



AMERICA SPEAKS

Our Budget, Our Economy



FINDING COMMON GROUND ON OUR FISCAL FUTURE

A NATIONAL DISCUSSION AMONG 3,500 AMERICANS ACROSS 57 SITES

INTERIM REPORT TO CONGRESS

JULY 27, 2010

Albuquerque, NM, Augusta, ME, Casper, WY, Chicago, IL, Columbia, SC, Dallas, TX, Des Moines, IA, Detroit, MI, Grand Forks, ND, Jackson, MS, Los Angeles County, CA, Louisville, KY, Missoula, MT, Overland Park, KS, Philadelphia, PA, Portland, OR, Portsmouth, NH, Richmond, VA, Silicon Valley, VA, and 38 additional community conversations

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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 150,000 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 an interim 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 of 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 reports are available at www.usabudgetdiscussion.org that break down voting results at each of the 19 sites.

Additional analysis is being conducted to understand correlations between voting results, correlations between options that were commonly selected in table packages, and input from volunteer-organized community conversations. *AmericaSpeaks* will make available the individual voting results as well as raw data from the computers at tables at www.usabudgetdiscussion.org.

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

- Message Developed by Table #4, Des Moines, IA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A National Town Meeting: 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 trade offs, 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 volunteer-organized Community Conversations across the country.

Who Participated? Participants came from every walk of life and reflected the rich diversity of the nation with some important exceptions. Similar to voting profiles, participants tended to be somewhat older, wealthier and less Latino than the general population of the country. Participants reflected a broad range of ideological viewpoints on economic and fiscal issues with slightly more describing themselves as liberal or somewhat liberal than those who described their views as conservative or somewhat conservative. Participants were joined in person and by video by several members of Congress.

What Did Participants Have to Say about Economic Recovery? While the meeting focused on long-term fiscal challenges, participants were asked to briefly discuss the short-term economic recovery. Participants had a mixed view of the recovery with 42% saying that the economy had gotten worse or somewhat worse this year and 34% saying it had gotten better or somewhat better. A majority of participants (51%) expressed at least some support for legislation that had failed to pass the Senate the previous week, which would have extended unemployment benefits and increased aid to the states. 61% of participants said that government should be doing more to strengthen the economy.

What Did Participants Have to Say about Reducing the Long-Term Deficit? Participants spent much of the meeting learning about, discussing and voting on revenue and spending options that could reduce the deficit in 2025 by \$1.2 trillion. They were presented with 42 options developed along with the *Our Budget, Our Economy* National Advisory Committee. In addition to expressing preferences among the options, they were able to suggest new additional options.

- Among spending options, reductions in defense spending received the greatest support. 85% of participants expressed support for reducing defense spending by at least 5%, which included 51% of participants who expressed support for a 15% cut. 68% of participants expressed support for reducing All Other Non-Defense spending by at least 5%. 62% of participants expressed support for reducing health care spending by at least 5%. No options for reducing Social Security benefits received a majority of support. Rather, 60% of participants expressed support for raising the cap on payroll taxes to 90%.
- Among revenue options, 54% of participants expressed support for raising income taxes on those earning more than \$1 million by five percent and 52% of participants expressed support for raising personal tax rates for the top two income brackets by at least 10%. 54% of participants expressed support for establishing a carbon tax and 50% of participants supported the establishment of a securities-transaction tax. No options for reducing deductions and credits received majority support. Participants were evenly divided about options presented to reform the tax code.

What Did They Have to Say about the National Town Meeting? 91% of participants at the end of the day said they were very satisfied or satisfied with the tone and quality of the discussion. In a final set of voting questions, only 15% said their views were not at all influenced by others and only 3% said they did not learn anything during the meeting.

“Outstanding experience ... I learned from the people at my table, incorporated their experiences and lessons into my thoughts and modified my opinions as appropriate. It was a great experience and I sincerely hope the information is used by those in authority.”

- William H., Jackson, MS

INTRODUCTION TO THE NATIONAL TOWN MEETING

3,500 Americans came together across 57 cities to discuss the nation’s long-term fiscal challenges on June 26, 2010. 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. 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 at the tables across the country 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 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. Some conservatives agreed that it will be necessary to raise taxes and some 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. “Please find the political will to use this input as if it were coming from a powerful lobbying group – because we are!” said one table group. “Abandon the failed politics of partisanship,” said another. “You can’t demonize each other and expect us to trust you.” 89% of participants said they were dissatisfied with the tone and quality of political discussion in our nation.

WHO PARTICIPATED?

Early in the day, participants at the 19 town meeting sites shared their demographic information using individual keypad voting.

Household Income	6/26	Census	Race/Ethnicity	6/26	Census
Less than \$25,000	17%	23%	African American	16%	12%
\$25k - \$50k	21%	25%	Asian/Asian American	3%	4%
\$50k - \$75k	20%	19%	Caucasian/White	68%	65%
\$75k - \$100k	16%	12%	Latino/Hispanic	5%	15%
More than \$100k	26%	21%	Native American	1%	1%
			More than One	5%	1%
			Other	3%	1%
Age					
17 - 24	10%	18%			
25 - 34	9%	17%			
35 - 44	9%	18%			
45 - 54	18%	18%			
55 - 64	29%	14%			
65 or Older	25%	16%			
			Views on Economic/Fiscal Issues		
			Liberal	26%	NA
			Somewhat liberal	18%	NA
			Moderate	23%	NA
			Somewhat conservative	13%	NA
			Conservative	20%	NA

“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 MEETING WORK?

Learning, Deliberating, Expressing Preferences: In 19 cities across the country, Americans gathered at meeting sites around tables of 8-10 with volunteer facilitators. Participants spent most of the day deliberating with their table mates. They began by talking about their hopes and ground rules for a civil discussion. They then discussed 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 and discussed actions they would take in their community to remain engaged.

National Themes and Priorities: Periodically, participants shared their ideas and opinions with the rest of the nation through a video link connecting the sites. They used computers at each of their tables to submit their ideas, which were read and analyzed during the meeting by a “theme team” in Philadelphia, which looked for nation-wide themes. They 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 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. Data from the community conversations will be provided in the final report, but it is not included in this report and will be kept separate because of the varying levels of diversity and depth of the conversations.



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)
Rep. John Spratt (D-SC)
Dr. Alice Rivlin (*Member of the National Fiscal Commission & Co-Chair of the Debt Reduction Task Force*)

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



“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

ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Early on in the day, participants 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?	
Better	4%
Somewhat better	30%
About the same	25%
Somewhat worse	19%
Worse	23%
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?	
Supportive	32%
Somewhat Supportive	19%
Neutral	11%
Somewhat Unsupportive	12%
Unsupportive	26%
Do you think the government should be doing more or less to strengthen the economy?	
More	61%
Less	14%
About the same	25%

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.

Three Notes about the Data and Analysis

Representativeness: 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 diverse group of Americans who spent a day deliberating about the issue.

Correction: A technical error was found in the keypad voting results that was caused by a flaw in Turning Point Technology’s voting software. For the four voting questions in this report that enabled participants to select more than one option at a time, the percentages that were reported in the preliminary results reflected some “double voting” (e.g. multiple votes were sometimes recorded when an individual pressed a button more than once.) By going through the individual votes of each keypad, Turning Point Technologies has been able to correct this error on the questions in which it occurred by eliminating duplicate votes. The corrected data (starred in the following pages) does not reflect a significant shift in relative priorities within each section.

Other Data: Data from the 38 Community Conversations are not included in this report and will be reported separately in the final report. Additional data reflecting correlations between individual polling responses as well as correlations within table packages will also be provided in future reports.

"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

VALUES SCALES

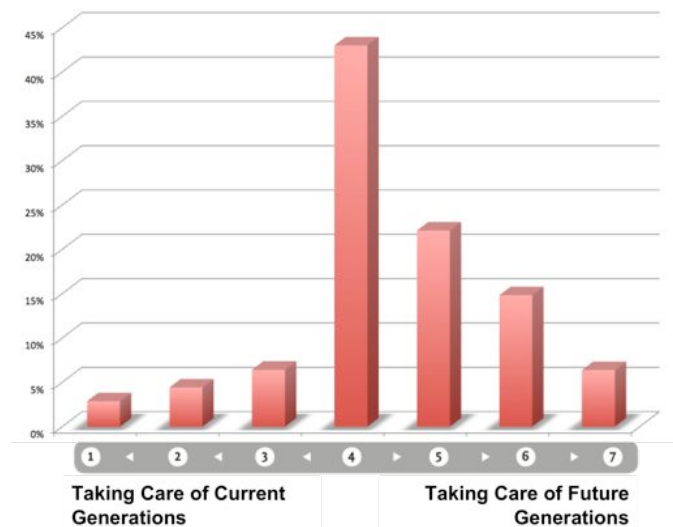
Participants were asked to identify and discuss their preferred values on three 7-point scales to help clarify and communicate how they believe the nation's fiscal challenges should be approached. During the day, they were asked to reflect on how their values related to the options that they preferred.

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

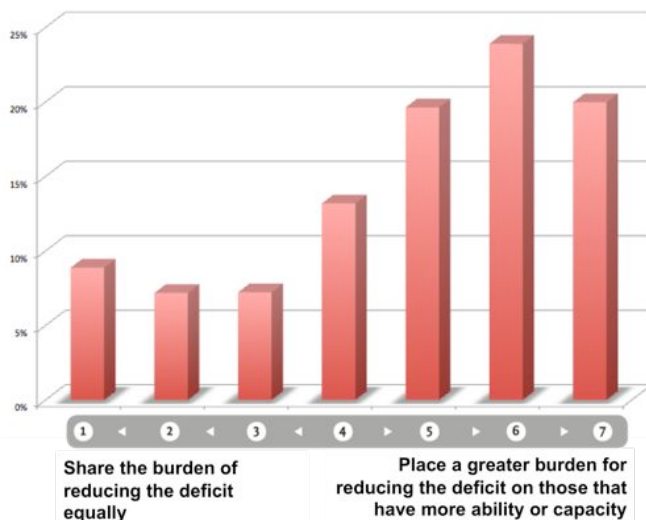
While more participants tended to believe that a greater burden for reducing the deficit should be placed on those who are more capable, responses diverged somewhat by ideology.

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.

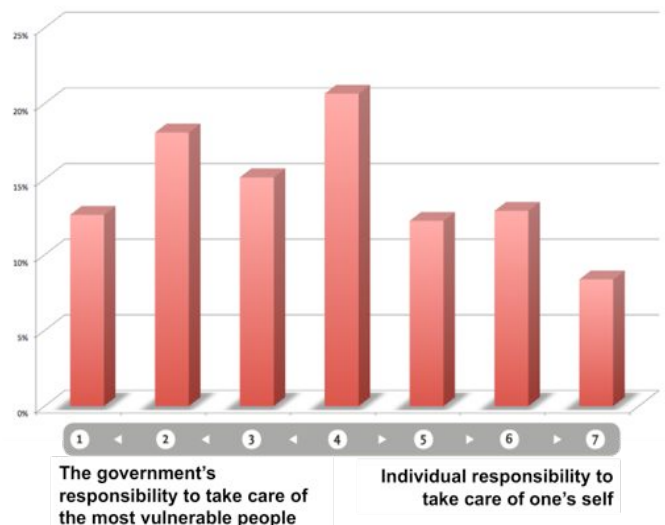
Current vs Future Generations



Share Burden Equally vs. Place More Burden on Those with Greater Ability



Government vs Individual Responsibility



“This was the best experience in participatory democracy I have ever been involved with. ... The respectfully shared diversity of views expressed at our table, I believe led to increased understanding by everyone at the table of everyone else’s perspective. This seemed true even when there were fairly strong disagreements. I found it heartening that people at our table were able to compromise. We were civil even when we disagreed.”

- Robert F., Dallas TX

MAKING TOUGH CHOICES

2025 Challenge: 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.¹ 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.



Setting Priorities: 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.

Additional Analysis: The following data reflect an initial analysis of the preferences articulated by the public. Future reports will include a more in depth analysis of table packages, greater analysis of the correlations between policy preferences and participant demographics, and results from the community conversations.

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 table reflects the progress made by tables across the 19 sites.

Reductions Reached by Tables	# of Tables	% of Tables
More than \$1.2 trillion	163	47%
More than \$1.1 trillion	202	58%
More than \$1 trillion	226	65%
More than \$900 billion	249	71%
More than \$800 billion	265	76%
More than \$700 billion	292	83%
More than \$600 billion	314	90%
Total Tables	350	100%

¹ See the *Our Budget, Our Economy* Options Workbook for a full description of each option.

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

- Ray M., Overland Park, KS

HEALTH CARE OPTIONS

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.

Health Care	6/26
Reduce Spending by 5%	27%
Reduce Spending by 10%	16%
Reduce Spending by 15%	19%
No Change	38%

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

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%.)

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.

Social Security	6/26 ²
Raise Age Limit to 69	39%
Limit Increase in Starting Benefits	24%
Lower Measurement of Inflation	24%
Raise Payroll Tax to 13.4%	20%
Raise Payroll Tax to 14.4%	30%
Raise Cap to Cover 90% of earnings	60%
Create Personal Savings Account	17%
No Change	13%

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.

² Percentages on this question have been corrected due to a “double voting” error on multi-vote options that was caused by a software problem with the voting system. See earlier notes about data correction on Page 7.

“We had a very diverse group that ranged from recent high school grads to retired and from inner city Chicago to high end suburbs. I learned that while our perspectives may be different our problems are the same ... I also learned that we are all in this together.”

- Don B., Chicago, IL

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.

All Other Non-Defense	6/26
Reduce Spending by 5%	26%
Reduce Spending by 10%	16%
Reduce Spending by 15%	27%
No Change	32%

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 the 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.

Defense	6/26
Reduce Spending by 5%	16%
Reduce Spending by 10%	18%
Reduce Spending by 15%	51%
No Change	15%

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.

“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

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.

Raising Taxes	6/26 ³
Raise personal income tax rates by 10% for everyone	14%
Raise personal income tax rates by 20% for everyone	5%
Raise personal tax rates by 10% for everyone in the top two tax brackets	14%
Raise personal tax rates by 20% for everyone in the top two tax brackets	38%
Create an extra 5% tax for people earning more than \$1M per year	54%
Raise the tax rate on capital gains and dividends	37%
Raise the top corporate income tax rate to 40% from 35%	44%
No change	27%

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.

REDUCING DEDUCTIONS AND CREDITS

No options in this category received a majority of support from participants. Liberals tended to be more supportive of limiting corporate depreciation (54%) and converting the mortgage interest deduction to a credit (45%). No change was the most popular option among conservatives (61%).

Notably, about 250 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.

More than one-third of tables supported no changes to deductions and credits in their final table packages.

Reduce Deductions & Credits**	6/26 ⁴
Limit the value of itemized deductions to 28%	37%
Convert the mortgage interest deduction into a credit	34%
Limit the deduction for state and local taxes, real estate, and personal property	22%
Limit corporate deductions for equipment	40%
End the business deduction for domestic production	12%
No change	32%

³ Percentages on this question have been corrected due to a “double voting” error on multi-vote options that was caused by a software problem with the voting system. See earlier notes about data correction on Page 7.

⁴ See previous footnote.

“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. Our table facilitator was particularly good at making sure that everyone was heard and no one person dominated the discussion.”

- MaryEllen S., Albuquerque, NM

REFORM THE TAX CODE

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.

Reform Tax Code	6/26
Use 10% to Reduce Deficit	5%
Use 20% to Reduce Deficit	9%
Use 30% to Reduce Deficit	36%
No Change	50%

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

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.

Establish New Taxes	6/26 ⁵
Establish a 5% Value-Added Tax (VAT)	24%
Establish a carbon tax	54%
Establish a securities transaction tax	50%
No change	25%

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

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 support for a single payer health care system and for 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.

⁵ Percentages on this question have been corrected due to a “double voting” error on multi-vote options that was caused by a software problem with the voting system. See earlier notes about data correction on Page 7.

“I was affirmed that holding discussions makes citizens feel as though their opinion counts.”

- Kimberlee S., De Moines, IA

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.

How satisfied with the tone and quality of political discussion in our country today?

Very satisfied	1%
Satisfied	3%
Neutral	8%
Dissatisfied	31%
Very dissatisfied	58%

How satisfied are you with the tone and quality of our discussions here today?

Very satisfied	62%
Satisfied	29%
Neutral	6%
Dissatisfied	2%
Very dissatisfied	1%

Participants were also asked whether they were influenced by others at their tables and whether they had learned something in the discussions.

To what extent did the people at your table influence your views about the options?

A great deal	11%
Somewhat	39%
A little bit	34%
Not at all	15%

To what extent did you learn something today about the budget challenges our country faces?

I learned a great deal	51%
I learned a few things	39%
I learned very little	8%
I didn’t learn anything at all	3%

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.

Local Addendum to Outcomes Report *Silicon Valley, California*

Silicon Valley Speaks: California Residents Join National Town Meeting

Over 80 people from the Silicon Valley area joined 3,500 others at 57 locations across the country in a national discussion on tough choices about our federal budget on June 26, 2010. National findings and other information about the daylong meeting can be found at www.usabudgetdiscussion.org.

This addendum provides additional insight about the views of local residents at the Silicon Valley site and should be read as a supplement to the national report.

A Message to Washington

Tone and Quality of Discussion: Near the beginning of the day, participants were asked “How satisfied are you with the tone and quality of political discussion in our country today?” At the end of the day, participants were asked the same question about “the tone and quality of our discussions here today (at the Town Meeting)?”

- 94% of participants in Silicon Valley were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the tone and quality of political discussion in our country today, compared to 89% nationally.
- 90% of participants in Silicon Valley were satisfied or very satisfied with the tone and quality of the discussions at the Town Meeting, compared to 91% nationally.

National Message: When asked to send a message to national leaders at the end of the day, the message generated by tables that received the strongest support from participants was: “Please find the political will to use this input as if it were coming from a powerful lobbying group – because we are!” The message that received the second highest level of support was: “Abandon the failed politics of partisanship. You can’t demonize each other and expect us to trust you.”

Economic Recovery

Early in the day, participants talked about the nation’s economic recovery and responded to polling questions about how they feel about the economy and what role they want government to play in strengthening the economy. In Silicon Valley, 29% of participants said it was getting better or somewhat better, 25% said it was about the same, and 45% said it was worse or somewhat worse.

Participants were asked about their level of support for recent legislation to extend unemployment benefits and provide aid to the states in the context of its impact on the deficit. The table to the right compares views expressed by Silicon Valley participants with those expressed at the 19 town meeting sites across the nation.

	Silicon Valley	Nation
Supportive	51%	32%
Somewhat Supportive	20%	19%
Neutral	10%	11%
Somewhat Unsupportive	7%	12%
Unsupportive	12%	26%

Silicon Valley residents tended to be much more supportive of government action to strengthen the economy compared to the nation. Nationally, 61% of participants said the government should do more

(80% in Silicon Valley), 14% said about the same (13% in Silicon Valley), and 25% said less (8% in Silicon Valley).

Tough Choices about our Federal Budget

Participants engaged in a three-part activity in which they sought to reduce the deficit in 2025 by \$1.2 trillion by considering 42 spending and revenue options. After making initial choices, the tables discussed ways to align their choices with their values and how, if at all, they wanted to modify their choices to meet the target.

After working through all of the options and submitting table packages, participants used individual voting keypads to express their preferences for the spending and revenue options:

Individual Voting on Spending Options

Health Care	Silicon Valley	Nation
Reduce spending by 5%	14%	27%
Reduce spending by 10%	14%	16%
Reduce spending by 15%	17%	19%
No change	55%	38%

Social Security**	Silicon Valley	Nation
Raise age for receiving full benefits to 69 years of age	33%	39%
Limit increases in starting benefits for all but the lowest wage earners	17%	24%
Change the formula for raising benefits each year to reflect a lower rate of inflation	13%	24%
Raise the 12.4% payroll tax gradually to 13.4% by 2025	11%	20%
Raise the 12.4% payroll tax gradually to 14.4% by 2025	29%	30%
Raise the limit on taxable earnings so it covers 90% of total earnings in America	71%	60%
Create personal savings accounts within the system	4%	17%
No change	11%	13%

All Other Non-Defense	Silicon Valley	Nation
Reduce overall spending in this category by 5%	24%	26%
Reduce overall spending in this category by 10%	14%	16%
Reduce overall spending in this category by 15%	19%	27%
No change	43%	32%

Defense	Silicon Valley	Nation
Reduce overall spending in this category by 5%	14%	16%
Reduce overall spending in this category by 10%	21%	18%
Reduce overall spending in this category by 15%	59%	51%
No change	6%	15%

**Percentages on this starred question have been corrected due to a “double voting” error on multi-vote options that was caused by the voting system. See note at end of this report for more details.

Individual Voting on Revenue Options

Raising Existing Taxes**	Silicon Valley	Nation
Raise personal income tax rates by 10% for everyone	26%	14%
Raise personal income tax rates by 20% for everyone	4%	5%
Raise personal tax rates by 10% for everyone in the top two tax brackets	16%	14%
Raise personal tax rates by 20% for everyone in the top two tax brackets	62%	38%
Create an extra 5% tax for people earning more than \$1M per year	69%	54%
Raise the tax rate on capital gains and dividends	53%	37%
Raise the top corporate income tax rate to 40% from 35%	57%	44%
No change	6%	27%

Reform the Tax Code	Silicon Valley	Nation
Reform the tax code and use 90% to lower tax rates and 10% to reduce deficit	4%	5%
Reform the tax code and use 80% to lower tax rates and 20% to reduce the deficit	10%	9%
Reform the tax code and use 70% to lower tax rates and 30% to reduce the deficit	10%	36%
No change	75%	50%

Create New Taxes**	Silicon Valley	Nation
Establish a 5% Value-Added Tax (VAT)	42%	24%
Establish a carbon tax	71%	54%
Establish a securities transaction tax	70%	50%
No change	14%	25%

Reduce Deductions & Credits**	Silicon Valley	Nation
Limit the value of itemized deductions to 28%	44%	38%
Convert the mortgage interest deduction into a credit	56%	34%
Limit the deduction for state and local taxes, real estate, and personal property	19%	22%
Limit corporate deductions for equipment	33%	40%
End the business deduction for domestic production	13%	12%
No change	14%	32%

**Percentages on these starred questions have been corrected due to a “double voting” error on multi-vote options that was caused by the voting system. See note at end of this report for more details.

Note: Participants were instructed that they could not select options to raise tax rates or reduce deductions and credits if they wanted to reform the tax code, or vice versa. About 200-250 fewer people voted national during the raise tax rates and reduce deductions sections. About 500 fewer people voted national during the reform the tax code section.

Notes about the Data and Analysis

Representativeness: 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 National Town Meeting results reflect the views of a diverse group of Americans who spent a day weighing trade-offs about the nation's fiscal challenges.

Correction: A technical error was found in the keypad voting results that was caused by a problem with a flaw in Turning Point Technology's voting software. For the five voting questions that enabled participants to select more than one option at a time, the percentages that were reported in the preliminary results reflected some "double voting" (e.g. multiple votes were sometimes recorded when an individual pressed a button more than once.) By going through the individual votes of each keypad, Turning Point Technologies has been able to correct this error on the five questions in which it occurred by eliminating duplicate votes. The corrected data does not reflect a significant shift in overall priorities – the relative order of top preferences has essentially remained the same.

Data in this Report: Data in this report only includes information from the 19 town meeting sites. Data from Community Conversation participants is being reported separately because these sites did not reflect the same level of diversity as participants at the 19 town meeting site and many Conversations used an abbreviated program agenda.