



**NORTH STAR**  
OPINION RESEARCH

**TO: Interested Parties**  
**FROM: Whit Ayres and Jon McHenry**  
**DATE: November 14, 2014**  
**RE: Post-Election Survey of Registered Voters Regarding *Room to Grow* Messages**

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***Overview***

This post-election survey of registered voters, conducted November 4, 5, 6, and 8, 2014 for the YG Network, shows strong support for some of the messages outlined in *Room to Grow* to address current challenges faced by many Americans, including education, unemployment, and poverty in addition to health care and tax reform.

***Importance of Issues to Voters***

Focusing on what issues voters say are *very* important in determining their votes for federal offices, it is clear that health care is the top issue, with 80 percent of voters – including 90 percent of Democrats, 77 percent of Republicans, and 73 percent of independents – saying the issue is very important to their vote. The table below shows the percentage of voters saying each issue is very important to their vote, overall and by party. This table reveals several areas of agreement, as well as some areas of distinction by party.

Issue	Total Very Imp	Party		
		Rep	Ind	Dem
Health Care	80%	77%	73%	90%
Elem/Secondary Education	71%	60%	68%	85%
Taxes	67%	76%	64%	63%
Unemployment	66%	64%	61%	73%
Higher Education	61%	47%	56%	79%
Poverty	60%	45%	55%	79%
Energy	55%	47%	54%	63%
Breakdown of Family	52%	59%	47%	52%
Excessive Regulations	42%	57%	44%	27%

## ***Health Care Reform***

**1. A majority of all voters wants to repeal Obamacare ...** By a 54 to 44 percent margin, voters want to repeal, rather than keep, Obamacare. Interestingly, 18 percent would go back to the “health care system we had before” while 36 percent want to “repeal Obamacare and replace it with reforms that lower costs and put patients first.” Only one out of ten voters wants to keep Obamacare “as is.”

**2. ... but voters split on whether the most important goal of changes should be keeping taxes and premiums down or making sure people have coverage for nearly all medical expenses.** Forty-seven percent of voters say the top priority should be keeping taxes and premiums down, while 47 percent say the top priority should be making sure people have coverage for nearly all expenses. Not surprisingly, voters who want to repeal Obamacare say the top priority should be low taxes and premiums (59 to 35 percent) while voters who want to keep Obamacare say the top priority should be expanded coverage (63 to 34 percent).

**3. A bare majority of voters says “we can find other ways to protect people with pre-existing conditions and should not force people to buy insurance.”** Fifty-one percent of voters take this view while 42 percent say in order to cover people with pre-existing conditions, “we have to require everyone to buy health insurance.” Republicans (66 to 26 percent) and independents (50 to 42 percent) say we can find other ways, while Democrats say we have to require everyone to buy insurance (56 to 39 percent).

**4. Presented with two alternate views of health care reform, a majority supports a concept built around tax credits.** Respondents were given these two alternatives:

- a) Congressman A says Obamacare puts Washington in control of our health care. We need to start over and give power to patients and their doctors. The government should give tax credits to help people without coverage buy it, and protect them from losing coverage. We should give people the freedom to buy the plans they want. The result would be a new health care system with lower costs, more choices, and more freedom.
- b) Congressman B says the Affordable Care Act is a start, but it's not perfect. We should keep the parts that work and fix the rest. The law stops insurance companies from dropping people or raising rates when they get sick, charging women more than men, and skimping on preventive care like cancer screenings. Repealing the law now will mean more political fighting, hurt a lot of people, and put the insurance companies back in charge.

Voters prefer the first alternative, built around tax credits, by a 55 to 41 percent margin, including a 54 to 40 percent margin among independents. The first alternative is preferred by both men (59 to 38 percent) and women (52 to 43 percent), and by white and Hispanic voters (56 to 38 percent and 59 to 40 percent, respectively).

## ***Tax Reform***

**1. Over 90 percent of voters say tax relief for working parents is very or somewhat important, including three-fifths who say it is very important.** Overall, 91 percent of voters say tax relief for working parents is very or somewhat important (62 percent say very important). Across party lines, majorities agree that it is very important, with an even higher percentage among Democrats (71 percent) than among Republicans (62 percent) and independents (54 percent).

**2. Voters support a \$2500 per year tax credit for children under age 18.** Respondents were offered two alternatives on tax reform, with one focused on providing tax credits and the other saying the tax code should not be used for social engineering:

- a) Congressman A says that middle-class parents need tax relief. Raising the next generation is an investment in our nation's future, so we should let parents keep more of their own money to do it. We should give parents a tax credit of \$2500 per year for each child under 18, and pay for it by eliminating tax breaks for corporations and the wealthy. The tax code should be pro-growth, pro-family, and pro-children.
- b) Congressman B says that it is not appropriate to use the tax code to try to help families with children or for any other social goal. We should not give parents an advantage over people who choose not to have children. The purpose of the tax code should be to raise money for the government, period. Then everyone can make their own choices without being influenced by social engineers in the federal government.

Voters prefer the first alternative by a 68 to 27 percent margin, including a 73 to 24 percent margin among Democrats, a 65 to 29 percent margin among independents, and a 64 to 29 percent margin among Republicans.

## ***Education Reform***

**1. On elementary and secondary education reform, voters prefer giving more power to parents and local schools over spending more money.** Given the following alternatives:

- a) Congressman A says we need more than money to improve elementary and secondary schools. We should give parents more power to choose specialized curricula for their children, such as advanced science courses, foreign language courses, or art instruction. We need to direct more money to our classrooms, and less to bureaucracy. We need to free teachers from endless rules. Washington can't create good schools. It should create an environment where teachers, parents, and communities can build better schools.
- b) Congressman B says we will never improve elementary and secondary education until we invest more money in our schools. We need to dramatically raise teachers' salaries, and increase the amount we spend per student. "School choice" is just an excuse to take desperately needed money away from public schools and give it to private and parochial schools. And the federal government should direct money wisely to help local schools.

Voters prefer reform that seeks to expand freedom for parents, teachers, and local communities by a 56 to 39 percent margin, including a 57 to 39 percent margin among independents and a 71 to 25 percent margin among Republicans. Democrats say that we will never improve schools without more funding by a 54 to 43 percent margin.

**2. Similarly, voters say we need to “rethink traditional higher education” rather than increase funding to the current system.** Despite the second option citing “the best higher education system in the world,” voters choose the first of these two alternatives by a 59 to 36 percent margin:

- a) Congressman A says we need to rethink traditional higher education so it’s more affordable and better tailored to students' needs. The cost of higher education is exploding, but too many graduates cannot get good jobs or pay off student loans. Colleges should share the costs when graduates default. They should tell parents how their graduates are performing in the labor market after they graduate. And young adults should have better occupational training and apprenticeship options.
- b) Congressman B says we need to invest more money in our higher education system to be competitive in the 21st century. Student loans should be more generous, and we should forgive those loans if students go into public service. We should invest in universities because the research they do leads to new discoveries, new businesses, and more jobs. We have the best higher education system in the world, and we should not change what is working.

On this question, Democrats (51 to 45 percent) join independents (59 to 36 percent) and Republicans (68 to 24 percent) in calling for reform of the current system.

### ***Anti-Poverty and Unemployment***

**1. There is broad support for giving anti-poverty money from the federal government to the states.** Overall, voters prefer sending anti-poverty money directly to the states by a 62 to 32 percent margin given the following wording:

- a) Congressman A says the goal of anti-poverty programs should be to move people out of poverty into the world of work, from dependency to self-sufficiency. Federal bureaucracies spending billions of dollars have failed. It's time to try something different. The federal government should send anti-poverty money to the states, and let them design programs to meet their needs. The government should supplement the wages of low-income people so work pays better than being on welfare.
- b) Congressman B says pushing people on public assistance to "get a job" is blaming the victim. Big corporations have moved millions of good jobs overseas. Our economy is creating fewer opportunities than it once did for people to work their way into the middle class. We can't trust all the states to provide the level of assistance people need to live, so the federal government should ensure a basic standard of living for all Americans.

It is no surprise that Republicans (75 to 19 percent) and independents (67 to 27 percent) prefer the conservative approach. But Democrats split on this question with 48 percent preferring the

conservative approach and 49 percent saying the federal government should ensure a basic standard of living, suggesting the possibility of a bipartisan approach on the issue despite traditional support for a federal program.

**2. Despite the potential for a bipartisan solution to anti-poverty measures, voters are divided on how to address unemployment.** Voters support a conservative approach on unemployment that focuses on tax credits for companies that train and hire the long-term unemployed over a liberal approach that wants to use the tax code to stop outsourcing and making the “wealthy pay their fair share to support people who lost jobs” by a slim 49 to 45 percent margin.

- a) Congressman A says the Great Recession of 2008 has created serious problems for people who want to work but who have been unemployed for a long time. The government should make it easier to use unemployment benefits to relocate to places with better job markets. It should provide tax credits for companies that train and hire the long-term unemployed. We need to make it easier for those who want to work to do so.
- b) Congressman B says long-term unemployment is caused by large corporations moving American jobs overseas. We need to go after these corporate deserters who are leaving American workers behind. The federal government should invest in green energy and infrastructure to create jobs. We should extend unemployment assistance for those who need it. We need to close tax loopholes and make the wealthy pay their fair share to support people who lost jobs.

The even split comes with strong disagreement between Republicans (66 to 27 percent for tax credits) and Democrats (64 to 34 percent for closing tax loopholes), with independents siding with Republicans by a 49 to 43 percent margin.

### ***Strengthening the American Family***

**1. A narrow majority of voters agrees that “America has moved beyond the traditional family” rather than “the breakdown of marriage and families is a major problem facing the country.”** Few questions point to changing attitudes in the electorate as precisely as this one:

- a) Congressman A says the breakdown of marriage and families is a major problem facing our country. We should eliminate the marriage penalty in federal programs, so that benefits are not reduced when a couple gets married. The tax credit for children should be increased to \$2500 per child to help families. Congress should fund a social marketing campaign to encourage kids to finish school, get a job, get married, and have children, in that order.
- b) Congressman B says America has moved beyond the traditional family. Millions of children are being raised in single-parent households, and it is unrealistic to think that we will ever go back to an earlier time. We need to focus on helping children in whatever situation they are in to become responsible adults, and stop trying to influence the structure of the modern American family.

Voters overall say America has moved beyond the traditional family by a 51 to 45 percent margin. The pendulum has not swung completely against traditional families: nearly a third of Democrats, over 40 percent of independents, and nearly two-thirds of Republicans say the breakdown of traditional families is a major problem. But there is no question that the culture is less reliant on and attached to traditional families now than 20 years ago, and the “stop trying to influence” phrase may have appeal to voters with a libertarian streak.

### ***Methodology***

This survey was conducted November 4, 5, 6, and 8, 2014, with responses from 1000 registered voters. Interviews were conducted by live interviewers using a random-digit-dialing sample including both cellular and landline telephones; 35 percent of the respondents were contacted on their cell phones. The margin of error is  $\pm 3.10\%$  at a 95% level of confidence, with a higher margin of error for subgroups.