



Mercyhurst Center
for Applied Politics

*Pennsylvania Republicans:
Leadership and the Fiscal Cliff*

*A Survey of 430 Registered
Republicans in Pennsylvania*

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Summary of Findings

In the aftermath of the 2012 presidential election, where Mitt Romney lost to Barack Obama in spite of a weak economy, pundits and media personalities have sought to identify the causes of the of the Republican defeat and the individuals who are the leaders of the party. Less than a month later, the Republican-controlled House of Representatives is confronted with a major challenge: the need to address what has been called “the fiscal cliff.” The Mercyhurst Center for Applied Politics polled 430 registered Republicans in Pennsylvania (MOE +/- 4.7%) to learn about Republican perceptions of the 2012 presidential election, the state of their party, and how their party should address the issue of the fiscal cliff.

Pennsylvania Republicans are uncertain about to whom they should look for leadership and do not agree on the key reason why Mitt Romney did not win the election. The poll finds that a majority (54%) of Pennsylvania Republicans are unable to identify even one person as the leader or indicate that there party does not have a leader. Small minorities of the commonwealth’s Republicans say that their leader is John Boehner (13%), Mitt Romney (10%), Paul Ryan (6%), Marco Rubio (3%), or Chris Christie (3%). Similarly, Republicans are divided when it comes to identifying the key reason Mitt Romney failed to win the 2012 presidential election, with a small plurality of voters (12%) saying voters’ misperception about their party’s candidate or his personal attributes was most important.

In the midst of the ongoing debate over how to address the fiscal cliff, Pennsylvania Republicans have found few reasons to be optimistic that a deal will be reached, but express a desire for a compromise agreement. Republicans are pessimistic (64%) about the possibility that President Obama and the Republicans in Congress will reach an agreement, and majorities say that neither President Obama (75%) or Republicans in Congress (50%) have shown enough willingness to compromise since the November election. Majorities of the commonwealth’s Republicans indicate President Obama (77%) and the Republicans in Congress (53%) should compromise even if they have to sacrifice some of their beliefs. As far as the compromise necessary to avoid the fiscal cliff, a solid majority of Republicans in Pennsylvania (60%) say that a budget agreement should include a

combination of tax increases on higher income Americans and spending cuts, as opposed to only spending cuts (28%) or tax increases (4%). Strong majorities of Pennsylvanians say that failure to avoid the fiscal cliff will cause harm to the United States economy (81%), Pennsylvania economy (81%) and their personal financial situation (76%).

The State of the Republican Party

In the wake of their electoral defeat in November, Pennsylvania’s Republican voters are uncertain about who is leading the party. While Democrats can look to Barack Obama as the party leader, one of the challenges of the party *out* of the White House is deciding who carries the mantle of party leadership. When asked who they see as the leader of their party, a majority of respondents (54%) said there is no clear leader or that they simply don’t know who is leading the party. Among the minority of respondents who did identify a leader, John Boehner (14%), Mitt Romney (11%), Paul Ryan (6%), Marco Rubio (4%), and Chris Christie (3%) were the most frequently mentioned (see Table 1).

Table 1. Leader of the Republican Party

<i>Thinking about the Republican Party today, which person do you personally see as the leader of the party?</i>	
Do not see a leader (e.g. “I don’t see one,” “there isn’t one,” “don’t know”)	54%
John Boehner	14%
Mitt Romney	11%
Paul Ryan	6%
Marco Rubio	4%
Chris Christie	3%
Other	8%

N=397 Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Pennsylvania Republicans are also uncertain about why Mitt Romney was defeated by Barack Obama in November. A majority of Republicans interviewed (54%) say that Romney lost the election for one of five reasons. These reasons include (1) voters’ misperceptions about the Republican candidate or the candidate’s personality (12%), (2) a poorly run Republican campaign (11%), (3) voters were enticed by Obama’s promise of entitlements (9%), (4) the Republican position on issues or the candidate himself were not appealing to minority voters, including women (8%), or (5) voters were misinformed/uneducated on the issues (7%).

Table 2. Reason Republicans Lost the 2012 Presidential Election

In the 2012 presidential election Mitt Romney, the Republican candidate, lost to Barack Obama, the Democratic candidate. In just a couple of words, what do you believe is the key reason that Mitt Romney lost the election?

Voter misperceptions about candidate/candidate's personal attributes (e.g. candidate's wealth, inability to relate to people, likeability)	12%
Poor campaign by Republican candidate (e.g. strategy, tactics, message)	11%
Obama's promise of entitlements (e.g. Obama offered people "free stuff," "freebies," "redistribution")	9%
Alienated minority voters (e.g. women, African-Americans, Latinos)	8%
Voters misinformed/uneducated on issues (e.g. people were "misinformed," "ignorant," "unknowing")	7%
Media bias (e.g. biased media, media misinformation, news)	4%
Other	36%
Don't know/no answer	14%

Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

While Pennsylvania Republicans offer a host of explanations for why their party's candidate lost the election in November, not one identified Romney's failure to unify the party as a reason. This is surprising when one considers Republicans' perception of what type of people belong to the party. When asked what type of person comes to mind when they think of the Republican Party, Pennsylvanians offered a wide range of responses including a conservative (29.2%), hard-working/self-reliant individual (9%), a moral/Christian person (8%), the rich (6%), businesspeople (7%), patriots (4.1%), middle/upper-middle class (3%), and reasonable/realistic people (3%). Other Republicans chose words like "concerned with the Constitution," "interested in liberty," "frugal," "small government," or "rural" to name only a few.

Fiscal Cliff

As President Obama and the Republicans in Congress approach the edge of the fiscal cliff, Pennsylvania Republicans are pessimistic that a deal will be reached and say they want more compromise from both Democrats and Republicans. A majority of Republicans in the commonwealth (64%) say that they either somewhat not confident (30%) or not at all confident (34%) that the President and

Congress will reach an agreement that allows the nation to avoid the fiscal cliff. When it comes to working together to solve problems facing the nation, Pennsylvania Republicans say that neither Obama (75%) or the Republicans in Congress (50%) have shown enough willingness to compromise.

Further, solid majorities say that President Obama (77%) and the Republicans in Congress (53%) should compromise even if they have to sacrifice some of their beliefs. Concerning the fiscal cliff, Republicans in Pennsylvania have a clear idea about what a compromise should look like. A strong majority (60%) say that a budget agreement should include a combination of tax increases and spending cuts, as opposed to only spending cuts (28%) or tax increases (4%). Motivation for this apparently strong desire for compromise may be respondents' perception of the effect that not reaching an agreement on a budget plan will have on them. Strong majorities say that failure to reach an agreement will harm the United States economy (81%), the Pennsylvania economy (81%), and their personal finances (76%).

Frequency Report

Interviews were completed with 430 registered Republicans in Pennsylvania. For a sample size of 430, there is a 95 percent probability that our survey results are within plus or minus 4.7 points (the margin of error) of the actual population distribution for any given question. For subsamples the margin of error is larger (depending on the size of the subsample). The data were weighted on age and gender to correct for discrepancies between sample and population. Due to rounding, column totals may not equal 100 percent. Bracketed or italicized text are instructions to interviewers.

Q.1 To begin, about a month ago there was a presidential election. Some people voted in this election, while others did not. Did you vote in the 2012 presidential election or did something come up that kept you from voting?

Yes, voted	96%
No, something came up	4%
DK	-
RF	-

Q.2 In the 2012 presidential election Mitt Romney, the Republican candidate, lost to Barack Obama, the Democratic candidate. In not more than a few words, what do you believe is the key reason that Mitt Romney lost the election.

[Open-Ended Response]

Q.3 When it comes to politics, some people have a handful of issues that are really important to them. These issues help them to make decisions about which candidate they will vote for or which political party they will join. In just a word or two, please tell me the issue that is most important to you.

[Open-Ended Response]

Q.4 How about the second most important issue? I can only record a word or two.

[Open-Ended Response]

Q.5. When you think of people who are Republicans, what type of person comes to mind? I can only record a couple of words.

[Open-Ended Response]

Q.6 When you think of people who are Republicans, what type of person comes to mind? I can only record a couple of words.

[Open-Ended Response]

Q. 7 Thinking about the Republican Party today, which person do you personally see as the leader of the party?

[Open-Ended Response]

Since the election in November, there's been some talk about bipartisanship, where Democrats and Republicans compromise in order to address the problems facing the nation.

[ASK QUESTIONS 9 TO 10 IN RANDOM ORDER]

Q.8 In your view, has Barack Obama shown enough willingness to compromise with the Republicans in Congress since being re-elected in November, or not?

Yes	13%
No	75%
Depends (volunteered)	6%
DK	5%
RF	1%

Q.9 In your view, have the Republicans in Congress shown enough willingness to compromise with Barack Obama since the election in November, or not?

Yes	35%
No	50%
Depends (volunteered)	6%
DK	7%
RF	2%

[ASK QUESTIONS 11 TO 12 IN RANDOM ORDER]

Q.10 When dealing with the Republican Congress, do you think President Obama should compromise to get things done even if he has to sacrifice some of his beliefs, or should Obama stand up for his beliefs even if that means less might be accomplished?

Compromise	77%
Stand up for his beliefs	12%
Depends (volunteered)	7%
DK	3%
RF	2%

Q.11 When dealing with President Obama, do you think the Republicans in Congress should compromise to get things done even if they have to sacrifice some of their beliefs, or should the Republicans in Congress stand up for their beliefs even if that means less might be accomplished?

Compromise	53%
Stand up for their beliefs	38%
Depends (volunteered)	8%
DK	1%
RF	1%

As you may know, the United States is approaching what some call the "fiscal cliff." Unless Congress and the President reach an agreement before January 1st, most Americans will have to pay more in taxes and spending in most government programs, including the military, will be cut significantly.

[ASK QUESTIONS 14 TO 16 IN RANDOM ORDER]

Q.12 If these tax increases and spending cuts occur next year, do you think that would HARM the UNITED STATES economy, HELP the U.S. economy, or have NO real impact on the economy?

Harm	81%
Help	7%
No impact	6%
Depends (volunteered)	3%
DK	2%
RF	1%

Q.13 If these tax increases and spending cuts occur next year, do you think that would HARM the PENNSYLVANIA economy, HELP the PA economy, or have NO real impact on the economy

Harm	81%
Help	4%
No Impact	9%
Depends (volunteered)	1%
DK	6%
RF	0%

Q.14 If these tax increases and spending cuts occur next year, do you think that would HARM your PERSONAL finances, HELP your finances, or have NO real impact on them?

Harm	76%
Help	2%
No Impact	17%
Depends (volunteered)	2%
DK	2%
RF	1%

Q.15 If you had to choose, would you rather see Congress and President Obama agree to a budget plan that includes ONLY cuts in government spending, ONLY tax increases for higher income Americans, or one that includes a COMBINATION of spending cuts and tax increases on higher income Americans?

Only spending cuts	28%
Only tax increases	4%
Combination of tax increases and spending cuts	60%
Depends (volunteered)	3%
DK	3%
RF	1%

Q.16 If congress and the President do not reach an agreement by the end of the year and those tax increases and spending cuts occur, do you think that President Obama or the Republicans in Congress would be more responsible for that?

President Obama	47%
Republicans in Congress	16%
Depends (volunteered)	19%
Other (volunteered)	10%
DK	6%
RF	1%

Q.17 How confident are you that the President and Congress will reach an agreement that will allow the nation to avoid the fiscal cliff? Would you say you are very confident, somewhat confident, or somewhat not confident, or not at all confident that they will reach an agreement?

Very confident	7%
Somewhat confident	29%
Somewhat not confident	30%
Not at all confident	34%
Depends (volunteered)	1%
DK	1%
RF	-

Q.18 Finally, I have a few questions that we'll be using for statistical purposes. Generally speaking, would you consider yourself to be a liberal, a conservative, a moderate, or have you not thought much about this?

Liberal	2%
Conservative	62%
Moderate	22%
Not thought much about it	12%
Don't Know	1%
Refused	1%

[IF THE ANSWER IS , AND...]

[IF THE ANSWER IS 3-4 OR 8-9, THEN SKIP TO QUESTION 19]

Q.20 What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Less than high school	1%
High school	25%
Some college/associates/technical	22%
College	33%
Graduate degree	19%
Don't Know	0%
Refused	-

Q.23 In what year were you born?

18-28 years	11%
29-38 years	12%
39-48 years	19%
49-58 years	23%
59-68 years	21%
69- and over	15%

Q.22 Do you consider yourself to be a Born Again Christian or Fundamentalist?

Yes	45%
No	49%
Don't Know	2%
Refused	4%

Q.23 What is your marital status?

Married	75%
Single	15%
Divorced	5%
Widowed	4%
Partnership	0%
Other	-
Don't Know	-
Refused	0%

Q.24 If you add together the yearly incomes, before taxes, of all the members of your household for the past year, what would the total be?

Less than \$30,000	7%
\$30,000-\$60,000	23%
\$60,000-\$100,000	21%
\$100,000-\$150,000	13%
Greater than \$150,000	12%
Don't Know	6%
Refused	19%

Q.25 What is your race?

White	97%
Non-White	2%
Don't Know	-
Refused	1%

Q.26 Gender? [DO NOT ASK]

Male 49%

Female 52%

Thank you for your time. If you would like to see the results from this study, go to polisci.mercyhurst.edu. If you have questions about the study, contact Dr. Joseph Morris at 814-824-2154. Research at Mercyhurst University which involves human participants is overseen by the Institutional Review Board. Questions or problems regarding your rights as a participant should be addressed to Mr. Timothy Harvey; Institutional Review Board Chair; Mercyhurst University; 501 East 38th Street; Erie, Pennsylvania 16546; Telephone (814) 824-3372.

Methodology

This report summarizes the results of a survey of registered Republicans in Pennsylvania, which was conducted between Wednesday, December 5 and Thursday, December 13, 2012. During the 8 day field period interviewers called weekday evenings between the hours of 6:00 and 9:00 PM and between 11:00 AM and 6:00 PM on weekends. For each working phone number, interviewers made no fewer than six attempts to contact individuals selected to participate in the study. Calls were generated by CATI software or manually dialed and relied on a list of randomly selected registered Pennsylvania Republicans obtained from Voter Contact Services.

A total of 430 individuals were interviewed. For a sample size of 430, there is a 95 percent probability that the results are within plus or minus 4.7 points (the margin of error) of the actual population distribution for any given question. For subsamples, the margin of error is higher (depending on the size of the subsample). Aside from sampling error, there are several factors that prevent the results obtained through a probability sample from being a perfect representation of the results that would be obtained if the entire population was interviewed. This non-sampling error may be caused by a variety of factors including, but not limited to, response rate and question order. In this survey, a variety of techniques were employed to reduce common sources of non-sampling error.

Response Rate

Calculating a response rate for a particular study involves considering a number of variables (see http://www.aapor.org/Response_Rates_An_Overview.htm); but, simply stated, it refers to the percentage of individuals in a sample that, when contacted, elect to participate in a study by responding an interviewer's questions. In recent years, researchers have documented a sharp decline in response rates. Today, a typical study that relies on telephone interviews can expect a response rate of between 20 and 30%. Although it is unclear if, or to what extent, response rate is a source of non-sampling error, most polls strive to maximize response rate by making multiple attempts to contact individuals and taking steps to secure their cooperation once they have been reached. In this way, our study of registered Republicans in Pennsylvania is no different than most polls: No fewer than six attempts were made to contact hard-to-reach individuals. These attempts occurred during weekday evenings, mornings and on Saturday afternoons. To ensure a high rate of cooperation, interviewers received training on conversion techniques that

are consistent with research ethics as identified by the Mercyhurst University Institutional Review Board.

Questions

This report contains the questions as worded on the questionnaire and in the order in which they were asked. Some of the questions include bracketed information, which is, in every case, an instruction to the programmer or interviewer.

Whenever possible, question order was randomized to ensure that respondents did not receive a set order of response options, which allowed response set bias to be minimized. For structured (close-ended) questions, interviewers were trained to probe for clarity when respondents' answers were not identical to the predefined response options. For unstructured (open-ended) questions, interviewers were trained to record verbatim responses whenever possible. In cases where verbatim responses were impossible to capture due to their length or complexity, interviewers sought to clarify responses by using standard, question-specific probes. In cases where a respondent asked that a question or response option be repeated, interviewers were careful to re-read the entire question or all response options.

Data

Data collected during this study was prepared for analysis by director and associate director of Mercyhurst Center for Applied Politics. Data preparation included, but was not limited to, removing partial interviews (respondent-terminated interviews) from the dataset. To maximize the accuracy of our results and correct for discrepancies between our sample and the population, the data were weighted on gender and age. Simply stated, weighting is when data collected from survey respondents are adjusted to represent the population from which the sample was drawn.

Mercyhurst Center for Applied Politics

The Mercyhurst Center for Applied Politics (MCAP) began operations in July 2010. Inspired by the mission of Mercyhurst University and guided by the university's core values, the center promotes reasoned discourse about problems facing communities, states and nations. It accomplishes this objective by providing elected officials, government agencies, news organizations, and nonprofits with accurate and unbiased assessments of public opinion; and offering a nonpartisan forum for public debates and roundtable discussions that address pressing public problems.

The centerpiece of MCAP is the state of the art computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) facility. The facility, which is located in the Center for Academic Engagement, is comprised of thirty-one interviewer stations and staffed by well-trained research associates. The specialized computer software used to conduct telephone interviews generates random telephone numbers in a predefined geographic area or dials from a list, and allows research associates to accurately complete even the most complex interviews.

The center also has the ability to design and administer online surveys. This method of interviewing is ideal for organizations that have relatively up-to-date email addresses for their members. The software used by MCAP allows a researcher to administer a survey - whether short and simple or long and complex – to an unlimited number of email addresses. In addition, a researcher has the ability to monitor response rates and send out reminders, thereby ensuring that the study produces high quality results.

As the Northwestern Pennsylvania's only CATI facility whose primary purpose is to regularly and accurately gauge public opinion, the MCAP is an invaluable resource for community leaders. Each year the center conducts polls on issues of local, state and national interest. The results of these studies are made available to the public via the university's webpage (polisci.mercyhurst.edu/mcap). In addition to its annual polls, the center offers its services to private parties, nonprofits, news organizations, and government agencies for minimal cost.

Please direct questions about the center to Dr. Joseph M. Morris, Director, Mercyhurst Center for Applied Politics, Mercyhurst University, 501 E. 38th Street, Erie, PA, 16546, (814) 824-2154, jmorris@mercyhurst.edu.

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