



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on April 26, 2011

Tea Party About to Give Obama a Second Term

The McClatchy-Marist Poll, which was released last Monday, revealed that those calling themselves Tea Partiers have little interest in doing anything substantial about slashing government spending. This cuts the legs out from under any attempt by conservatives in Washington to rein in that spending and it also gives President Obama a huge edge going into the 2012 elections.



Despite 49 percent of those polled disapproving of the job the President is doing (and 80 percent of those calling themselves Tea Partiers in the poll disapproving), and 57 percent of those polled giving top priority to cutting the deficit, when the question was asked: "Do you support or oppose cut[ting] Medicare and Medicaid?," 70 percent of Tea Partiers opposed any such cutting. And when it came to reducing military spending, 66 percent of Tea Partiers were opposed as well.

But when those polled were asked if they supported raising the federal debt ceiling, 81 percent of Tea Partiers were opposed to such a raise.

At this moment, Medicare, Medicaid, and defense spending [make up 62 percent](#) of the federal budget, which leaves any cutting to be done in the remaining 38 percent. Simple math makes the point: with federal spending exceeding revenues by \$1.5 trillion, there is no way to balance the budget without considering those three areas.

President Obama couldn't be more pleased. Certainly aware of his own poll numbers (86 percent of Republicans and 50 percent of Independents view him unfavorably in this same poll), why would he take the political risk of going along with any of the cutting proposed by Republicans? In fact, he no doubt will consider any opportunity to bash Republicans for being "insensitive" in their efforts to cut the precious entitlements so favored by such large numbers of the electorate.

This poll echoed the [Washington Post/ABC News poll](#), which showed the same disinclination of those polled to face reality: 78 percent of Americans oppose cutting spending on Medicare, and 69 percent oppose cutting Medicaid. In other words, as political analyst Patrick Buchanan noted, "Obama's position is in sync with three-fourths of the nation."

Why would he retreat from his unassailable high ground to seek a compromise with a hugely unpopular Republican proposal? Why not pound the Ryan Republicans remorselessly as defenders of the rich and slashers of the social safety net if America agrees with you?

This puts those promoting spending cuts in a precarious position, especially those wanting the



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President to compromise in order to get the federal debt ceiling raised. Sen. Mark Kirk (R-Ill.) [remarked](#) on CBS's *Face the Nation*: "I will vote 'no' on raising the debt ceiling unless we have comprehensive, dramatic, effective, and broad-based cuts to federal spending including the reform of entitlement spending." Without such limits, he said, the country "would risk repeating the mistakes of the governments of Greece, Portugal and Ireland — all who said 'yes' to everyone and 'no' to their economic future."

Rep. Joe Walsh, who also appeared on *Face the Nation*, was firm that the ceiling wouldn't be raised without concessions from the White House: "[They have] to be something structural that says we're going to cut up the credit card and we're going to quit spending money we don't have."

If those polls are correct and accurately reflect the current thinking of those most likely to vote in the next election, then those Republican demands will be ignored. But that leaves the question open: If the government continues to spend more than it takes in, in the trillions, "as far as the eye can see," how will the conflict be resolved? Professor Gary North [concluded](#) in his member's only letter, simply: "The deficits will be added to the national debt until a default becomes necessary ... The government will have to cut Medicare/Medicaid payments at some point, but this will be part of a desperation plan at the very edge of the fiscal abyss. Short of an imminent default, rising interest rates, and either Great Depression II or hyperinflation, Congress will not backtrack on Medicare."

The Tea Partiers are about to discover that they can't have it both ways.

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