Voters Want Congress to Pass a Plan that Includes Entitlement Reform, Tax Reform, and Sequester Replacement

WASHINGTON, Oct. 25, 2013 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- Today, the Campaign to Fix the Debt released results of a recently-completed national survey that suggest a major shift in voter attitudes on the national debt. According to the survey, the national debt is now tied with the economy as the most important issue likely voters want Congress to address; by contrast, a July poll found the economy outpaced the debt by 24 points as voters' top legislative priority.

While only about one in three voters supports stand-alone changes to Social Security and Medicare, according to the new poll, support for reforming the programs nearly doubles to 61 percent when proposed changes are phased in gradually and are combined with cuts to wasteful spending and increased revenues from closing tax loopholes. Reforming the tax code, implementing structural changes to Social Security and Medicare, and replacing the sequester all received majority support, so long as they occur in the context of a comprehensive deficit-reduction plan.

"While we always expected substantial public support for a comprehensive debt deal, even we were surprised by this research," said Maya MacGuineas, head of the Campaign to Fix the Debt. "This survey tells us two things: Americans understand the stakes in the debate around the national debt, and voters are overwhelmingly willing to support elected officials who make the hard choices to fix the debt, so long as they do it in a balanced way."

Among the poll's findings:

- The budget deficit is now tied with the economy as the most important issue for Congress to address, and is the most important issue with political independents. In a July CBS poll, the budget deficit trailed the economy by 24 points.
- General support for Social Security and Medicare reform starts low (34 percent), but opinions are extremely malleable. Reforms that are phased in gradually receive the support of 55 percent of respondents with 35 percent in opposition; the same policies receive support from 61 percent of respondents with 27 percent opposing if these reforms are enacted alongside cuts to wasteful spending and increased revenues from closing tax loopholes.

- Shifting to Chained CPI and making reforms to Medicare – including increasing the eligibility age, means-testing benefits, and changing cost-sharing rules – ALL polled with majority support in the context of a comprehensive plan that includes protections for low-income populations, cuts waste, closes unfair tax loopholes, and is phased in gradually.
- There was also a great deal of support for tax reform that raises revenue as part of a plan that includes entitlement reforms and cuts to wasteful spending. Specifically, the poll found more than 60 percent of respondents support eliminating or scaling back tax breaks and lowering tax rates, capping tax deductions, eliminating corporate tax loopholes for certain industries, and removing the payroll tax cap.

The poll, which was conducted October 4-8, during the government shutdown, questioned 800 likely voters and has a margin of error of +/- 3.5 percent.

For more information about the "Citizens' Plan to Fix the Debt" please visit FixtheDebt.org .

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