



# DEMOCRACY CORPS

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**GREENBERG QUINLAN ROSNER RESEARCH**

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To: Friends of Democracy Corps and Greenberg Quinlan Rosner  
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## Paul Ryan Pick Could Seriously Erode Romney's Support

When Mitt Romney announced Paul Ryan as his running mate this morning, the Wisconsin Congressman's budget became constitutive to Romney's candidacy—in selecting Ryan, Romney not only supports, but also adopts, the principles and priorities in Paul Ryan's radical budget plan. To be sure, Mitt Romney has already endorsed the Ryan budget. But today, Romney makes Ryan's priorities his own.<sup>1</sup>

Last month, we released a [memo](#) underscoring the Ryan Budget's potential detrimental impact on Mitt Romney. When voters learned that Romney had given Ryan's budget his full-throated support, they pulled back sharply—to the extent that President Obama's lead against Romney **more than doubled when the election was framed as a choice on the Ryan budget**. We wrote,

“President Obama's lead against Romney **more than doubles** when the election is framed as a choice between the two candidates' positions on the Ryan budget— particularly its impact on the most vulnerable. The President makes significant gains among key groups, including independents and voters in the Rising American Electorate (the unmarried women, youth, and minority voters who drove Obama to victory in 2008.) This is an important new finding; highlighting the Ryan budget's impact on the most vulnerable seriously weakens Romney.”

Today, Mitt Romney has done more than align himself with the Ryan Budget's misguided priorities for the American people, seniors, and the middle class. He has made these priorities a cornerstone of his candidacy.

### Key Findings:

- **The Ryan budget is unpopular and increasingly so.** Even described using Paul Ryan's own words, barely a majority of voters both nationally and in the battleground now say they favor Ryan's budget. And when we describe the individual components, the plan not only loses support, but drags its supporters, including Romney, down with it. For the last two years, we have measured voters' real and deep concerns about the deficit. But as Republicans in Washington, most strikingly Paul Ryan, have taken their self-proclaimed mandate to advance an increasingly extreme agenda, voters have pulled back sharply; this was not what they voted for in November 2010 and not what they intend to vote for in November 2012.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information about the information provided here, please see our recent [Battle-ground](#) and [National](#) research memos.

- **Mitt Romney’s embrace of the Ryan budget erodes his support.** Romney’s full-fledged support of the Ryan budget opens him up to attacks on big, decisive issues. When the election is framed as this choice—between Romney’s support for Paul Ryan and Obama’s opposition based on principle, Obama’s margin on the ballot increases 9 points nationally, with his vote climbing above 50 percent.
- **Voters respond equally to big critiques of the Ryan budget.** Voters completely reject Ryan’s plan to cut taxes for the very wealthiest. They are deeply worried about Ryan’s plan for Medicare and health care spending for seniors. They are abhorred by Ryan’s plan to allow the refundable child tax credit to expire, which would push the families of 2 million children back into poverty. Finally, voters strongly disapprove of cuts to education spending. These facts about the Ryan budget are the most concerning to voters—including key swing voters (independents, suburban voters, and seniors), and Democratic base voters who have yet to become energized in this election.
- **Voters reject Ryan on both practical and moral grounds.** In focus groups and on our surveys, we have found that what drives voters most sharply and permanently away from Paul Ryan and Mitt Romney is their concern that Ryan and Romney’s budget priorities **are simply immoral**. Even we were surprised at how strongly voters feel about this. Voters take a moral approach to evaluating the proposed cuts in the Ryan budget. And they reject the budget on deeply principled and unmovable grounds.

### Real impact on the ballot

Romney is severely weakened by his support for the Ryan plan. On our June National Survey, voters heard a list of facts about the budget followed by a quote from Mitt Romney endorsing Ryan’s plan. The shift against Romney based on his support for the budget was particularly dramatic among Hispanics. More than half (53 percent) of Hispanics said Romney’s endorsement support for Ryan’s budget would make them less likely to vote for him; only 32 percent said they would be more likely to vote for Romney based on his support for the Ryan budget.

On this same survey, the President started with a 3-point margin against Mitt Romney among all voters, 49 percent to 46 percent. After hearing about the individual cuts and an even number of arguments for and against the budget, Romney’s support plummeted. When asked to judge the two candidates based *only on* the Ryan budget—Romney’s support for the Ryan budget because it *reflects his values* and Obama’s opposition because of *what it would do to the most vulnerable*—the vote shifted significantly. On these grounds, Obama won a majority of voters (51 percent) and his margin against Romney more than doubled. This is a significant finding.

Most importantly, this erosion was steepest among swing voters. After hearing about the Ryan budget and an even debate on both sides, Obama gained a net 9 points among independents, with Romney’s vote among this group dropping to just 40 percent. Among seniors, Romney’s net 11-point edge eroded to just a 2-point margin. Dramatically, Romney’s initial 20-point advantage among white seniors was reduced by more than half—to just 9 points with this critical group. Among suburban voters, it is no contest—after hearing about the Ryan budget and Romney’s support for it, Obama won suburban voters by an 18-point margin on the final ballot.

### The unkindest cuts

It is obvious that voters have a clear sense of what should and should not be sacrificed in order to reduce the deficit. When faced with facts about what the Ryan budget will do, voters prioritize four concerns above the rest – privatizing Medicare, cutting education funding, cutting taxes for the very wealthiest, and raising taxes and cutting programs most vulnerable.

This top tier of concerns is especially potent among key demographic groups—including blocs of voters—independents, seniors, Hispanics, suburban voters, and those in swing districts and swing states—that Mitt Romney will need to win if he is to prevail in November. To quote swing voters in our focus groups in Columbus, Ohio,

*“It’s just wrong, in my opinion...I think of Robin Hood, where the king is stealing from the poor to make more money.”* –Columbus woman

*“I feel like what [Romney] wants to pass is morally wrong.”* – Columbus woman

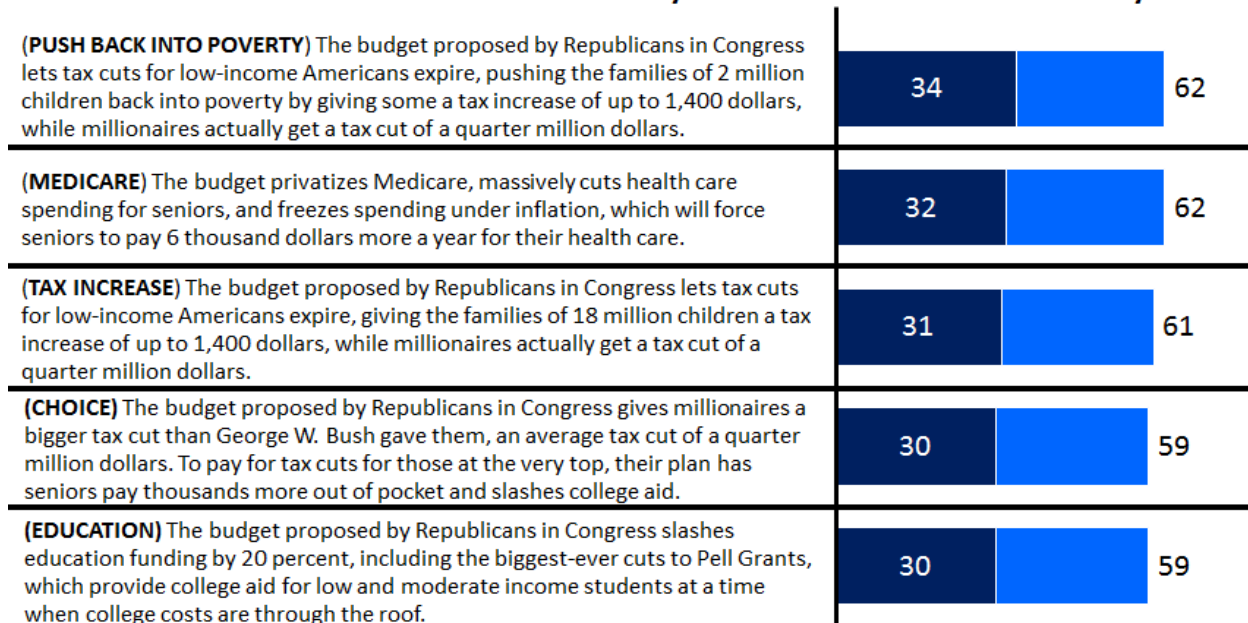
On our June National survey, we tested a series of attacks against Mitt Romney based on his endorsement of the Ryan budget. These attacks were powerful, effective, and focused on the inequities inherent in the future Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan would ask Americans to endure.

Among all voters, 60 or more percent said Romney’s support for key elements of the Ryan budget: eliminating low-income tax credits, privatizing Medicare and cutting health care spending for seniors, cutting taxes on top earners, and reducing federal government spending on education raised serious doubts about his candidacy.

## Strongest attacks on Mitt Romney link to Ryan Budget

Now I'm going to read you some of the things critics are saying about the Republican budget plan, which Mitt Romney has supported. After I read each one, please tell me whether this raises very serious doubts, serious doubts, minor doubts, or no real doubts in your own mind about Mitt Romney.

### Very serious doubts about Mitt Romney



And these cuts critically erode Romney’s support among key voting populations.

	Total	Swing States	Seniors	independents	suburban	White non-coll
<b>(PUSH BACK INTO POVERTY)</b> The budget expires tax cuts for low-income Americans, pushing the families of 2 million children back into poverty, giving some a tax increase of up to \$1,400, while millionaires get a tax cut of a quarter million dollars.	62	59	66	59	63	56
<b>(MEDICARE)</b> The budget privatizes Medicare, cuts health care spending for seniors, and freezes spending, forcing seniors to pay 6 thousand dollars more a year for their health care.	62	60	63	59	65	59
<b>(TAX INCREASE)</b> The budget lets tax cuts for low-income Americans expire, giving the families of 18 million children a tax increase of up to 1,400 dollars, while millionaires get a tax cut of a quarter million dollars.	61	58	58	59	69	61
<b>(EDUCATION)</b> The budget slashes education funding by 20 percent, including the biggest-ever cuts to Pell Grants, which provide college aid for low and moderate income students at a time when college costs are through the roof.	59	58	59	61	67	57
<b>(CHOICE)</b> The budget gives millionaires a bigger tax cut than under George W. Bush, an average tax cut of a quarter million dollars. To pay for those tax cuts, the plan has seniors pay thousands more out of pocket and slashes college aid.	59	55	61	59	66	56
<b>(FOOD STAMPS)</b> The budget slashes average daily food stamp benefits of just four dollars and 47 cents for nearly 50 million Americans, including over 16 million children and 5 million babies and toddlers, who will face the risk of going hungry each day.	59	59	55	51	72	61

Vice Presidential selections say a great deal about Presidential candidates. What this selection says about Mitt Romney should be clear. What remains to unfold is how critical swing voters in key swing states will assimilate Romney’s wholehearted embrace of Paul Ryan. If our research is any indication, Romney may well have to write off seniors in battleground states like Florida.