



THE PEW RESEARCH CENTER
For The People & The Press

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Obama, GOP Leaders Would Share Blame in Government
Shutdown

More Side with Wisconsin Unions than
Governor

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Obama, GOP Leaders Would Share Blame in Government Shutdown More Side with Wisconsin Unions than Governor

By a modest margin, more say they back Wisconsin's public employee unions rather than the state's governor in their continuing dispute over collective bargaining rights.

Roughly four-in-ten (42%) say they side more with the public employee unions, while 31% say they side more with the governor, Scott Walker, according to the latest Pew Research Center survey, conducted Feb. 24-27 among 1,009 adults.

In Washington, meanwhile, prospects for an imminent government shutdown decreased as Republicans and Democrats neared a short-term budget deal. However, the public is divided over who would be more to blame if the federal government were to shut down as a result of a budget impasse: 36% say Republicans would be more to blame, 35% say the Obama administration and 17% volunteer that both would be to blame. This question was asked jointly by the Pew Research and *The Washington Post*.

Opinions are notably different today than they were the last time a budget battle threatened a government shutdown. In November 1995, a Washington Post/ABC News survey asked a similar question and found that 46% said a possible government shutdown would be mainly the Republicans' fault; just 27% said the bulk of the blame would fall on the Clinton administration.

The differences in opinions between now and then may well be more linked to changes in views of the GOP House Speaker rather than the Democratic president.

Obama's current approval rating of 49% is about the same as Bill Clinton's in October 1995 (48%).

But the current House Speaker, John Boehner, is viewed far less negatively than Newt Gingrich was in 1995. In December 2010, 28% expressed a favorable opinion of Boehner

Wisconsin Unions Favored in Showdown

<i>In collective bargaining dispute, do you side more with ...</i>	Feb 2011 %
Public employee unions	42
The governor	31
Neither (Vol)	9
Don't know	<u>18</u>
	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Feb. 24-27, 2011.

Divided over Possible Gov't Shutdown

<i>If federal government shuts down, who would be most to blame ...</i>	Feb 2011 %
Republicans	36
Obama administration	35
Both equally (Vol)	17
Neither/Don't know	<u>11</u>
	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER/Washington Post Feb. 24-27, 2011.

while 25% had an unfavorable view. In August 1995, a few months before the budget impasse, 30% had a favorable view of Gingrich while 54% had an unfavorable opinion.

Democrats, Young, Less Affluent Side Strongly With Unions

Democrats overwhelmingly side with the government employee unions in the ongoing dispute in Wisconsin. Two-thirds (67%) say this, compared with just 12% who say they side more with the governor. About half of Republicans (53%) say they side more with Gov. Walker; 17% say they side more with the public employee unions. Independents are evenly divided (39% side more with the unions, 34% more with the governor).

Among those ages 18 to 29, nearly half (46%) say they side more with the public employee unions, while 13% say they side with the governor. Among those 65 and older, the balance is reversed – but the gap more narrow (45% say they side more with the governor, 33% with the unions).

While whites are nearly evenly divided (38% unions, 36% governor), non-white people are much more likely to say they side more with the unions that represent public employee workers (51% vs. 19%).

And while those with household incomes of \$75,000 or more are divided (36% side more with the unions, 40% with the governor), those earning less clearly side more with the government employee unions. Among those with family income of less than \$30,000, 46% say they side more with the unions, while 20% say they side more with the governor.

Lower-Income People Side with Unions while the Affluent Are Split

<i>In Wisconsin collective bargaining dispute, do you side more with ...</i>	Unions %	Governor %	Union-Gov Diff
Total	42	31	+11
Republican	17	53	-36
Democrat	67	12	+55
Independent	39	34	+5
18-29	46	13	+33
30-49	40	32	+8
50-64	49	35	+14
65+	33	45	-12
White	38	36	+2
Nonwhite	51	19	+32
<i>Household income</i>			
\$75,000 or more	36	40	-4
\$30,000-\$74,999	49	31	+18
Less than \$30,000	46	20	+26

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Feb. 24-27, 2011.

Partisan Divide on Potential Blame for Federal Shutdown

Looking at the possibility of a federal government shutdown if Republicans and the Obama administration cannot agree on a budget, partisans on both sides would put the bulk of the blame on the opposing party.

About seven-in-ten Republicans (69%) say the administration would be most to blame. Just 8% would blame their own party's leaders. More than six-in-ten Democrats (63%) say congressional Republicans would be most responsible for any shutdown, while 11% say the administration would be most to blame. Independents are divided: 32% say Republicans and 37% say the administration would be mostly to blame. Among all three groups, 17% say both would share the blame equally.

Blame Would be Shared if Shutdown Occurs

<i>If federal gov't shutdown, who would be most to blame?</i>	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
Republicans	36	8	63	32
Obama administration	35	69	11	37
Both equally	17	17	17	17
Neither/DK	<u>11</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>13</u>
	100	100	100	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER, Washington Post Feb. 24-27, 2011. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

In November 1995, just days before a standoff between congressional Republicans and the Clinton administration led to a partial government shutdown, most Democrats (71%) said Republicans would be responsible for any shutdown, while a smaller majority of Republicans (57%) put the blame on Clinton. Unlike today, many more independents said they would blame the Republicans (46%) than the Clinton administration (24%).

In early January 1996, with the government in a partial shutdown, the public continued to put more blame on the Republicans, according to a second ABC News/Washington Post survey. At that point, a plurality (44%) said the GOP was mainly to blame for the shutdown, while 25% said the Clinton administration was mainly to blame and 24% blamed both sides.

About the Survey

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted February 24-27, 2011 among a national sample of 1,009 adults 18 years of age or older living in the continental United States (678 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 331 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 144 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by interviewers at Princeton Data Source under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. A combination of landline and cell phone random digit dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English. Respondents in the landline sample were selected by randomly asking for the youngest adult male or female who is now at home. Interviews in the cell sample were conducted with the person who answered the phone, if that person was an adult 18 years of age or older. For detailed information about our survey methodology, see: <http://people-press.org/methodology/detailed>.

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin, region, and population density to parameters from the March 2010 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status and relative usage of landline and cell phones (for those with both), based on extrapolations from the 2010 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cell phones have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size within the landline sample. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. The following table shows the sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

Group	Sample Size	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	1009	4.0 percentage points
Republicans	248	7.5 percentage points
Democrats	290	7.0 percentage points
Independents	397	6.0 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

About the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press

The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press is an independent opinion research group that studies attitudes toward the press, politics and public policy issues. We are sponsored by The Pew Charitable Trusts and are one of seven projects that make up the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan "fact tank" that provides information on the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world.

The Center's purpose is to serve as a forum for ideas on the media and public policy through public opinion research. In this role it serves as an important information resource for political leaders, journalists, scholars, and public interest organizations. All of our current survey results are made available free of charge.

All of the Center's research and reports are collaborative products based on the input and analysis of the entire Center staff consisting of:

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FEBRUARY 24-27, 2011 OMNIBUS
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N=1009**

PEW.1 THROUGH PEW.3 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

ASK ALL:

PEW. 4 From what you've read and heard about the dispute between Wisconsin's governor and public employee unions over collective bargaining rights, do you side more with **[READ AND RANDOMIZE]**?

Feb 24-27

2011

31	The governor
42	The public employee unions
9	Neither (VOL.)
18	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

TREND FOR COMPARISON:

*How about when you hear of a disagreement between state or local governments and unions that represent government workers, is your first reaction **[READ AND RANDOMIZE]**?*

Feb 2-7

2011

To side with the governments	38
To side with the unions	44
Both/Neither (VOL.)	3
Depends (VOL.)	5
Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	10

PEW.5 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

NOTE: PEW.6 asked in conjunction with <i>The Washington Post</i>.
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ASK ALL:

PEW.6 If the federal government shuts down because **[RANDOMIZE: Republicans and the Obama administration]** can't agree on a budget, who do you think would be more to blame: **[READ IN SAME ORDER AS ABOVE: Republicans or the Obama administration]**?

Feb 24-27

2011

36	Republicans
35	The Obama administration
17	Both equally (VOL.)
1	Neither (VOL.)
10	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:

There's a possibility the federal government might have to shut down in the next few days because the Clinton Administration and the Republicans in Congress can't agree on a plan to keep it running while they work on a new budget. Whose fault do you think this mainly is—Clinton's or the Republicans' in Congress?

Washington Post/ABC News

Nov 10-13

1995

Clinton	27
Republicans	46
Both (VOL.)	20
Neither (VOL.)	2
No opinion	5

PEW.6 TRENDS FOR COMPARISON CONTINUED...

As you may know, the federal government has shut down many of its operations because the Clinton Administration and the Republicans in Congress have not agreed on a plan to keep it running while they work on a new budget. Whose fault do you think this mainly is—Clinton's or the Republicans' in Congress?

	<i>ABC News</i> Jan 3 <u>1996</u>	<i>Washington Post/ ABC News</i> Nov 19 <u>1995</u>
Clinton	25	24
Republicans	44	51
Both (VOL.)	24	20
Neither (VOL.)	3	1
No opinion	3	4

ASK ALL:

PARTY In politics TODAY, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or Independent?

ASK IF ANSWERED 3, 4, 5 OR 9 IN PARTY:

PARTYLN As of today do you lean more to the Republican Party or more to the Democratic Party?

	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Independent</u>	(VOL.) No <u>preference</u>	(VOL.) Other <u>party</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>	Lean <u>Rep</u>	Lean <u>Dem</u>
Feb 24-27, 2011	22	31	39	3	1	4	17	14