some of the cuts in the new tax law for incomes from \$200,000 to \$1 million** (\$36.4 billion).
- **deeper cuts in spending**, especially in defense (\$53 billion) and Homeland Security (\$14 billion), as well as other areas—generating an additional \$27 billion.

All told, the overall majority reduced the deficit by a total of \$278.3 billion, with \$84 billion in spending cuts and \$194.3 billion in revenue increases:

- **a majority of Democrats cut the deficit by \$453.9 billion or more**, including a net \$121 billion in spending cuts, and \$332.9 billion in revenue increases.
- **a majority of Republicans cut the deficit by \$215.9 billion or more**, including a net \$66 billion from spending cuts and \$149.9 in tax increases.

The sample included an Ohio statewide sample of 415 registered voters and an additional 421 voters from four Congressional districts surrounding Cleveland, down weighted to be proportionate to their portion of the state. The sample of registered voters was provided by Nielsen-Scarborough from its larger sample, which is recruited by telephone and mail from a random sample of households, and by Precision Sample from its opt-in internet panel.