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All Sides Blamed After Close Call on Government Shutdown

Budget Negotiations in a Word – “Ridiculous”

A Survey Conducted in Partnership with The Washington Post

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The public has an overwhelmingly negative reaction to the budget negotiations that narrowly avoided a government shutdown. A weekend survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & The Press and the Washington Post finds that “ridiculous” is the word used most frequently to describe the budget negotiations, followed by “disgusting,” “frustrating,” “messy,” “disappointing” and “stupid.”

Overall, 69% of respondents use negative terms to describe the budget talks, while just 3% use positive words; 16% use neutral words to characterize their impressions of the negotiations. Large majorities of independents (74%), Democrats (69%) and Republicans (65%) offer negative terms to describe the negotiations.

The full survey was conducted April 7-10 among 1,004 adults; people were asked their impressions of the budget talks in interviews conducted April 9-10, following the April 8 agreement that averted a government shutdown.

All of the principals in the budget showdown are blamed to some extent for the dispute that nearly resulted in the shutdown. Nearly four-in-ten (37%) say they blame Republican congressional leaders “a lot” for the dispute, while 33% say Democratic congressional leaders deserve a lot of blame and 32% say the same about President Obama. About a quarter (27%) say that representatives affiliated with the Tea Party movement deserve a lot of blame.
Solid majorities say all four principal players – GOP leaders, Democratic leaders, Obama and Tea Party-affiliated representatives – deserve at least some blame for the budget dispute. Much smaller percentages say each deserves no blame: 23% Tea Party representatives; 22% Obama; 12% GOP leaders; and 11% Democratic leaders.

Opinions about how much blame the participants deserve changed after the agreement was concluded. In interviewing conducted prior to the deal (April 7-8), 58% said that Tea Party representatives would deserve either a lot or some blame if the government shut down. In polling conducted April 9-10, the number saying Tea Party representatives deserve a least some blame for the dispute jumped to 72%.

More also blamed Obama and Democratic leaders after the agreement than before it. In early interviewing, 66% said that Obama would deserve at least some blame for a possible government shutdown; after the agreement 79% expressed that view. Blame for Democratic leaders rose 10 points (from 77% to 87%) after the budget deal.

Criticism for Tea Party representatives increased among the GOP base after the budget agreement. In polling before the agreement, 40% of Republicans and GOP leaners said Tea Party representatives would deserve some blame if the government shut down. After the agreement, however, 61% of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents said that Tea Party
representatives in Congress deserved at least some blame for the dispute that nearly led to the shutdown.

Democrats grew more critical of Obama after the budget deal was concluded. Prior to the agreement, 51% of Democrats and Democratic leaners said Obama would deserve a lot or some blame if the government shut down. Following the agreement, 69% of Democrats and Democratic leaners said Obama deserved at least some blame for the budget dispute.
About the Survey

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted April 7-10, 2011 among a national sample of 1,004 adults 18 years of age or older living in the continental United States (673 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 331 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 138 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by interviewers at Princeton Data Source under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. A combination of landline and cell phone random digit dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English. Respondents in the landline sample were selected by randomly asking for the youngest adult male or female who is now at home. Interviews in the cell sample were conducted with the person who answered the phone, if that person was an adult 18 years of age or older. For detailed information about our survey methodology, see: [http://people-press.org/methodology/detailed](http://people-press.org/methodology/detailed).

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin, region, and population density to parameters from the March 2010 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status, based on extrapolations from the 2010 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cell phones have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size within the landline sample. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. The following table shows the sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Sample Size</th>
<th>Plus or minus ...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total sample</td>
<td>1,004</td>
<td>4.0 percentage points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr 7-8 sample</td>
<td>577</td>
<td>5.0 percentage points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr 9-10 sample</td>
<td>427</td>
<td>6.0 percentage points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republicans</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>7.5 percentage points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrats</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>7.0 percentage points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>6.5 percentage points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.
About the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press

The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press is an independent opinion research group that studies attitudes toward the press, politics and public policy issues. We are sponsored by The Pew Charitable Trusts and are one of seven projects that make up the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan "fact tank" that provides information on the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world.

The Center’s purpose is to serve as a forum for ideas on the media and public policy through public opinion research. In this role it serves as an important information resource for political leaders, journalists, scholars, and public interest organizations. All of our current survey results are made available free of charge.

All of the Center’s research and reports are collaborative products based on the input and analysis of the entire Center staff consisting of:

Andrew Kohut, Director
Scott Keeter, Director of Survey Research
Carroll Doherty and Michael Dimock, Associate Directors
Michael Remez, Senior Writer
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Jacob Poushter, Research Analyst
Danielle Gewurz, Research Assistant

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PEW.1-PEW.2 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

ASK ALL APRIL 9-10 ONLY [N=427]:
PEW.2A If you had to use one single word to describe your impression of the budget negotiations in Washington, what would that one word be? [IF "DON'T KNOW" PROBE ONCE: It can be anything, just the first word that comes to mind... ] [OPEN END: ENTER VERBATIM RESPONSE]

NOTE: The numbers listed represent the number of respondents who offered each response; the numbers are not percentages.

Apr 9-10
2011
29    Ridiculous
22    Disgust/Disgusted/Disgusting
14    Frustrated/Frustrating
14    Mess/Messy
13    Disappointing/Disappointment/Disappointed
13    Stupid/Stupidity
12    Bull/Bull****
  7    Poor/Poorly
  7    Terrible
  6    Childish
  5    Fair
  5    Horrible
  5    Idiot/Idiotic
  5    Stink/Stinks
  4    Chaos/Chaotic
  4    Confusing
  4    Pathetic
  4    Politics/Political
  4    Slow
  4    Suck/Sucks
202    Other
 45    Don't know/Refused
ASK ALL:

PEW.3  How much, if at all, would you blame each of the following for the dispute over the budget that nearly led to a government shutdown? (First/Next) do you think [INSERT, RANDOMIZE] deserve(s) a lot, some, or none of the blame for a shutdown?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A lot</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>DK/Ref</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. President Obama</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 7-10, 2011</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Democratic leaders in Congress</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 7-10, 2011</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Republican leaders in Congress</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 7-10, 2011</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Representatives affiliated with the Tea Party movement</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 7-10, 2011</td>
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ASK ALL:

PEW.4  Would you or a member of your family be personally inconvenienced by a partial shutdown of the federal government, or not? [IF YES, ASK: Would it be a major inconvenience or a minor inconvenience?]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Apr 7-10 2011</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33 Yes, major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20 Yes minor/not sure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>42 No, hasn't had any impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 Don't know/Refused (VOL.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TREND FOR COMPARISON:

Were you or a member of your family personally inconvenienced by the recent partial shutdown of the federal government, or not? If yes: Is it a major inconvenience or a minor inconvenience?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, major</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes minor/not sure</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, hasn't had any impact</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know/Refused (VOL.)</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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1 Wording shown was used April 9-10, 2011. Wording for April 7-9, 2011 was: “How much, if at all, would you blame each of the following for a government shutdown? (First/Next) do you think [INSERT, RANDOMIZE] deserve(s) a lot, some, or none of the blame for a shutdown?”

2 ABC News/Washington Post question wording in Early January 1996 and November 1995 was: “Have you personally been inconvenienced by the partial shutdown of the federal government, or not? If yes: Is it a major inconvenience or a minor inconvenience?”