



GREENBERG QUINLAN ROSNER RESEARCH

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To: Friends of Democracy Corps
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Independent Voters Flee Boehner, Congressional GOP **Report on a web survey examining Independent voters' attitudes on the debt ceiling debate**

A national web survey conducted this week by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner on behalf of Democracy Corps shows that Independent voters do not trust House Speaker John Boehner and the Congressional Republicans on the debt ceiling and budget deficit debate. These swing voters are tuned in and paying close attention to the debt ceiling debate in Washington and are very concerned about what could happen to the economy should Congress not act.

Most problematic for Speaker Boehner and Republicans is these voters represent a critical bloc that propelled them into the majority last November, but have now turned away from the Republicans. Independent voters supported Republicans nationally by a double digit margin last November, but that support has fallen off during the debt ceiling debate. Independents are extremely negative toward Boehner and just 30 percent favor Boehner and the Republicans' approach on the debt ceiling debate.¹ Boehner's personal standing is abysmally low with this bloc, including among self-described conservatives.

Equally important, President Obama has a sizeable advantage over Boehner and the Republicans among Independents on who is more concerned with the interests of the middle class, and Boehner is viewed as looking out more for millionaires and billionaires by a huge margin. Independents simply don't see Boehner as an advocate for the middle class.

President Obama and Democrats have a real advantage as Boehner and Republicans lack credibility among these swing voters as the debt ceiling debate continues.

Key Findings

- *Independents are paying attention.* Independent voters are typically less engaged in the political process than more committed partisans. In this case, however, most Independents are focused on what is happening in Washington and are truly concerned about what it might mean for them.

¹ Based on an experimental web survey of 600 registered voters who self-identify as independents conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner for Democracy Corps July 27-28, 2011. Unless otherwise noted, margin of error= +/- 4.0

Eighty percent of Independents say they are paying a lot or some attention to this debt ceiling and deficit reduction debate. Ninety percent tell us that they are concerned about what it might mean for the economy if Congress doesn't act. This includes 65 percent who say they are 'extremely' or 'very' concerned.

- *Speaker Boehner's standing with Independents is abysmal.* By nearly 5-1, Independent voters view Boehner negatively. Boehner has an abysmal 12 – 56 percent favorable-unfavorable ratio that cuts across every subset of Independents. Only 12 percent of Independent voters have a favorable impression of John Boehner. A majority (56 percent) view him unfavorably. Boehner's standing is very poor across all segments of the Independent electorate.

President Obama is doing much better than Boehner, with more than twice as many Independents viewing him favorably. Still, his overall rating is not particularly good with these disgruntled voters (29 – 56 percent favorable-unfavorable).

- *After viewing video clips of the Monday evening speeches, Independent voters more likely to trust Obama than Boehner.* In the web test experiment, we showed voters short, equal-length video segments from President Obama and Speaker Boehner's dueling Monday night addresses. After watching the videos, voters favored President Obama over Speaker Boehner on this issue by a 10-point margin, 40 to 30 percent.

Voters who are 'extremely' or 'very' concerned about the effects of not acting on the debt ceiling favor Obama's approach to the debate over Boehner and the Republicans by a substantial 45 – 27 percent.

- *Obama seen as looking out more for the middle class, Boehner more of an advocate for millionaires and billionaires.* By an overwhelming 42 – 16 percent margin, Independents believe that the phrase "is looking out more for the middle class" describes Barack Obama better than it describes John Boehner and the Congressional Republicans.

On the flip side of that coin, these same voters believe by an even larger margin that the phrase "is looking out more for millionaires and billionaires" describes Boehner and his caucus better than it describes Obama (see the table below for details).

For each phrase, overall please tell me whether you think it better describes John Boehner and the Congressional Republicans or Barack Obama.

	Obama Better	Boehner Better	Obama-Boehner
Is looking out more for millionaires and billionaires	7	50	-43
Is looking out more for the middle class	42	16	26
Is more willing to compromise and solve problems	36	24	12
Has a balanced and fair approach to the deficit	35	24	11
Is too rigid and unwilling to compromise	25	29	-4