

Stockton Poll: N.J. Residents Want Balanced Federal Budget, but Balk at Spending Cuts

For immediate release: with video

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Galloway, N.J. - Half of New Jersey residents would support a Constitutional amendment requiring a balanced federal budget even if it required “major spending cuts,” according to a Stockton University poll released today.

But those polled do not agree where cuts should be made, and overall a majority balk at making spending cuts in key programs to balance federal revenues and spending.

The poll of 709 adult state residents found that 78 percent say the national debt is a major problem, and 16 percent consider it a minor problem. Four percent say it is not a problem at all, and 2 percent are unsure.

Exactly half would support a Constitutional amendment requiring a balanced federal budget that required spending cuts. Thirty-eight percent would oppose a balanced-budget amendment, and 12 percent are unsure.

Those who support such an amendment were asked how they feel about spending cuts in three areas: the military; entitlement programs such as Social Security and Medicare; and safety net programs such as welfare and Medicaid. While none of the three proposed cuts were supported by a majority, close to half the respondents would choose to cut programs to help poor people. Results include:

- 59 percent oppose cuts to the military, while 40 percent would support them
- 74 percent are against cutting Social Security or Medicare, while 24 percent would support it and 2 percent are unsure, and
- 50 percent oppose cuts to welfare or Medicaid, and 48 percent support such cuts with 2 percent unsure.

“Our poll results reflect an age-old question about public policy: how much are residents willing to pay for the services that government provides,” said Michael W. Klein, interim director of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy. “The Congressional Budget Office has estimated that the federal deficit will top \$1 trillion in 2020, in part from revenue lost under the recent federal tax overhaul and spending increases under the new federal budget. Balancing the federal budget just got harder.”

The Stockton Polling Institute of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy interviewed 709 New Jersey adults from April 5-14, 2018. Interviewers working from the

Stockton University campus called landline and cell telephones. The statewide poll's margin of error is +/- 3.7 percentage points.

Research about government social programs conducted in 2015 by Dr. David Carr, senior fellow at the Hughes Center at the time, found that New Jersey adults differentiate between entitlement and safety-net programs. Those who had received benefits from welfare, Medicaid, food stamps and subsidized housing were more likely to say they had participated in a "government social program" than were recipients of Social Security, Medicare, disability or unemployment benefits. Recipients of Social Security and other entitlement benefits also tended not to see benefits delivered indirectly through the tax code as "participation in a government social program."

In a poll conducted for the research by Dr. Carr, who is now Stockton University provost emeritus and professor of political science emeritus, 90 percent held somewhat or very favorable views of Social Security and Medicare. Eighty-two percent held similarly positive views of Medicaid, and 60 percent felt favorably toward welfare. Those results are consistent with respondents' tolerance for program cuts in the new poll. Read the full report on the Hughes Center Research page, titled [The Invisible Hand](#).

Other findings in the new Stockton Poll on economic issues include:

A plurality of 48 percent believe U.S. tariffs imposed on imports of foreign products hurt the U.S. economy, while 30 percent say tariffs help the economy and 10 percent say they have no impact. Eleven percent are unsure.

President Donald Trump often points to the bull stock market as a sign of a good economy. However, 78 percent say the employment rate is a better indicator of how the economy is doing than the stock market (17 percent), with 5 percent unsure.

For complete poll results click [Poll Results](#).

For a YouTube video of Michael Klein discussing the results click [Stockton Poll Video](#)

Methodology

The poll was conducted by the Stockton Polling Institute of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy. Live interviewers on the Stockton University campus called both landlines and cell phones from April 5-14, 2018. The poll was conducted with 709 adults who are residents of New Jersey. The poll's margin of error is +/- 3.7 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence level. MOE is higher for subsets. Data are weighted based on United States Census Bureau demographics for the State of New Jersey population.

About the Hughes Center

The William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy (www.stockton.edu/hughescenter) at Stockton University serves as a catalyst for research, analysis and innovative policy solutions on the economic, social and cultural issues facing New Jersey, and promotes the civic life of New Jersey through engagement, education and research. The center is

named for William J. Hughes, whose distinguished career includes service in the U.S. House of Representatives, Ambassador to Panama and as a Distinguished Visiting Professor at Stockton. The Hughes Center can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/StocktonHughesCenter> and can be followed on Twitter @hughescenter.

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