

MEMORANDUM

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Global Strategy Group and North Star Opinion Research
RE: National Survey on the National Debt and the 2014 Election
DATE: October 30, 2014

The national debt is a critical issue for voters as they decide who to vote for in the November midterm election, according to a recent nationwide survey conducted by polling firms Global Strategy Group and North Star Opinion Research for the Peter G. Peterson Foundation¹. Americans believe it is important for candidates to have a plan to reduce the debt in order to stimulate the economy, and there is clear opportunity for candidates from both parties to win over voters by showing a willingness to work on a bipartisan debt reduction strategy.

Key findings include:

- **The national debt is an important issue for an overwhelming majority of voters in deciding how to vote.** Roughly eight in ten (82%) voters say that the debt is an important issue when it comes to their vote for Congress this year, including one half (51%) who consider it “extremely” or “very” important. The issue is highly salient across partisan lines, with seven in ten voters (70%), including clear majorities of Democrats (63%), Independents (66%), and Republicans (83%) alike, saying it is one of the three most important issues they will consider in deciding which candidate to vote for.
- **Voters want candidates to have a plan to reduce the national debt because they believe a lower debt burden will boost the American economy.** Broad majorities say it is important that a Congressional candidate have a plan to reduce the debt in order to create more opportunities for everyday Americans (76% important), increase companies’ confidence so they make investments and hire more workers (71%), and enable more small businesses to get loans they need (71%).
- **Voters want the debt to receive more focus in campaigns.** While it is a significant issue to voters, just three in ten (31%) recall seeing or hearing candidates talk about the debt “some” or “a lot” in their local race for Congress. Nearly three-fourths (73%) agree that they would have preferred that candidates spent more time discussing the debt, including 44% who agree strongly. Roughly six in ten (61%) would also have been more motivated to vote if their candidates had spent more time on the issue, including majorities of Democrats (52%), Independents (60%), and Republicans (72%).
- **Candidates from both parties stand to benefit by taking a bipartisan approach to the national debt problem.** Nearly six in ten voters would consider voting for a generic Republican (58%) or Democratic (56%) candidate for Congress this year. When the same candidate is described as willing to work with the other party on a plan to reduce the debt, however, the share of voters open to voting for them rises to 74% for the Republican and 69% for the Democrat. Even a majority of Democrats (58%) are open to voting for a Republican who is willing to work across party lines on the issue, and Republican voters are 18 points more likely to consider voting for a Democrat (22% to 40%) if the candidate will work toward a bipartisan solution to the country’s national debt problem.

¹ This survey was conducted between October 20th and October 23rd, 2014, among 1,001 registered voters nationwide. The margin of error on the full sample is +/- 3.1%. The margin of error on sub-samples is greater.