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Obama Viewed as Fiscal Cliff Victor; Legislation Gets Lukewarm Reception

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Obama Viewed as Fiscal Cliff Victor; Legislation Gets Lukewarm Reception

Barack Obama is viewed as the clear political winner in the fiscal cliff negotiations, but the legislation itself gets only a lukewarm reception from the public: As many disapprove as approve of the new tax legislation, and more say it will have a negative than positive impact on the federal budget deficit, the national economy and people like themselves.

Public Takes Dim View of Tax Legislation to Avoid Fiscal Cliff

	Approve	Disapprove	DK
	%	%	%
View of tax legislation …	38	41	21=100
Legislation will …	**Help**	**Hurt**	**DK**
People like you	30	52	18=100
Budget deficit	33	44	23=100
Economy	36	46	18=100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Jan. 3-6, 2013. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

The latest national survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, conducted Jan. 3-6 among 1,003 adults, finds that 57% say that Obama got more of what he wanted from the tax legislation while just 20% say Republican leaders got more of what they wanted. And while 48% approve of the way Obama handled the fiscal cliff negotiations only 19% approve of the way GOP leaders handled the negotiations.

Republicans take a particularly sour view of the outcome: just 16% approve of the final legislation, and by a 74% to 11% margin they think Obama got more of what he wanted. Only 40% of Republicans approve of how their party's leaders handled the negotiations; by comparison, fully 81% of Democrats approve of how Obama handled the negotiations.

Relatively few Americans expect that the tax legislation that resulted from those talks will help people like themselves, the budget deficit, or the national economy. Just three-in-ten Americans say the tax measure will mostly help people like them; 52% say it will mostly hurt. And even when it comes to the budget deficit, 44% say the deal will mostly hurt, while 33% say it will mostly help.

Political Winners and Losers

There are wide partisan differences in opinions about the tax legislation and the negotiations that produced it. Notably, Republicans are far more likely than Democrats to say that Obama got more of what he wanted from the deal than did Republican leaders in Congress. Fully 74% of Republicans say Obama got more of what he wanted from the talks compared with just 11% who say GOP leaders prevailed.

Republicans Overwhelmingly See Obama as Fiscal Cliff Winner …

Who got more of what they wanted from tax legislation?	**Barack Obama**	**Rep leaders**	**Both/ Neither/ DK**
	%	%	%
Total	57	20	23=100
Republican	74	11	15=100
Democrat	53	26	21=100
Independent	55	19	26=100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Jan. 3-6, 2013. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Democrats and independents also say Obama fulfilled more of his goals in the legislation, but by smaller margins – 53% to 26% among Democrats and 55% to 19% among independents.

Overall, 48% approve of how Obama handled the negotiations over the tax legislation, while just 19% approve of the job GOP leaders did hammering out the legislation. While Republicans broadly disapprove of how Obama handled the tax measure (77% disapprove), they give GOP leaders only mixed approval ratings – 40% approve while 45% disapprove.

Modest Obama Approval on Cliff Talks, Abysmal Marks for GOPers

Handling of negotiations over tax legislation …	**App-rove**	**Dis-approve**	**DK**
	%	%	%
Obama			
Total	48	40	12=100
Republican	16	77	7=100
Democrat	81	13	6=100
Independent	41	42	17=100
Republican leaders			
Total	19	66	15=100
Republican	40	45	15=100
Democrat	12	79	9=100
Independent	14	69	17=100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Jan. 3-6, 2013. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Just 14% of independents approve of the way Republican leaders handled the fiscal cliff talks while 69% disapprove. Independents are divided over how Obama handled the negotiations (41% approve, 42% disapprove). Democrats overwhelmingly approve of Obama's handling of the negotiations (81% approve) and disapprove of GOP leaders' (79% disapprove).

Views of Tax Legislation and Its Impact

There also are substantial partisan differences over the tax legislation itself: 58% of Democrats approve of the measure compared with 36% of independents and 16% of Republicans.

These opinions carry over to the impact the legislation will have on average people, the economy and the budget deficit. Republicans take a decidedly negative view of the effects of the legislation in all three areas: 73% say it will mostly hurt people like them, 69% say it will hurt the U.S. economy and 66% say it will hurt the budget deficit.

Democrats offer much more positive views of the legislation, with majorities saying it will mostly help the economy (58%) and the budget deficit (53%). Half of Democrats (50%) say it will mostly help people like them, while more than a third (36%) say it will mostly hurt.

There are educational differences in opinions about the personal impact of the tax legislation. A majority of those with no more than a high school education (60%) say it will mostly hurt people like them, as do half (50%) of those with only some college experience. Among college graduates, 40% say the bill will have a mostly negative impact on them personally while as many (40%) see a mostly positive impact.

Mixed Views of Tax Legislation

	Approve	Disapprove	DK
	%	%	%
Total	38	41	21=100
Republican	16	66	18=100
Democrat	58	19	22=100
Independent	36	45	19=100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Jan. 3-6, 2013. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Tax Bill Seen as Mostly Hurting Economy, Deficit, Average People

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
Plan's effect on…	%	%	%	%
U.S. Economy				
Help	36	17	58	30
Hurt	46	69	25	52
No difference/DK	18	14	17	18
	100	100	100	100
People like you				
Help	30	12	50	27
Hurt	52	73	36	55
No difference/DK	18	15	14	19
	100	100	100	100
Budget deficit				
Help	33	16	53	28
Hurt	44	66	25	50
No difference/DK	23	19	23	22
	100	100	100	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Jan. 3-6, 2013. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Attentive Public More Supportive of Bill

Nearly four-in-ten Americans (38%) say they followed passage of the fiscal cliff legislation very closely. That is comparable to interest in the fiscal cliff talks over previous weeks. Similar percentages of Democrats (44%) and Republicans (41%) followed the legislative end-game very closely; somewhat fewer independents (31%) did so.

Those who tracked the news about passage of the tax legislation very closely are more likely than those who followed it less closely to approve of the measure (49% vs. 32%). In addition, 57% of those who followed the bill's passage approve of Obama's handling of the legislation, compared with 42% of those who tracked it less closely.

More Positive Views of Tax Bill among Attentive Americans

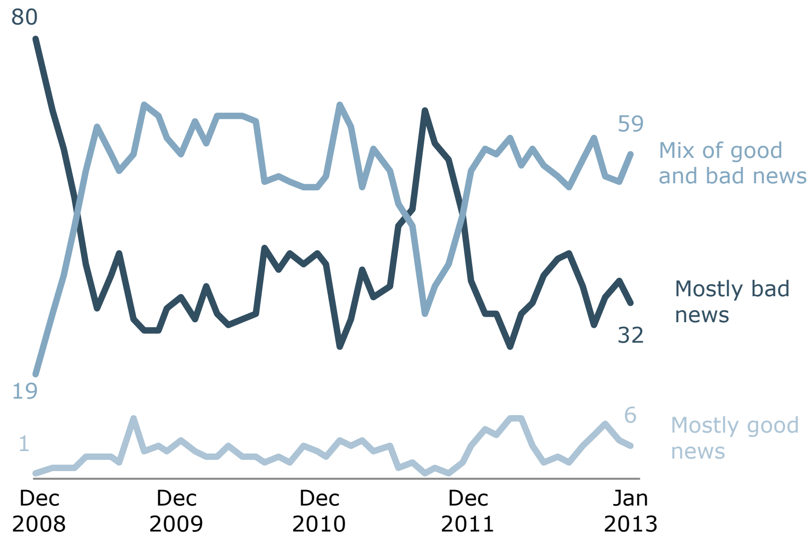
		Followed Fiscal Cliff news	
	Total	**Very closely**	**Less closely**
Tax legislation	%	%	%
Approve	38	49	32
Disapprove	41	41	41
Don't know	21	10	28
	100	100	100
Obama's negotiations			
Approve	48	57	42
Disapprove	40	40	39
Don't know	12	3	18
	100	100	100
Who got more of what they wanted?			
Obama	57	68	51
Rep leaders	20	18	21
Other/DK	23	14	28
	100	100	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Jan. 3-6, 2013. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Public Still Hearing Mixed Economic News

The public continues to say they are hearing mixed news about the nation's economy: 59% say they are hearing a mix of both good and bad news about the economy these days, while 32% say they are hearing mostly bad news and only 6% say they are hearing mostly good economic news.

Public's View of Recent Economic News



PEW RESEARCH CENTER Jan. 3-6, 2013.

Wide partisan gaps persist in views of economic news. Nearly half of Republicans (48%) say they have been hearing mostly bad news compared with 36% of independents and just 18% of Democrats.

About the Survey

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted January 3-6, 2013 among a national sample of 1,003 adults 18 years of age or older living in the continental United States (501 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 502 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 241 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/.

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin and region to parameters from the 2011 Census Bureau's American Community Survey and population density to parameters from the Decennial Census. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status, based on extrapolations from the 2012 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 among respondents with a landline phone. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. The following table shows the unweighted 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	**Unweighted sample size**	**Plus or minus …**
Total sample	1,003	3.7 percentage points
Republicans	242	7.5 percentage points
Democrats	335	6.4 percentage points
Independents	348	6.3 percentage points
Followed fiscal cliff news		
Very closely	416	5.8 percentage points
Less closely	583	4.9 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.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER
January 3-6, 2013, OMNIBUS
FINAL TOPLINE
N=1,003

PEW.1a,b,d,e HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

ASK ALL:
PEW.1 As I read a list of some stories covered by news organizations this past week, please tell me if you happened to follow each news story very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely. First, **[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE;] [IF NECESSARY** "Did you follow **[ITEM]** very closely, fairly closely, not too closely or not at all closely?"**]**

	Very closely	Fairly closely	Not too closely	Not at all closely	**(VOL.)** DK/Ref
c. Congress and the president passing legislation to avoid the Fiscal Cliff					
January 3-6, 2013	38	26	16	21	1
TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:					
December 13-16, 2012: *The debate in Washington over automatic spending cuts and tax increases that would take effect in January unless the president and Congress act*	37	28	16	18	1
December 6-9, 2012	37	26	17	20	1
November 29-December 2, 2012	40	26	14	20	1
November 15-18, 2012	33	24	16	25	1
November 8-11, 2012	38	20	20	20	*
July 19-22, 2012	23	21	22	33	1
February 16-20, 2012: *Congress passing a bill to extend payroll tax cuts and unemployment benefits*[1]	24	27	21	27	1
August 4-7, 2011: *Congress and the president agreeing to cut federal spending and raise the debt limit*	46	25	13	14	1
December 16-19, 2010[2]: *The extension of tax cuts and unemployment benefits approved by Congress and signed by President Obama*	37	27	15	19	1
December 9-12, 2010: *The agreement reached between Barack Obama and Congressional Republicans to extend tax cuts and unemployment benefits*	37	29	15	17	1
December 2-5, 2010: *The debate in Washington over the federal income tax cuts passed when George W. Bush was president*	39	26	17	17	1
September 16-19, 2010: *The debate in Washington over competing Democratic and Republican tax plans*	21	24	21	34	*
September 9-12, 2010	16	19	22	42	1
May 8-11, 2009: *The debate in Washington over the federal budget*	22	28	19	31	*

1 The wording of item PEW.1d was changed after the first night of interviewing (February 16, 2012) to reflect Congress passing this legislation. On February 16, 2012, the item wording was "Negotiations in Congress to extend payroll tax cuts and unemployment benefits."

2 The wording of item PEW.1c was changed after the first night of interviewing (December 16, 2010), to reflect Congress passing and Obama signing this legislation. On December 16, 2010 the item read "The debate in Washington over extending tax cuts and unemployment benefits."

PEW.1 CONTINUED…

	Very closely	Fairly closely	Not too closely	Not at all closely	**(VOL.)** DK/Ref
March 27-30, 2009: *Debate over Barack Obama's budget proposal*	28	34	18	19	1
February 27-March 2, 2009: *Barack Obama's budget proposal for next year that raises taxes on wealthy Americans and increases spending on health care, education and other programs*	47	34	9	10	*
May, 2003: *George W. Bush's tax cut and economic stimulus plan*	25	36	22	15	2
February, 2003	26	33	23	16	2
January, 2003	28	34	21	15	2
February, 2002: *Debate in Congress over G.W. Bush's budget and tax cut plan*	17	31	28	23	1
April, 2001	24	38	20	18	*
February, 2001: *G.W. Bush's tax cut plan*	31	35	19	14	1
September, 1999: *The debate in Washington over how much to cut taxes*	18	30	28	23	1
July, 1999	14	34	21	31	*
June, 1997: *Competing proposals on ways to cut taxes as part of the recent bipartisan budget agreement*	11	27	28	33	1
September, 1992 *(RVs)*: *George Bush's plan to improve the economy by cutting government spending and cutting taxes*	28	44	18	9	1

ASK ALL:

Now thinking about recent economic news…

PEW.2 Are you hearing mostly good news about the economy these days, mostly bad news about the economy or a mix of both good and bad news?

	Hearing mostly good news	Hearing mostly bad news	A mix of good and bad news	**(VOL.)** DK/Ref
January 3-6, 2013	6	32	59	2
December 6-9, 2012	7	36	54	2
November 1-4, 2012	10	33	55	2
October 4-7, 2012	8	28	62	2
September 7-9, 2012	6	35	58	1
August 2-5, 2012	3	41	53	3
July 5-8, 2012	4	40	55	2
May 31-June 3, 2012	3	37	57	3
May 3-6, 2012	6	32	60	2
April 5-8, 2012	11	30	57	2
March 8-11, 2012	11	24	62	2
February 2-5, 2012	8	30	59	3
January 5-8, 2012	9	30	60	1
December 1-4, 2011	6	36	56	1
November 10-13, 2011	3	48	48	1
October 6-9, 2011	1	58	39	2
September 1-4, 2011	2	61	35	1
August 4-7, 2011	1	67	30	2
July 7-10, 2011	3	49	46	2
June 2-5, 2011	2	46	50	1
May 12-15, 2011	6	35	56	2
March 31-April 3, 2011	5	33	60	2
March 3-6, 2011	7	38	53	2
February 3-6, 2011	6	29	64	1
January 6-9, 2011	7	24	68	1
December 2-5, 2010	4	39	55	1

PEW.2 CONTINUED…

	Hearing mostly good news	Hearing mostly bad news	A mix of good and bad news	**(VOL.)** DK/Ref
November 11-14, 2010	5	41	53	2
October 7-10, 2010	6	39	53	2
September 2-6, 2010	3	41	54	2
August 5-8, 2010	4	38	55	3
July 1-5, 2010	3	42	54	1
June 10-13, 2010	4	30	65	1
May 7-10, 2010	4	29	66	1
April 1-5, 2010	6	28	66	*
March 5-8, 2010	4	30	66	1
February 5-8, 2010	4	35	61	*
January 8-11, 2010	5	29	65	1
December 4-7, 2009	7	33	59	1
October 30-November 2, 2009	5	31	62	2
October 9-12, 2009	6	27	66	1
September 3-6, 2009	5	27	68	1
August 7-10, 2009	11	29	59	1
July 2-5, 2009	3	41	56	*
June 12-15, 2009	4	37	59	*
May 8-11, 2009	4	31	64	1
April 9-13, 2009	4	39	56	1
March 13-16, 2009	2	51	46	1
February 13-16, 2009	2	60	37	1
January 16-19, 2009	2	67	30	1
December 5-8, 2008	1	80	19	*

NO QUESTION PEW.3

ASK ALL:

PEW.4 As you may know, Congress and the president have passed new legislation on taxes. From what you've read and heard, do you strongly approve, approve, disapprove or strongly disapprove of this tax legislation?

Jan 3-6 2013	
38	NET Approve
6	Strongly approve
32	Approve
41	NET Disapprove
28	Disapprove
12	Strongly disapprove
21	Don't know/Refused **(VOL.)**

TREND FOR COMPARISION:

As you may know, Barack Obama and Congressional Republicans have reached an agreement to extend tax cuts and unemployment benefits. From what you've read and heard, do you strongly approve, approve, disapprove or strongly disapprove of this plan?

Dec 9-12 2010	
60	NET Approve
12	Strongly approve
48	Approve
22	NET Disapprove
17	Disapprove
5	Strongly disapprove
18	Don't know/Refused **(VOL.)**

ASK ALL:
Thinking ahead…
PEW.5 Do you think this tax legislation will mostly help or hurt **[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE]**?

		Help	Hurt	**(VOL.)** Make no difference	**(VOL.)** DK/Ref
a.	The condition of the U.S. economy				
	January 3-6, 2013	36	46	3	15
b.	People like yourself				
	January 3-6, 2013	30	52	6	13
c.	The federal budget deficit				
	January 3-6, 2013	33	44	4	18

TREND FOR COMPARISION:
Thinking ahead…
*Do you think this plan will help or hurt **[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE]**?*
(Question asked in reference to Barack Obama and Congressional Republicans reaching an agreement to extend tax cuts and unemployment benefits.)

		Help	Hurt	**(VOL.)** Make no difference	**(VOL.)** DK/Ref
a.	The condition of the U.S. economy				
	December 9-12, 2010	48	29	5	18
b.	People like yourself				
	December 9-12, 2010	47	25	12	15
c.	The federal budget deficit				
	December 9-12, 2010	26	46	5	23

NO QUESTION PEW.6

ASK ALL:
PEW.7 Do you approve or disapprove of the way **[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE]** handled negotiations over the tax legislation?

		Approve	Disapprove	**(VOL.)** DK/Ref
a.	Barack Obama			
	January 3-6, 2013	48	40	12
b.	Republican leaders in Congress			
	January 3-6, 2013	19	66	15

ASK ALL:
PEW.8 And just your impression, who do you think got more of what they wanted from the tax legislation **[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE]** OR **[ITEM]**?

Jan 3-6 2013	
57	Barack Obama
20	Republican leaders in Congress
4	Both **(VOL.)**
4	Neither **(VOL.)**
16	Don't know/Refused **(VOL.)**