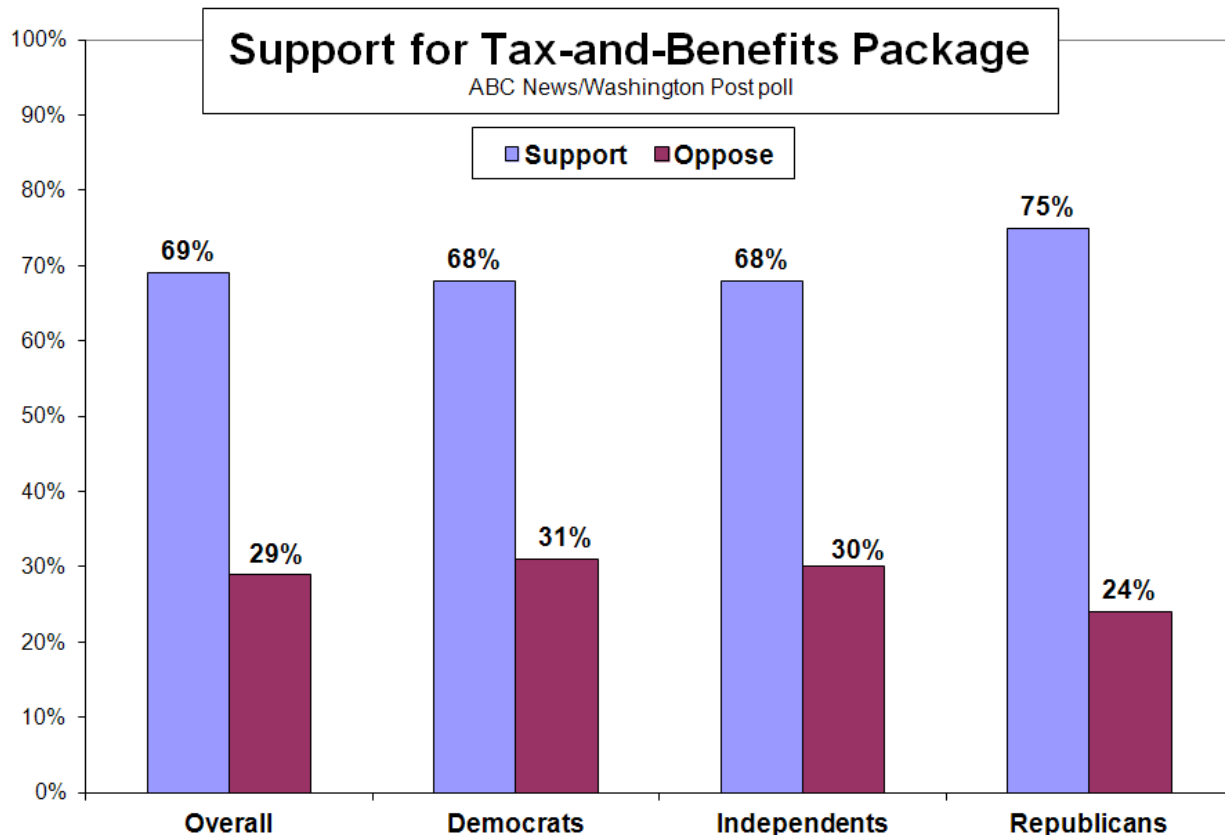


Broad Backing for Tax/Benefits Deal, With Extended Benefits the Top Draw

With decisive votes in Congress pending, Americans in a new ABC News/Washington Post poll broadly support the tax-and-benefits deal forged by President Obama and Republican leaders of Congress – the deficit be damned.

Sixty-nine percent support the package overall, far outnumbering the 29 percent opposed. And even when given arguments that it'll add as much as \$900 billion to the federal budget deficit, 62 percent continue to support the measure, with opposition inching up only to 34 percent.

The package underscores both the charm and challenge of political compromise. Several of its individual elements are sharply divisive, and on average they score better with Republicans than with Democrats. But in combination the package appeals across the political spectrum; with nose-holding on both sides, it gets as much support from liberals as from conservatives, and nearly as much from Democrats and independents as from Republicans.

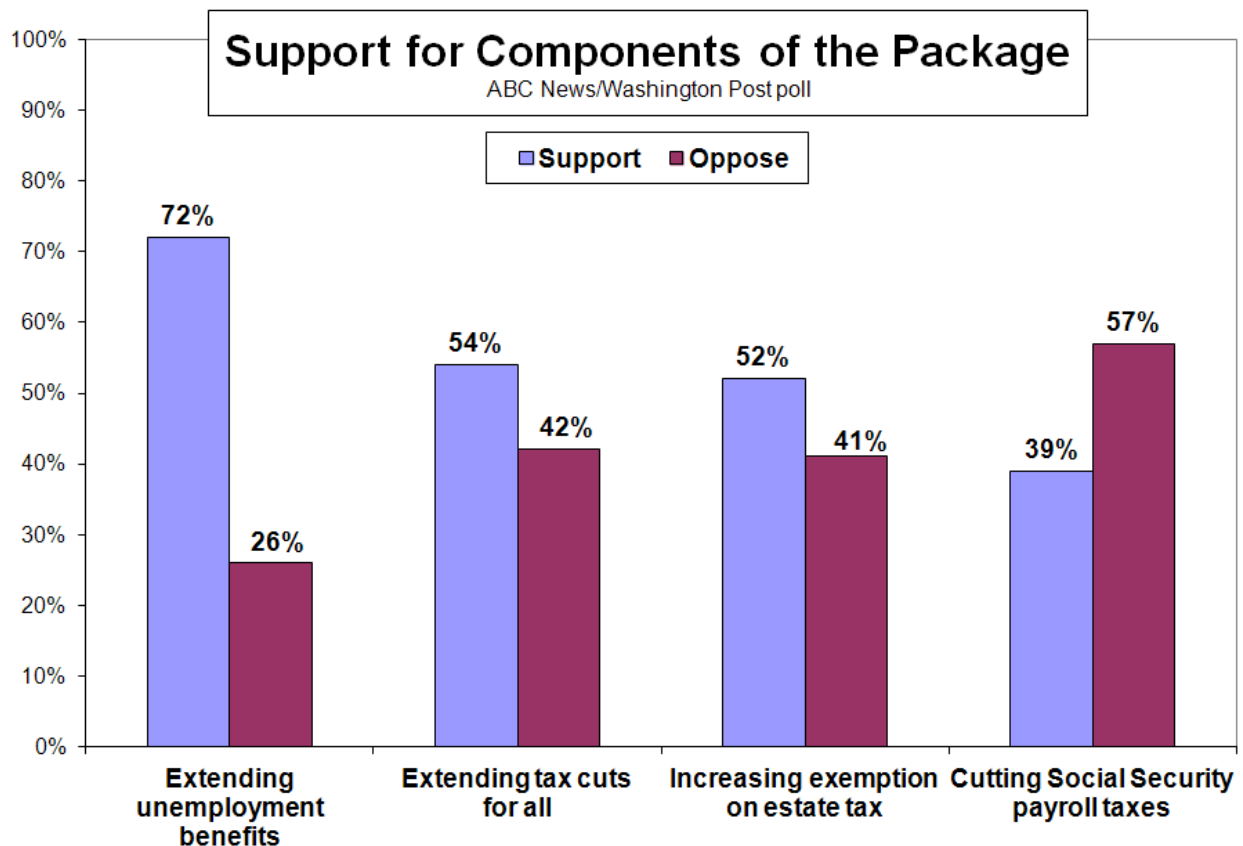


What it lacks, though, is passion; perhaps given its something-for-everyone nature, this poll, produced for ABC News by [Langer Research Associates](#), finds that just 20 percent of Americans support the package “strongly” overall. And most of its main elements are less popular individually than they are in combination.

While support is broad, its tepid nature in part reflects skepticism that the changes will do much to improve the long-troubled economy. Just 36 percent think it’ll help, including only 9 percent who think it’ll help a great deal. That leaves six in 10 who either don’t think the deal will have much economic impact at all (43 percent), or fear it’ll make things worse (17 percent). Strong support for the package is higher among those who think it’ll improve the economy.

THE PARTS – The deal, as noted, is more popular than the sum of its parts. Of its four chief elements, only one – extending unemployment benefits – wins as much support individually (72 percent) as do all the elements in combination. Another, indeed, elicits majority opposition: Perhaps given concerns about the future of Social Security, 57 percent of Americans oppose a 2 percent cut in Social Security payroll taxes.

The other two main parts of the package win majority backing, but fairly narrowly so: Fifty-four percent support extending the Bush-era tax cuts for all Americans, including the wealthy; 52 percent favor increasing the exemption on inheritance taxes so that only estates worth more than \$5 million are taxed.



While the package has been described chiefly as a deal on taxes, it's notable that its most popular element, by far, is not one of its tax provisions, but rather its extension of unemployment benefits – a “tax-and-benefits” package may characterize it better. The Senate was to hold its first vote on the measure today, with vote-counters suggesting it has a good chance of approval.

PARTISANS – As noted, some individual elements draw sharply partisan views. Support for extending the Bush-era tax cuts for all Americans, including the wealthy, ranges from 85 percent of Republicans to just 38 percent of Democrats. On the other hand Democrats are 33 points more apt than Republicans to favor extending unemployment benefits, 88 percent vs. 55 percent.

Averaging views on each of the four main elements of the package suggests that the GOP, in this sense, can be said to have won the better deal. Republicans favor the four items by an average of 61-37 percent; Democrats, by a closer 54-42 percent. Independents, at 52-44 percent, align more closely with Democrats.

	% support among		
	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
Extending unemployment benefits	88%	55%	73%
Extending tax cuts for all	38	85	49
Increasing exemption on estate tax	52	60	48
Cutting Social Security payroll tax	37	42	38
Average support for items	54	61	52

But in a single question taking the package as whole, Democrats and independents come along, with 68 percent support in both groups, compared with 75 percent among Republicans. A driving force looks to be unemployment benefits, favored by nearly three-quarters of independents as well as nearly nine in 10 Democrats.

The depth of that support also contributes: Sixty-six percent of Democrats “strongly” favor extending benefits, the highest partisan support for any individual element of the plan. And 48 percent of independents strongly back it as well, the one element on which their views, too, are most strongly felt.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone Dec. 9-12, 2010, among a random national sample of 1,001 adults, including landline and cell-phone-only respondents. Results have a margin of sampling error of 3.5 points. Click [here](#) for a detailed description of sampling error. This survey was produced for ABC News by [Langer Research Associates](#) of New York, N.Y, with sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS of Horsham, Pa.

Analysis by Gary Langer.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com at <http://abcnews.com/pollingunit>

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Full results follow.

1-13 Held for release.

14. For each item I name, please tell me if it's something you support strongly, support somewhat, oppose somewhat or oppose strongly.

12/12/10 - Summary Table

	Support			Oppose			No opin.
	NET	Strgly	Smwht	NET	Smwht	Strgly	
a. Extending the Bush-era tax cuts for all taxpayers, including wealthy people as well as the middle class	54	30	24	42	16	27	3
b. Funding an additional 13 months of unemployment benefits for people who are out of work	72	49	23	26	11	14	2
c. Cutting Social Security payroll taxes by two percentage points for all workers for the next year	39	18	21	57	18	39	3
d. Increasing the exemption on inheritance taxes so that only estates worth more than five million dollars are taxed	52	29	23	41	16	25	7

15. Obama and the Republican leaders of Congress have reached an agreement to do all four of these things together as a package. Is this plan something you support strongly, support somewhat, oppose somewhat or oppose strongly?

	Support			Oppose			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
12/12/10	69	20	49	29	17	12	2

16. Some people oppose this agreement because it will increase the federal deficit by 900 billion dollars, and some also say it fails to raise taxes on wealthy people who can afford it. Others say it's worth it in order to let people have more money to spend while the economy is still weak. Given these arguments, is this agreement something you support strongly, support somewhat, oppose somewhat or oppose strongly?

	Support			Oppose			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
12/12/10	62	17	45	34	20	14	4

17. Over the next year or two, do you think this agreement will help the national economy, hurt the national economy or won't make much difference? (IF HELPED/HURT) Is that a great deal or somewhat?

	Help			Hurt			No diff.	No opinion
	NET	Great deal	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Great deal		
12/12/10	36	9	27	17	9	8	43	3

Compare to: Thinking about the federal government's economic stimulus program, do you think the economic stimulus program has (helped) the national economy, (hurt) the national economy, or hasn't made much difference? (IF HELPED/HURT) Is that a great deal or somewhat?

	----- Helped -----			----- Hurt -----			No	No
	NET	Great deal	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Great deal	diff.	opinion
6/6/10	30	9	21	20	7	13	49	1
11/15/09	37	12	25	23	6	17	39	1
9/12/09	32	10	22	19	5	13	47	2
6/21/09	28	8	20	19	6	13	52	2
4/24/09	33	10	23	16	6	10	49	2

18-39 Held for release.

END