



AMERICAN VIEWPOINT®

To: National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare

From: Celinda Lake, Bob Carpenter, Alysia Snell, and Jonathan Voss

Re: Key Findings from polling on Medicare, Social Security & the Deficit<sup>1</sup>

Date: September 21, 2011

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## Executive Summary

- By a 50 point margin, voters oppose including cuts to Social Security and Medicare as part of a potential Super Committee proposal (70 percent oppose, 20 percent support). Voters continue to overwhelmingly oppose cuts to these programs to reduce the deficit.
- Opposition to these cuts remains strong across party lines as 82 percent of Democrats, 73 percent of Independents, and 58 percent of Republicans oppose including cuts to Social Security and Medicare in the proposal.
- Consistent with past research, voters oppose several proposals to change Social Security and Medicare by wide margins.
- For Social Security, means testing, changing Social Security's payment formula to reduce the cost of living increases for people receiving benefits now and in the future, and raising the retirement age for Social Security from 67 to 69 all prove unpopular.
- Voters also reject Medicare modifications that would cut reimbursements to health care providers, raise the Medicare eligibility age from 65 to 67, and increase the amount Medicare beneficiaries pay in co-pays for some services.
- However, voters overwhelmingly approve of raising the cap on taxing Social Security wages above \$106,000, consistent with what we have seen in past research.

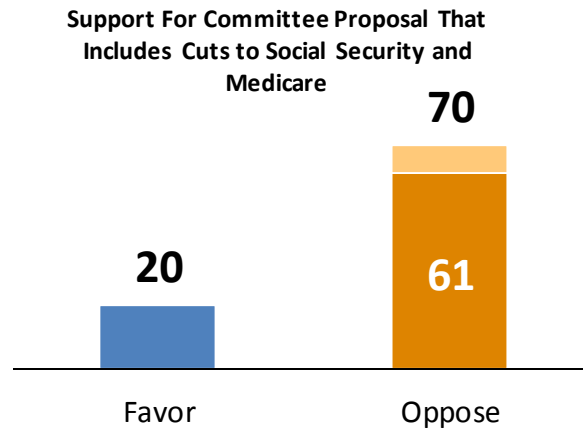
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<sup>1</sup> Lake Research Partners and American Viewpoint designed and administered this survey which was conducted by phone using professional interviewers. The survey reached a total of 800 likely voters nationwide. The survey was conducted September 8 - 12, 2011. Telephone numbers were drawn from a voter file sample. The sample was stratified geographically based on the proportion of voters in each region. Data were weighted slightly by party identification, age, and region to reflect the attributes of the actual population. The margin of error for the overall survey is +/- 3.5%. It is higher among subgroups.

## Key Points

Including cuts to Medicare and Social Security in the Committee proposal to cut the deficit is a non-starter. By a 50 point margin (20 percent favor to 70 percent oppose), voters oppose including cuts to these programs as part of a potential Super Committee proposal. Opposition to these cuts remains strong across party lines as 82 percent of Democrats, 73 percent of Independents, and 58 percent of Republicans oppose

including cuts to Social Security and Medicare in the proposal. Solid majorities of both fiscal conservatives (62 percent) and those who say they are not fiscally conservative (85 percent) also oppose the Committee proposal that includes cuts to Social Security and Medicare.



In addition to expressing a desire to keep cuts to Social Security and Medicare off the table for the Super Committee, about three-quarters of voters oppose cutting Social Security (77 percent oppose) or Medicare (74 percent oppose) to reduce the deficit. Across party lines large majorities of voters strongly reject cutting Social Security or Medicare benefits to reduce the deficit, with 85 percent of Democrats, 78 percent of Independents and 69 percent of Republicans opposing cutting Social Security benefits and 84 percent of Democrats, 75 percent of Independents and 65 percent of Republicans opposing cutting Medicare. About seven-in-ten fiscal conservatives also oppose cutting Social Security benefits (72 percent) and Medicare (68 percent).

As previous research showed, voters reject proposals to alter Social Security and Medicare for the Middle Class and future retirees, but support raising Social Security's cap on wages, by gradually requiring employees and employers to pay Social Security taxes on all wages above one-hundred six thousand eight hundred dollars (71 percent favor, 21 percent oppose).

- Means testing is the least popular Social Security proposal (72 percent oppose), followed by changing the COLA formula (66 percent oppose), and raising the retirement age for Social Security from 67 to 69 (65 percent oppose).
- Cutting reimbursements to doctors, hospitals and other health care providers who provide services to Medicare beneficiaries is the least popular Medicare proposal (65 percent oppose), followed by raising the Medicare eligibility age from 65 to 67 (57 percent oppose) and increasing the amount Medicare beneficiaries pay in co-pays (56 percent oppose).

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