A Civil Conversation in a Polarized Political Climate

The Story of How 3,500 Americans From All Walks of Life Found Common Ground to Reduce Our Federal Deficits

January 3, 2011

Albuquerque, NM; Augusta, ME; Casper, WY; Chicago, IL; Columbia, SC; Dallas, TX; Des Moines, IA; Detroit, MI; East Palo Alto, CA; Grand Forks, ND; Jackson, MS; Louisville, KY; Missoula, MT; Overland Park, KS; Pasadena, CA; Philadelphia, PA; Portland, OR; Portsmouth, NH; Richmond, VA and 38 additional community conversations
Our Budget, Our Economy

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About AMERICASPEAKS: Our Budget, Our Economy

AmericaSpeaks is a non-partisan, non-profit organization with the mission of providing Americans with a greater voice in the most important decisions that affect their lives. AmericaSpeaks has engaged more than 160,000 citizens across the country on such topics as shaping municipal budget priorities in Washington, D.C., creating regional plans for the greater Chicago and Cleveland regions, and developing rebuilding plans for the World Trade Center site in New York City and New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina.

For more information about AmericaSpeaks, visit us online at www.usabudgetdiscussion.org or www.americaspeaks.org.

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About This Report

The following report provides a final analysis of the outcomes of the June 26, 2010, National Town Meeting on the nation’s fiscal future. Data from the report primarily comes from three sources: individual keypad voting by participants at the 19 primary town meeting sites, ideas submitted by table groups at the 19 town meeting sites, and deficit reduction packages created by table groups at the 19 town meeting sites. Additional input comes from data submitted by the 38 smaller community conversation sites and preliminary findings from independent evaluators at Harvard University and the University of California.

Participants were not recruited through a randomized sample and went through a day-long deliberation. As such, their preferences should not be characterized as representing the views of the general public. Rather, the results reflect the views of a large, diverse group of Americans who spent a day deliberating about the issue.

To view individual site reports and more data from the National Town Meeting, visit the results page at www.usabudgetdiscussion.org.

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At tables across the country, people from every walk of life sat together and deliberated about the steps our nation can take over the coming decades to ensure that our fiscal house is in order. Liberals and conservatives, young and old, rich and poor, people of all races and ethnicities sat together in authentic conversation.

Something interesting happened at the tables across the country. No fights broke out. There were no disruptive arguments. People didn’t scream at each other. Rather, members of local Tea Parties sat together with activists from MoveOn and people from every other walk of life, and had civil conversations.
WHAT HAPPENED?
An Executive Summary
A National Discussion
On Our Fiscal Future

3,500 Americans came together across 57 sites around the country to discuss the nation’s long-term fiscal challenges on June 26, 2010. Participants worked in small groups with skilled facilitators to learn about the issues, weigh tradeoffs, and express their preferences. Face-to-face meetings at each of the sites took place simultaneously and were linked together by satellite and webcast to create a true National Town Meeting.

At 19 of the sites, participants used electronic voting keypads and groupware computers to identify their shared priorities over the course of the day-long meeting. They were joined by participants at 38 smaller, volunteer-organized Community Conversations across the country.

“It was so refreshing to have civil discourse among people of different ages, persuasions, and backgrounds. Congress could learn a lot from our experience. The tone of our discussions was polite, respectful, and everyone contributed.”

- MaryEllen S., Albuquerque, NM
Participants in the discussion evaluated 42 spending and tax options to reduce the deficit in 2025 by $1.2 trillion. The strongest messages that emerged from the discussion included:

**Reduce Defense Spending by 15%**
85% of participants supported at least a 5% cut in defense spending; 51% supported a 15% cut.

**Reduce Health Care Spending by at least 5%**
62% of participants expressed support for reductions in health care spending.

**Reduce All Other Spending by at least 5%**
68% of participants expressed support for reductions in other spending.

**Raise the Cap on Payroll Taxes**
60% of participants expressed support for raising the earnings cap on payroll taxes.

**Raise Income Taxes on those in Higher Tax Brackets**
54% supported an extra 5% tax on those earning more than $1 million a year and 52% supported raising income taxes for the top two tax brackets.

**Establish Carbon and Securities Taxes**
54% of participants expressed support for a carbon tax and 50% supported a securities transaction tax.

**Don’t Reduce Social Security Benefits or Establish a VAT Tax**
No reduction in Social Security benefits received majority support from participants and only 24% supported the creation of a 5% Value Added Tax.
A Plea For Civility and Finding Common Ground

Liberals and conservatives, young and old, rich and poor, and people of all races and ethnicities sat together and deliberated about the steps our nation can take over the coming decades to ensure that our fiscal house is in order. Together they learned about the issues, weighed the trades offs, and sent a strong message to leaders in Washington about their priorities.

Something interesting happened that no one would predict from reading the newspaper lately. No fights broke out. There were no disruptive arguments. People didn’t scream at each other. Rather, members of local Tea Parties sat together with activists from MoveOn and people from every other walk of life, and had civil conversations.

Most participants said that they learned something and were influenced by what they heard from others at the National Town Meeting. And while there were many disagreements, there were also many areas of common ground that emerged from the day. Many conservatives agreed that it will be necessary to raise taxes and many liberals agreed that it will be necessary to reduce spending.

When asked to compose messages to leaders in Washington, there was little doubt about what was most important to participants around the nation. The most popular messages generated by the group had to do with the tone of our politics and the ability of our leaders in Washington to represent their constituents.

Abandon the failed politics of partisanship.
- Table #4, Louisville, KY

You can’t demonize each other and expect us to trust you.
- Table #9, Des Moines, IA
Independent evaluators from Harvard University and the University of California conducted an analysis of Our Budget, Our Economy participants to understand who participated and how participation in the deliberation impacted them.

The evaluators summarized their preliminary findings by writing the following:

“Overall, the OBOE event appears to have achieved its goals of bringing together a diverse group of ordinary Americans to engage each other in constructive discussion. Both liberals and conservatives appear to have moderated in their policy views regarding spending cuts and tax increases. And the organizers appear to have been quite successful in creating a forum for open and balanced discussion, based on the self-reports of participants as well as the extensive observation by our 19 on-site research assistants.”

Key evaluation findings included:

- **Representative Participation:** AmericaSpeaks did a reasonably good job of recruiting a broad representation of Americans in the national discussion. The distribution of OBOE participants in terms of income, age, and ethnicity/race is roughly comparable with a few exceptions (OBOE participants are somewhat likelier to be older and African American and somewhat less likely to be Latino).

- **Moderating Policy Preferences:** Liberals and conservatives seem to have given ground on their specific priorities in order to help achieve their goal of reducing the deficit. For example, conservatives became more supportive of raising taxes on the very wealthy. To a similar degree, liberals became more supportive of a 5% across the board cut to discretionary programs after one day of deliberation.

- **Positive Experiences at the Event:** Large majorities of OBOE event participants had positive evaluations of their experience with deliberation on fiscal matters. Notably, 85 percent of the participants felt more informed about the challenges and options for cutting the federal budget deficit, 97 percent believed all participants listened to one another respectfully and courteously, and 93 percent felt that other participants seemed to hear and understand their views.

See page 30 for more detailed findings from the evaluation.
The most important thing I learned from this process is that ordinary citizens could tackle a complex issue, filter it civilly through their own perspective, and come up with consensus. I literally did not think this was possible.

- Fran G., Portland, OR
How Did The National Discussion Work?
Learning, Deliberating, Expressing Preferences:

In 19 cities across the country, Americans gathered at meeting sites of several hundred people each. At each site, participants sat around tables of 8-10 with volunteer facilitators.

Participants spent most of the day deliberating with their table mates. They began by talking about the nation’s economic recovery and the values that they believed should guide our long-term fiscal policies. For nearly three hours, they then learned about, discussed and voted on options for reducing the nation’s long-term deficits. Finally, they developed messages to send to leaders in Washington.

National Themes and Priorities:

Periodically, participants shared their ideas and opinions with the rest of the nation through a video link connecting the sites. Participants used computers at their tables to submit their ideas, which were read and analyzed by a team of analysts looking for nation-wide themes. Participants also used wireless voting keypads to express their individual priorities.

Community Conversations:

Participants in the 19 town meeting sites were joined by participants in 38 “community conversations.” These smaller, volunteer-led forums participated in the national meeting via webcast, but they varied with regard to the length of the discussion and diversity of participation.
Virtual Community Conversations

Participants at meeting sites across the country were also joined by others who took part virtually over the Internet. Online participants joined the discussion in “Second Life,” a 3-dimensional virtual world in which people can interact through avatars. Second Life participants watched presentations from the national program via the webcast and used the chat function in Second Life to deliberate about the issues. The Second Life forums were co-sponsored by the California National Issue Forums Network, Deliberative IDEAS, the Center for Voter Deliberation of Northern Virginia, Public Decisions, Texas Forums, and The World Cafe.
Early in the day, participants at the 19 town meeting sites shared their demographic information using individual keypad voting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Income</th>
<th>6/26</th>
<th>Census</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than $25,000</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25k - $50k</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50k - $75k</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75k - $100k</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than $100k</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>6/26</th>
<th>Census</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17 - 24</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 – 34</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 – 44</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 – 54</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 – 64</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 or Older</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>6/26</th>
<th>Census</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Asian American</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian/White</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino/Hispanic</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than One</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Views on Economic/Fiscal Issues</th>
<th>6/26</th>
<th>Census</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Liberal</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Conservative</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Current & Former Members of Congress Took Part in the National Town Meeting in Person and by Video

Senator Kent Conrad (D-ND)
Senator John Cornyn (R-TX)
Senator Jim DeMint (R-SC)
Former Senator Pete Domenici (R-NM)
Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC)
Senator Judd Gregg (R-NH)
Rep. Leonard Boswell (D-IA)
Rep. Chaka Fattah (D-PA)
Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)
Rep. Bobby Scott (D-VA)

Dr. Alice Rivlin (Member of the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform & Co-Chair of the Bi-Partisan Policy Center’s Debt Reduction Task Force)

Staff from several other Congressional offices also observed at meeting sites across the nation.

Albuquerque, NM; Augusta, ME; Casper, WY; Chicago, IL; Columbia, SC; Dallas, TX; Des Moines, IA; Detroit, MI; East Palo Alto, CA; Grand Forks, ND; Jackson, MS; Louisville, KY; Missoula, MT; Overland Park, KS; Pasadena, CA; Philadelphia, PA; Portland, OR; Portsmouth, NH; Richmond, VA and 38 additional community conversations
Please find the political will to use this input as if it were coming from a powerful lobbying group – because we are!

Message Submitted by Table #4, Des Moines, IA
WHAT DID THEY SAY?
Findings From The National Discussion
Economic Recovery

Early on in the day, participants in the National Town Meeting briefly discussed the nation’s economic recovery. They were asked three questions through the keypad voting system about the recovery and government policy.

So far this year, do you think economic conditions are getting better, worse or about the same?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinion</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Better</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat better</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About the same</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat worse</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worse</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How supportive or unsupportive are you of Congress spending more on programs [that extend unemployment benefits and increase aid to states] if that spending increases the budget deficit?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinion</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Supportive</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Unsupportive</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsupportive</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do you think the government should be doing more or less to strengthen the economy?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinion</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About the same</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Christopher B., Philadelphia, PA

I welcomed the opportunity to share my views with others. It allowed me to listen to other individual’s views and attempt to understand how and why they felt that way.

- Christopher B., Philadelphia, PA

How Did Views Break Down By Ideology?

**Economic Conditions:** Liberal and moderate participants tended to be more likely to believe that the economy is doing somewhat better this year, while conservative participants tended to believe the economy is doing worse.

**Legislation:** Liberal and moderate participants tended to be somewhat supportive or supportive of the recent legislation to extend unemployment insurance and provide aid to states, while conservative participants tended to be against it.

**Government Activity:** While conservatives and those somewhat conservative opposed more government action to strengthen the economy, more than a quarter joined liberal and moderate participants in supporting government doing more.
Participants were asked to identify and discuss their preferred values on three 7-point scales to help clarify and communicate how they believe the nation’s fiscal challenges should be approached. During the day, they were asked to reflect on how their values related to the options that they preferred.

These three graphs depict where participants placed themselves on each of these three values scales.
I learned a great deal from my table mates; the greatest of which was that regardless of our political perspectives, which varied widely, there is deep concern regarding the deficit, the ways in which our overspending will handicap the next generation and the fiscal stability of our way of life. Everyone at the table was willing to sacrifice to set things right. This central tendency of the group, replicated in the data we saw from the national participants, was inspiring.

- Marion K., Richmond, VA

How Did The Values Break Down?

Across ideological lines, most participants tended to support an equal emphasis on taking care of today's generation and taking care of future generations.

While more participants tended to believe that a greater burden for reducing the deficit should be placed on those who are more capable, responses diverged somewhat by ideology.

Finally, responses divided along ideological lines about the relative importance of government's responsibility to take care of the most vulnerable and an individual's responsibility to take care of one's self.
Making Tough Choices

Participants in the National Town Meeting were offered a challenge to reduce the deficit in the year 2025 by $1.2 trillion. In order to do so, they were presented with 42 spending and revenue options developed with the Our Budget, Our Economy National Advisory Committee. Tables spent a half hour learning about options and two hours working in diverse table groups with facilitators to weigh the trade offs and find agreement about reaching targets.

Options supported by at least half of each table group were submitted as a table vote towards their deficit reduction goal. Table groups also submitted new options and additional comments. Following table deliberations, participants used keypads to express their individual preferences for reaching the target.

The following several pages describe the level of support that participants expressed for each of the 42 spending and revenue options and break preferences down by ideology and other factors. Spending and revenue options were divided into eight categories:

- Health Care
- Social Security
- All Other Non-Defense Programs
- Defense Programs
- Raising Taxes
- Reducing Deductions and Credits
- Reforming the Tax Code
- Establishing New Taxes

Reductions Made by Tables

During the two hour discussion on the options, about half of the table groups reached their goal of reducing the deficit in 2025 by $1.2 trillion and 65% of tables reduced the deficit by $1 trillion. The following reflects the progress made by tables across the 19 sites.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reductions Reached by Tables</th>
<th># of Tables</th>
<th>% of Tables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More than $1.2 trillion</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than $1.1 trillion</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than $1 trillion</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than $900 billion</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than $800 billion</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than $700 billion</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than $600 billion</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Tables</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Health Care Options

Participants were presented with options to reduce health care spending by 5%, 10%, 15%, or not at all.

62% of participants at the 19 town meeting sites expressed support for at least a 5% reduction in health care spending (the sum of supporters of 5%, 10% and 15% cuts), while 38% of participants preferred no reductions in health care spending. While these cuts in health care spending tended to be supported more by conservative participants, a cut of 5% or more was supported by 36% of liberal participants, 58% of somewhat liberal participants, and 65% of moderate participants.

57% of table groups included a reduction in health care spending by at least 5% in the final packages that they submitted at the end of their discussions.

Notably, many table groups commented that they were not satisfied with the health care options provided in the Options Workbook. Many expressed support for reforms of the health care delivery system in order to reduce health spending, especially a Single Payer System. Some tables also expressed interest in reducing waste, fraud and abuse, and promoting wellness.
Social Security Options

Participants were presented with a range of options to reform Social Security, described in the table to the right.

60% of participants supported raising the cap on payroll taxes to 90% of earnings – the most popular option in this section. This option was supported by majorities in every age group. Among liberal participants, this option was supported by 73%. Among somewhat conservative participants, it was supported by 62%. 36% of conservative participants supported the option.

About half of participants supported an increase of payroll taxes by at least one percentage point (combining those who supported payroll tax increases to 13.4% and 14.4%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Security</th>
<th>6/26</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raise Age Limit to 69</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limit Increase in Starting Benefits</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Measurement of Inflation</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raise Payroll Tax to 13.4%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raise Payroll Tax to 14.4%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raise Cap to Cover 90% of earnings</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create Personal Savings Account</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Change</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No option to reduce benefits received support from a majority of participants. Among the options that reduced benefits, the most popular was raising the age of receiving full benefits to 69 by 2028, which received support from 39%. Greatest support for this option came from those who were between 25 – 34 years old (48%). It received the least support from those who were 35 – 44 (33%). 40% of those over 65 supported the option and 37% under 25 supported it.

Among the packages submitted by tables, 81% included raising the cap, 48% included an increase in payroll taxes, and 37% raised the age for receiving full benefits. Additionally, some tables expressed an interest in eliminating the cap on payroll taxes all together and some tables expressed support for some form of means testing for benefits.
All Other Non-Defense Options

68% of participants supported at least a 5% reduction in spending on all other non-defense programs (the sum of supporters of 5%, 10% and 15% cuts), and 32% of participants preferred no reductions in spending. 59% of conservative participants supported cutting spending by 15%, while 56% of liberal participants opposed any cuts in this category of spending.

66% of table groups included a reduction in spending of at least 5% in their final packages. Some tables expressed interest in ensuring that cuts are not made across the board. The area of the budget that some tables expressed an interest in protecting from cuts was education. Agriculture subsidies were cited as an area that should receive cuts.

Defense Options

Reductions in defense spending by at least 5% received support from 85% of participants. More than half of participants supported a 15% cut and an additional 18% supported a 10% cut.

60% of conservatives supported a 5% cut in defense spending and 83% of those who are somewhat conservative supported at least a 5% cut. A 15% cut in defense spending was supported by 78% of liberals and 54% of those who are somewhat liberal.

84% of table groups included a reduction in spending by at least 5% in their final packages. 48% included a reduction of 15%. Some tables expressed an interest in reducing defense spending by more than 15%. Some tables also expressed concern that cuts in defense should not compromise support for American troops. Suggestions for making defense cuts included reducing military bases overseas and cutting spending on outdated weaponry.
Raising Taxes

Raising tax rates among those in the top income brackets – either those earning more than $1 million or those in the top two brackets – received majority support from participants. 54% supported a 5% tax on earners of more than $1 million and 52% supported raising taxes by at least 10% for those in the top two brackets.

A tax on earners of more than $1 million was supported by 74% of liberals, 66% of those somewhat liberal, 54% of moderates, 43% of those somewhat conservative, and 20% of conservatives. Raising income tax rates on top brackets was supported by 77% of liberals, 65% of those somewhat liberal, 49% of moderates, 31% of those somewhat conservative and 15% of conservatives.

Notably, about 200 fewer people voted on this set of options, probably because these options were mutually exclusive with options to reform the tax code. Instead of selecting “no change”, some may have chosen not to vote.

52% of table groups supported a 5% tax increase for those earning more than $1 million and 41% supported raising income tax rates by at least 10% on top brackets.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Raising Taxes</th>
<th>6/26</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raise personal income tax rates by 10% for everyone</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raise personal income tax rates by 20% for everyone</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raise personal tax rates by 10% for everyone in the top two tax brackets</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raise personal tax rates by 20% for everyone in the top two tax brackets</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create an extra 5% tax for people earning more than $1M per year</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raise the tax rate on capital gains and dividends</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raise the top corporate income tax rate to 40% from 35%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No change</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reducing Deductions & Credits

Participants were provided with options to reduce several of the largest deductions and credits in the federal tax code; described in the table to the right. Separately, participants were also given options to eliminate all major deductions and credits by reforming the tax code -- see page 26. These options, however, were mutually exclusive because it isn’t possible to eliminate an individual deduction and then do so again while reforming the tax code.

Individually, no option in this category received a majority of support from participants. However, strong preferences for eliminating deductions and credits can be seen if support for simplifying the tax code (see page 26) is added to these individual votes.

Liberals tended to be more supportive of limiting corporate depreciation (54%) and converting the mortgage interest deduction to a credit (45%). Conservatives tended to be supportive of the more comprehensive approaches to reforming the tax code offered on page 26.

Notably, about 250 fewer people voted on this set of options, probably because they were mutually exclusive with options to reform the tax code. Instead of selecting “no change”, some may have chosen not to vote.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reduce Deductions &amp; Credits</th>
<th>6/26</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limit the value of itemized deductions to 28%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convert the mortgage interest deduction into a credit</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limit the deduction for state and local taxes, real estate, and personal property</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limit corporate deductions for equipment</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End the business deduction for domestic production</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No change</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reform The Tax Code

Participants were offered options that would reform the federal tax code by eliminating all major deductions and credits. Participants could choose to apply between 10 and 30 percent of the savings from this reform to reducing the deficit with the remaining 90 to 70 percent going to reduce taxes. These options are overly simplified to illustrate a type of reform and do not reflect actual proposals being considered by policy makers.

Half of those who voted on this option chose to reform the tax code and half chose no change. However, about 500 fewer people voted on this set of options, probably because these options were mutually exclusive of the raising rates and reducing deductions options. Instead of selecting “no change,” some may have chosen not to vote.

Establish New Taxes

Majorities supported the establishment of a carbon tax (54%) and a securities transaction tax (50%). A 5% VAT tax received low support across all ideological groups. While new taxes were opposed by most conservatives, one third of those who are somewhat conservative expressed support for the carbon and securities transaction tax.

53% of table groups supported a carbon tax in their final packages, and 48% supported a securities transactions tax.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reform Tax Code</th>
<th>6/26</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use 10% to Reduce Deficit</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use 20% to Reduce Deficit</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use 30% to Reduce Deficit</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Change</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of those who did support one of these options, participants preferred to provide more of the savings generated by eliminating major deductions to deficit reductions (e.g. 30% instead of 10% or 20%).

30% of tables selected one of the tax code reform options. Many table groups expressed interest through their computers in some form of flat tax, fair tax or other simplification of the tax code through their laptop computers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Establish New Taxes</th>
<th>6/26</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Establish a 5% Value-Added Tax (VAT)</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish a carbon tax</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish a securities transaction tax</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No change</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“I was pleased to find a good spread of race, age and gender at my table … It was great to hear from the table that we shared many of the same views but at different levels.

- James M., Columbia, SC

Other Options Submitted By Table Groups

Table groups were able to submit additional options through computers at their tables. The two options that were submitted most often were the creation of a single payer health care system and a fair or flat tax.

Other more common options submitted by table groups included the elimination of waste, fraud and abuse, promoting wellness to reduce health costs, limiting Social Security benefits for higher income seniors, separating Social Security out from a discussion of deficit reduction, reducing defense spending by more than 15%, making sure that defense cuts do not threaten the safety or support of troops, and ensuring that any cuts to All Other Non-Defense Spending are not done across the board.
Messages To Leaders
In Washington

Towards the end of the day, participants were asked to develop messages to leaders in Washington. Messages that reflected common themes were presented to the group and voted upon. The two messages that received the greatest support included:

- “Please find the political will to use this input as if it were coming from a powerful lobbying group – because we are.”

- “Abandon the failed politics of partisanship.” “You can’t demonize each other and expect us to trust you.”

Participants were also asked to reflect on the tone and quality of political discussion in our country today, as well as the tone and quality of discussions at the town meeting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How satisfied with the tone and quality of political discussion in our country today?</th>
<th>How satisfied are you with the tone and quality of our discussions here today?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very satisfied</td>
<td>Very satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very dissatisfied</td>
<td>Very dissatisfied</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additionally, 91% said they would like to see leaders convene the public in this kind of forum on other issues that are important to the country with 7% saying that they may be interested in convenings on other issues.

73% of participants said they were very likely or likely to contact the media, public officials or other leaders to tell them about their views on these issues. 18% said they were somewhat likely and 9% said they were not at all likely.

“It was a life changing event. I would do it again tomorrow.”

- Ray M., Overland Park, KS
Community Conversation Results

More than 800 people joined the national discussion at volunteer-organized Community Conversations. Unlike the 19 main town meeting sites, these Conversations were not convened by AmericaSpeaks’ staff or partners. Rather, individuals or organizations with a passion for the process of citizen engagement or the policy issue volunteered to recruit a group of local residents to join the national discussion.

Community Conversation hosts received a handbook and participated in a series of training calls to prepare them for their role. Some hosts prepared for just a handful of participants, while others organized events with dozens of participants. Conversation participants watched the national presentations by webcast and used paper worksheets to share their ideas and votes, which could be submitted by hosts over the Internet.

Each conversation host was encouraged to recruit a diverse group of participants, but the level of diversity varied greatly. Some conversations lasted the entire 7 hour program, while others hosted abbreviated discussions that ended early.

Because the Community Conversations were significantly less diverse and did not all go through the entire exercise, AmericaSpeaks is holding data from the Conversations separate from the 19 town meeting sites.

Who Participated?

Data submitted by about half of the Community Conversation hosts shows that:

- Participants tended to have higher numbers of white participants (76% vs. 68%)
- Tended to have fewer young people (4% between ages of 17-24 vs. 10%)
- Tended to be more moderate (36% vs 23%) and less conservative (11% vs. 20%)

They also tended to report their household income at a much lower rate (probably because they were not able to use anonymous keypad polling to share their demographic information).

Policy Preferences

Support for revenue and spending options from Community Conversation sites tended to be roughly consistent with the 19 town meeting sites. Two options that received substantially more support from Community Conversation table groups were creating a Value Added Tax (49% of tables supported vs. 21% of tables from the 19 town meeting sites) and creating a carbon tax (71% of tables supported vs. 53% of tables at the 19 town meeting sites).

Other options that received somewhat higher levels of support from Community Conversation table groups included creating a securities transaction tax, raising the age for receiving full retirement benefits, raising income taxes for those in the top income brackets by 20%, reducing non-defense spending by 5%, raising income taxes by those in the top brackets by 10%, and reforming the tax code and using 10% of savings to reduce the deficit.

Options that received less support from Community Conversation table groups included making no change to reform the tax code, reducing non-defense spending by 15%, and creating no new taxes.
Overall, the OBOE event appears to have achieved its goals of bringing together a diverse group of ordinary Americans to engage each other in constructive discussion. Both liberals and conservatives appear to have moderated in their policy views regarding spending cuts and tax increases. And the organizers appear to have been quite successful in creating a forum for open and balanced discussion, based on the self-reports of participants as well as the extensive observation by our 19 on-site research assistants.

- Professors Kevin Esterling, Archon Fung and Taeku Lee, “The Difference that Deliberation Makes: Evaluating the Our Budget, Our Economy Public Deliberation”
HOW DID IT WORK?

Initial Evaluation Findings
“We believe that “Our Budget, Our Economy” is the largest national experiment in structured public deliberation to date in the United States and so constitutes an unprecedented opportunity to explore both public views about the substantive topic of public spending and more general questions about the dynamics of public deliberation.”

-- Professors Kevin Esterling, Archon Fung and Taeku Lee

How Representative Were Participants?

The evaluators first sought to understand who participated in the national discussion and how representative they were of the general public. In order to answer this question, evaluators compared participant responses from the six largest town meeting sites (Philadelphia, Chicago, Portland, Dallas, Albuquerque, Columbia) with responses from the control groups described in the sidebar on page 33, as well as the Census.

The evaluators wrote:
“We find that AmericaSpeaks did a reasonably good job of recruiting a broad representation of Americans in the OBOE events. We reach this conclusion by comparing the demographic background of our survey of participants to our [Random Digit Dial] survey of the general population and to Census ACS data, and in contrast to the Public Agenda survey of elites.”
How was the evaluation conducted?

Independent evaluators from Harvard University and the University of California are currently undertaking an extensive evaluation of the Our Budget, Our Economy process to understand who participated in the national discussion, how participation in the national discussion impacted them, and what they thought about the national discussion itself. Information on the following pages is based on the first round of analysis from this evaluation, which will be followed by several additional reports over the next year.

1. Surveys were conducted with participants immediately before and after the national discussion.

2. The deliberations in the 19 town meeting sites were observed by research assistants.

3. Data submitted by participants through keypad polling and groupware computers was analyzed.

4. Surveys were conducted with four control groups: the first was a group of 2,594 people who registered for the event but did not show up, the second was a group of 2,677 people who were reached through random-digit phone calls, the third was a group of 1,350 people who were randomly reached through the Internet, and the fourth was a survey of policy elites and “Beltway influencers” conducted by Public Agenda.
Demographics

In general, participants in the national discussion tended to more closely resemble the Census demographics than those who were reached by the evaluators through random-digit phone calls, including by income, age, and race. Participants were very close to the Census demographics by income with slightly fewer participants earning a household income of more than $100,000 a year. Fewer participants were between the ages of 35 and 44 than the Census. And more Our Budget, Our Economy participants were African American, while fewer were Latino, compared to the Census.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INCOME</th>
<th>OBOE</th>
<th>Random Digit Dial</th>
<th>Census</th>
<th>Elites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;$50K</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50-100K</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;$100K</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>OBOE</th>
<th>RDD</th>
<th>Census</th>
<th>Elites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-24 yrs</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15²</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34 yrs</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44 yrs</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54 yrs</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64 yrs</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+ years</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RACE/ETHNICITY</th>
<th>OBOE</th>
<th>RDD</th>
<th>ACS</th>
<th>Elites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other / Multiple</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EDUCATION</th>
<th>OBOE</th>
<th>RDD</th>
<th>ACS</th>
<th>Elites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H.S. or less</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College degree</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced degree</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 The demographic statistics used to evaluate Our Budget, Our Economy come from individuals at the Philadelphia, Chicago, Portland, Dallas, Albuquerque and Columbia town meeting sites, who responded to the pre and post surveys conducted by evaluators. They do not necessarily include everyone who responded to demographic questions using a polling keypad at those six sites. Nor do the numbers include participants at the other 13 town meeting sites or 38 community conversations.

2 Census data are for 15-24 years, given the incompatibility between Census Bureau age ranges and those in our surveys. Census columns also are the percentage of those in the 15 to 65-plus year age range.

3 Two percent of RDD respondents refused to state their education background.
Partisanship, Ideology and Political Interest

Our Budget, Our Economy participants tended to have a higher percentage of Democrats and liberals than the control group generated by random digit dial, but tended to have a lower percentage of Democrats than the Cooperative Congressional Election Study. Our Budget, Our Economy participants were somewhat less likely to be Republicans or conservatives compared to the random digit dial survey and the election study.

The most dramatic difference between OBOE participants and the general population is in their very high degree of interest in politics and public affairs. Whereas only 40% of random-digit dial respondents and 50% of Election Study respondents report that they were “very” interested in politics, fully 80% of Our Budget, Our Economy participants do so.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTISANSHIP</th>
<th>OBOE</th>
<th>Random Digit Dial</th>
<th>Cooperative Congressional Election Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IDEOLOGY</th>
<th>OBOE</th>
<th>Random Digit Dial</th>
<th>Cooperative Congressional Election Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of these</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POLITICAL INTEREST</th>
<th>OBOE</th>
<th>Random Digit Dial</th>
<th>Cooperative Congressional Election Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very interested</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat interested</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly interested</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all interested</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>— 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 The CCES has a different set of response categories (only three categories), slightly different question wording, and a significantly higher proportion of respondents who indicated that they were “not sure” or “don’t know.” The column percentages do not sum to 100 because the remainder (25 percent) are in this category.
Impact of Deliberation on Policy Positions

The second major area of inquiry for the evaluators was to understand the degree to which participants in the national discussion reflected similar policy positions to the general public and how participating in the deliberation affected the policy positions of participants.

The evaluators asked participants and the control group to express their level of support or opposition to six policy options (more generic than the 42 options addressed at the National Town Meeting).

1. Raise income taxes on the very wealthy – individuals making $250,000 or more and households making $500,000 or more

2. Cut discretionary federal programs and services by 5% across the board

3. Raise taxes on the middle-class as well as the wealthy

4. Cut the growth of spending on entitlement programs such as Social Security and Medicare benefits

5. Cut spending on national defense and the military

6. Create a new federal consumption tax, which would be like a federal sales tax that would be on top of any state and local sales tax
How closely did the policy perspectives of OBOE participants match those of the randomly selected control group?

Generally speaking, participants in the national discussion came into the event with a similar set of views as the general public. However, in some cases their views were somewhat more polarized—which is to say that liberal and conservative participants tended to have slightly more extreme views on the options than the control group reached through random digit dial polling.

For example, liberal participants tended to have a slightly higher level of support for raising taxes on the wealthy compared to the control group and conservative participants tended to have a slightly higher level of opposition.

Similarly, conservative participants tended to have a slightly higher level of support for cutting discretionary spending and liberal participants tended to have a slightly higher level of opposition compared to the control group.

In the case of creating a new federal sales tax, on the other hand, OBOE liberal participants to be slightly less opposed than liberals from the general public, while OBOE conservatives nearly matched the control group's views.
How did the deliberation impact the policy preferences of OBOE participants?

Generally, the evaluators found that participants tended to moderate their views towards the common objective of reducing the deficit. On different policy items, liberals and conservatives seem to have compromised on their specific priorities in order to achieve this goal over the course of the deliberation. That pattern holds true on most of the policy options.

Additionally, those who started out by expressing no preference on a given option seem to have dramatically increased their support for several of the policy options based on the deliberation.

For the two policy options that are most traditionally associated with liberal perspectives — raising taxes on the wealthy and cutting military spending — those who described themselves as conservative significantly increased their level of support after the deliberation. And those who began by expressing no preference on the options (the “neutrals”) ended up dramatically increasing their level of support for the options. The graphs below depict the percentage of liberal, conservative and “neutral” participants who increased or decreased their support for each option.

For the two options most associated with conservative perspectives — cutting discretionary spending and the growth of entitlements — a similar shift occurred across the aisle. Those who described themselves as liberal significantly increased their level of support. Again, those who began by expressing no preference on the options (the “neutrals”) ended up dramatically increasing their level of support for the policies. In the case of slowing entitlement growth, conservatives also increased their level of support. The graphs below depict these shifts.
For the final two options that would make taxes more regressive through a new sales tax or higher income taxes for the middle class, liberal and “neutral” participants tended to become more opposed out of the deliberations. Conservatives became significantly more opposed to a sales tax, but increased their support for a tax increase that would include the middle class.

**Ideological Impact on Table Packages**

Additionally, the evaluators conducted an analysis of the packages produced by table groups. They found that options preferred by table groups did not tend to cluster along traditional ideological lines. According to the researchers: “The lack of ideological structure in the table packages strongly suggests that the packages were the result of creative and compromise processes at each table.”

They further elaborated on this observation:
“We do find that individuals, when responding individually to our survey, tend to have preferences that are highly structured by ideology. This suggests very strongly the difference between survey responses and a structured public deliberation. When asked to discuss policies with their fellow citizens, participants tended to set aside their ideological commitments to work toward the common goal of fiscal responsibility.”

“If one were to rely exclusively on individual survey responses to gauge public opinion, one would be misled to believe that our society can only consider policy options through a rigid ideological lens. But public opinion surveys have their limits in helping us understand the structure of public opinion. Public deliberation helps to reveal the considered opinions of citizens, a kind of opinion policy makers should care about as well.”
How did participants assess their experience at the national discussion?

Participants were asked in the post-event survey by evaluators to assess the event itself. Large majorities of OBOE event participants had positive evaluations of their experience with deliberation on fiscal matters. Notably, 85 percent of the participants felt more informed about the challenges and options for cutting the federal budget deficit, 97 percent believed all participants listened to one another respectfully and courteously, and 93 percent felt that other participants seemed to hear and understand their views.

Perceived fairness of the OBOE event was also high, with 73 percent of participants saying the event was fair and unbiased and that no particular view was favored. Participant evaluations suggest the learning from the exercise in deliberation had a positive effect on changing individuals’ views on the budget deficit. Forty-seven percent of participants agreed that they personally changed their views on the budget deficit, while 34 percent disagreed, and 20 percent neither agreed nor disagreed.

Participant evaluations of the quality of the OBOE event reveal a positive assessment of the deliberative experience. Eighty-seven percent of participants had fun at the event, and 92 percent would participate in a similar event in the future. Furthermore, 81 percent agreed decision makers ought to incorporate the conclusions of the event into federal budget policy.

A statistical analysis of the results found no significant difference based on ideology, nor on the ideological mix of each table group. Interestingly, they report that “liberals did not report their experiences at the event as either higher or lower quality ... as the percent of conservatives at tables increased, nor did conservatives report more or less [quality] as the percentage of liberals at tables increased. This suggests that table-level conversations were constructive, even when they were done across the ideological divide.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Strongly Disagree</strong></th>
<th><strong>Somewhat Disagree</strong></th>
<th><strong>Neither</strong></th>
<th><strong>Somewhat agree</strong></th>
<th><strong>Strongly agree</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am more informed about the challenges and options for cutting the federal budget deficit.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People at this meeting listened to one another respectfully and courteously.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other participants seemed to hear and understand my views.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The meeting today was fair and unbiased. No particular view was favored.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Even when I disagreed, most people made reasonable points and tried to make serious arguments.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyone had a real opportunity to speak today. No one was shut out and no one dominated discussions.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating today was part of my civic duty as an American to speak out and be heard on this issue.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I personally changed my views on the budget deficit as a result of what I learned today.</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I personally agree with the voting results at the conclusion of today’s meeting.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision makers should incorporate the conclusions of this town meeting into federal budget policy.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I had fun today. Politics should be like this more often.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would participate in an event like this one again.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Participants evaluations of Our Budget, Our Economy**
(all numbers in cells indicate percentages; row percentages sum to 100%)
AmericaSpeaks is grateful for the assistance we have received from countless organizations and leaders in communities across the country and nationally. Below is a partial list of individuals and organizations who have helped to ensure that a large, diverse group of Americans participates in the national discussion.

1000 Friends of Oregon, Eric Stanchon, Portland, OR
AARP South Carolina, Patrick Cobb, Columbia, SC
AARP, National
ACCESS, Detroit, MI
African American Chamber of Commerce of New Mexico, Ron Hinson, Albuquerque, NM
Albuquerque Independent Business Alliance, Leroy Pacheco, Albuquerque, NM
All Stars Project of Chicago, David Cherry, Chicago, IL
Altru Health System, Grand Forks, ND
America’s Promise, National
American Friends Service, Alexis Moore, Philadelphia, PA
American Leadership Forum, Robin Teater, Portland, OR
Americana Community Center, Louisville, KY
Americans for Prosperity-Clackamas County, Bill McKee, Richard Burke and Sara Seale, Portland, OR
Androscoggin County Chamber of Commerce, Augusta, ME
Arab American Family Services, Itedal Shalabi, Chicago, IL
Asian American United, Ellen Sokowana, Philadelphia, PA
Asian-American Association of New Mexico, Hwa Soon Thorson, Albuquerque, NM
Asociacion Puertorriquenos en Marcha, Jennifer Rodriguez, Philadelphia, PA
Association of Government Accountants, National
Bank of America, Melissa Drescher, Columbia, SC
BB&T, Mike Brennan, Columbia, SC
Benedict College, Love Collins, Columbia, SC
Berachah Baptist Church, Rev. Robert Shine, Philadelphia, PA
BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina, Ed Sellers, Columbia, SC
Bremer Bank, Grand Forks, ND
Business and Professional Women, National
Business Roundtable, National
Campus Progress, National
Carsey Institute at the University of New Hampshire, Portsmouth, NH
Cascade Policy Institute, Steve Buckstein, Portland, OR
Casper Area Economic Development Alliance, Casper, WY
Casper College, Casper, WY
Casper Community Foundation, Casper, WY
Casper Events Center, Casper, WY
Casper Rotary Foundation, Casper, WY
Center for Civic Policy, Matt Brix, Albuquerque, NM
Center for Natural Resources and Environmental Policy, University of Montana, Missoula, MT
Center for Tax and Budget Accountability, Kathy Miller, Chicago, IL
Central Carolina Community Foundation, JoAnn Turnquist and Susie VanHuss, Columbia, SC
Central Dallas Ministries, Gerald Britt and Jessica Davila, Dallas, TX
Chicago Community Trust, Ngoan Lee, Chicago, IL
Chicago Urban League, Angila Faison, Chicago, IL
Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce, Jerry Roper, Chicago, IL
Child and Family Policy Center, Des Moines, IA
Chinese-American Service League, Bernarda Wong, Chicago, IL
City of Casper, Casper, WY
City of Columbia Mayor, Robert Coble, Columbia, SC
City of Jackson, Jackson, MS
Clearinghouse for Women’s Issues, National
Coffee Party, National
Colonial Life, Donna Northam, Columbia, SC
Columbia Chamber of Commerce, Ike McLeese, Columbia, SC
Columbia College, Caroline Whitson and English Montgomery, Columbia, SC
Columbia Housing Authority, Gilbert Walker, Columbia, SC
Community Council of Greater Dallas, Martha Blaine, Dallas, TX
Concerned Youth of America, Yoni Gruskin, Philadelphia, PA
Concord Coalition, National
Cultural Council, Andy Witt, Columbia, SC
Dallas Black Chamber of Commerce, Dallas, TX
Davis, Hibbitts & Midghall Research, Adam Davis, Portland, OR
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., Southwest Dallas County Alumnae Chapter, Nicole Taylor, Dallas, TX
DFW International, Anne Marie Weiss-Armush, Dallas, TX
Dr. Gail Zimmerman, Casper, WY
Drake University, Des Moines, IA
Economy League of Greater Philadelphia, Steve Wray, Philadelphia, PA
E-Consult, Steve Mullin, Philadelphia, PA
Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, David Leslie, Portland, OR
Education Voters of Pennsylvania, Susan Gobreski, Philadelphia, PA
EdVenture, Catherine Horne, Columbia, SC
El Valor, Vincent Allocco, Chicago, IL
Ellis Lawhorne & Simms PA, Dave Sojourner, Columbia, SC
Faith in Place, Cynthia Bowman, Chicago, IL
Fels Institute of Government at UPenn, David Thornburgh, Philadelphia, PA
Friends Committee on National Legislation, National
Gheens Academy, Louisville, KY
Grand Forks Mayor’s Office, Grand Forks, ND
Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce, Rebecca Leppala, Albuquerque, NM
Greater Louisville Incorporated, Louisville, KY
Greater Philadelphia Urban Affairs Coalition, Mary Whalen & Lucy Kerman, Philadelphia, PA
Hip Hop Caucus, National
Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Varsovia Fernandez, Philadelphia, PA
Hispanic Connections, Inc, Gustavo Peñaranda, Columbia, SC
Hispanic Latino Business Council of Louisville, Louisville, KY
Illinois AARP, Courtney Hedderman, Chicago, IL
Illinois League of Women Voters, Esta Kallen, Chicago, IL
Illinois Library Association, Robert Doyle, Chicago, IL
Institute for the Study of Civic Values, Ed Schwartz, Philadelphia, PA
International Association of Public Participation, National
Jewish Community Center, Steve Terner, Columbia, SC
Johnson County Central Resource Library, Overland Park, KS
Johnson, Toals & Battiste PA, Luther Battiste III, Columbia, SC
Joint Venture: Silicon Valley Network, Silicon Valley, CA
Kansas Small Business Development Center, Overland Park, KS
KC Consensus, Overland Park, KS
KeenanSuggs Insurance, Tommy Suggs, Columbia, SC
Kennebec Valley Chamber of Commerce, Augusta, ME
Kentucky Youth Advocates, Louisville, KY
LaSalle University, Ed Turzanski, Philadelphia, PA
Latino Policy Forum, Sylvia Puente, Chicago, IL
Leadership Metro Richmond, Richmond, VA
Leadership Philadelphia, Liz Dow, Philadelphia, PA
League of United Latin American Citizens District 3, Jesse Garcia, Dallas, TX
League of United Latin American Citizens,
Ricardo Carlos Cabellero, Albuquerque, NM
League of Women Voters of Chicago, Chicago, IL
League of Women Voters, Jan Bray, Albuquerque, NM
League of Women Voters, Kelly Green, Philadelphia, PA
League of Women Voters, National
League of Women Voters, Sandy Greyson and Katherine Holman, Dallas, TX
Lexington Chamber of Commerce, Scott Adams, Columbia, SC
Linda Nettekoven, Portland, OR
LISC Chicago, Sandra Womack, Chicago, IL
Little Village Environmental Justice Organization, Kimberly Wasserman, Chicago, IL
Louisville Young Republicans, Louisville, KY
Loyal Opposition, Kevin Kelly, Philadelphia, PA
LULAC-SMU, Elizabeth Zamora, Dallas, TX
Maine Center for Economic Policy, Augusta, ME
Making Connections Louisville, Louisville, KY
Maranatha Church of Portland, Dr. T. Allen Bethel, Portland, OR
Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center, University of Maine, Augusta, ME
Mayor’s Commission On Asian American Affairs, Nina Ahmad, Philadelphia, PA
Member of American Federation of Musicians, Local 99, Bruce Fife, Portland, OR
Metro United Way, Louisville, KY
Metropolitan Mayors Caucus, Dave Bennett, Chicago, IL
Metropolitan Planning Council, Mary Sue Barrett, Chicago, IL
MIHAC, Dr. Moss Blachman, Columbia, SC
Mike Kelly Law Group LLC, Mike Kelly, Columbia, SC
Mikva Challenge Foundation, Miriam Martinez, Chicago, IL
Millennium Magazine, Calvin Reese, Columbia, SC
Mississippi Economic Policy Center, Jackson, MS
Montgomery County Republican Committee, Lauren Casper, Philadelphia, PA
MOSES, Detroit, MI
Muskie School of Public Policy, University of Southern Maine, Augusta, ME
National Association of Counties, National
National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation, National
National Council of La Raza, National
National Issues Forums, National
National Urban League, National
Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA), Nicole Maher, Portland, OR
New Mexico Federation of Labor, Chris Chavez, Albuquerque, NM
New United Majority, Philadelphia, PA
Nonprofit Associations of Oregon/TACS, Carrie Hoops, Portland, OR
Norris Square Civic Association, Patricia deCarlo, Philadelphia, PA
Norris Square Presbyterian Church, Rev. Adan Mairena, Philadelphia, PA
Novinger QTR LLC / MHA, Cathy Novinger, Columbia, SC
Oak Cliff Chamber of Commerce, Bob Stimson, Dallas, TX
Office for Civic Engagement at the University of Montana, Missoula, MT
Office of Neighborhood Involvement, City of Portland, Jeri Williams, Portland, OR
Oregon 9/12 Project, Bob Swift, Portland, OR
Oregon TEA Party, Jeff Ludt and Randi Kainz, Portland, OR
Oregon volunteers!, Kathleen Joy, Portland, OR
Palmetto Health, Vince Ford, Columbia, SC
Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, Joan Reilly, Philadelphia, PA
Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, Joan Reilly, Philadelphia, PA
Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation, Andy Toy, Philadelphia, PA
Philadelphia Education Fund, Brian Armstead and Carol Fixman, Philadelphia, PA
Points of Light Institute, National
Policy Consensus Initiative/PSU, Wendy Willis, Portland, OR
Portland Business Alliance, Mirabai Vogt, Portland, OR
Portland Community College, David Martinez, Portland, OR
Portsmouth Listens, Portsmouth, NH
Rebuild Oregon, Jeff Anderson, Portland, OR
Resource Associates, Anne Sinclair, Columbia, SC
Resurrection Project, Raul Raymundo, Chicago, IL
Rev. Robert Shine
Richland County Public Library, Melanie Huggins, Columbia, SC
Richland School District 1, Dr. Percy A. Mack, Columbia, SC
Rio Grande Foundation, Paul Gessing, Albuquerque, NM
SC Arts Foundation, Pat VanHuss, Columbia, SC
Sisters of Charity, Tom Keith and Brook Bailey, Columbia, SC
Small Business Monthly, Overland Park, KS
South East Dallas Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Jeronimo Valdez, Dallas, TX
State Public Policy Group (SPPG), Des Moines, IA
Suburban School Districts, Dr. Robert Kirton, Columbia, SC
Tate Foundation, Casper, WY
Taxpayers for Common Sense, National
The Bus Project, Noah Manger, Portland, OR
The City of Richmond, Richmond, VA
The Commonwealth Institute for Fiscal Analysis, Richmond, VA
The Community Foundation of Grand Forks, East Grand Forks and Region, Grand Forks, ND
The Cooperative Ministry, David Kunz, Columbia, SC
The Foundation for the Mid South, Jackson, MS
The Skillman Foundation, Detroit, MI
The State Media Company, Henry Haitz III, Columbia, SC
Trinity United Church of Christ, Rev. Otis Moss III, Chicago, IL
TrueMajority, National
United Community Services of Johnson County, Overland Park, KS
United States Student Association, National
United Way of the Midlands, Mac Bennett, Columbia, SC
United Way, National
University of Louisville College of Business, Louisville, KY
University of Maine at Augusta, Augusta, ME
University of Pennsylvania, Penn Project for Civic Engagement, Harris Sokoloff and Linda Breitstein, Philadelphia, PA
University of South Carolina, Eddie Yazdani, Columbia, SC
University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI
Urban League Greater Dallas, Beverly Mitchell-Brooks, Dallas, TX
Urban League of Greater Dallas, Beverly Mitchell-Brooks, Dallas, TX
Urban League, James (JT) McLawhorne, Columbia, SC
USAction, National
Voices for Illinois Children, Kathy Ryg, Chicago, IL
Wayne State University, Detroit, MI
We The People (Vancouver, WA), Tom Hann, Portland, OR
We The People of SW Washington, Karen Osborne and Terry Busch, Portland, OR
Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians, Anne O’Callaghan, Philadelphia, PA
West Dallas Community Centers, Cheryl Mayo, Dallas, TX
West Oak Lane, Kim Turner, Philadelphia, PA
Western Justice Center Foundation, Pasadena, CA
Wheaton College, Javier Comboni, Chicago, IL
WHYY, Chris Satullo, Philadelphia, PA
WIS-TV, Donita Todd, Columbia, SC
Women, Work, and Community, Augusta, ME
Women’s Action for New Directions, National
Wyoming Business Alliance/Wyoming Heritage Foundation, Casper, WY
Wyoming Medical Center, Casper, WY
Young Involved Philadelphia, Claire Robertson-Kraft, Philadelphia, PA
Young Involved Philadelphians, Claire Robertson-Kraft, Philadelphia, PA