

To determine public opinion on a variety of issues facing children and families in Iowa, the Every Child Matters Education Fund commissioned Mason-Dixon Polling and Research to undertake a telephone survey in Iowa. The poll was conducted in two parts. We interviewed a random sample of 400 likely general election voters statewide and an oversample of 229 likely Republican caucusgoers. This results in 629 interviews overall and with 300 Republican voters who say they will participate in a caucus early next year (see the methodological note at the end of this memo for more detail). The following summarizes key findings from the survey:

- **Voters hold extremely negative views of the status and future of children and do not believe leaders in Washington are doing enough to address their well-being.** 50% believe conditions for children have gotten worse in the last decade and 54% believe that when today’s children grow up, they will be worse off than people are now. Likely Republican caucusgoers hold the strongest assessment that things have been about the same for children the last decade. Majorities of all voters agree that children will grow up worse off.

Assessments of Conditions for Children and Washington’s Response			
	All Voters	GOP Caucusgoers	General Election Swing <sup>1</sup>
<b>Thinking about the last ten years, would you say that the lives of children in America have ...</b>			
Gotten Better	17%	3%	19%
Gotten Worse	50%	27%	50%
No Change	31%	67%	29%
<b>When today’s children in the United States grow up, do you think they will be better off ... than people are now?</b>			
Better Off	33%	36%	35%
Worse Off	54%	49%	51%
Volunteered: Same	11%	12%	13%
<b>(Agree/Disagree) “Our political leaders in Washington DC are not doing enough to ensure the health, education and well-being of children today.”</b>			
Strongly Agree	32%	9%	34%
Total Agree	58%	25%	63%
Total Disagree	41%	75%	37%
<b>(Agree/Disagree) “The President and Congress need to give a higher priority to the health, education and well-being of the country’s children.”</b>			
Strongly Agree	36%	5%	38%
Total Agree	63%	33%	63%
Total Disagree	36%	66%	37%

58% of likely voters overall and 63% of swing voters agree with the statement that “Our political leaders in Washington DC are not doing enough to ensure the health, education

<sup>1</sup> General election swing voters include people who say they usually split their ticket or only leans towards supporting one party over the other.

and well-being of children today”. Women, both mothers (61%) and non mothers (61%), are most in agreement. Even more agree that “the President and Congress need to give a higher priority to the health, education and well-being of the country's children.” Republican caucusgoers stand out from the wider electorate in strongly disagreeing with these statements.

- **Voters want candidates for office to make greater investments in children, not cut them.** While 59% of respondents agree that “With a deficit of more than trillion dollars every year, we need to cut all programs in the federal budget. Cutting programs might be hard but it is necessary to show we are serious about restoring the nation to a sustainable financial path,” **they oppose cutting programs that promote the health education and safety of children.**
- In fact, 66% agree that “No one disputes that the federal government needs to cut spending, but it needs to be done smartly. **Programs that promote and protect the health, education, and safety of children should be protected from any cuts and those that work for children best should be increased.**”
- Voters overall, particularly general election swing voters, say they are more likely to support candidates for office who propose specific investments in children. Republican caucusgoers are most supportive of candidates wanting to address child abuse prevention and more affordable college, but are not supportive of candidates advocating for other investments.

### Likelihood to Vote for a Candidate Who Addresses Specific Children’s Issues (% More Likely to Vote for a Candidate Who Addresses The Issue in His/Her Platform)

<u>GOP Caucus Voters</u>	<u>GE Swing Voters</u>	
56%	77%	<b>Child Abuse Prevention</b> - Likelihood to vote for a candidate who supports launching a major national initiative to reduce the 3 million reports of child abuse and neglect and the more than 2,000 child abuse deaths that occur every year.
53%	76%	<b>Higher Education</b> – Likelihood to vote for a candidate who supports increasing funding for student loans, including Pell Grant scholarships, for low and moderate-income college students.
38%	70%	<b>Head Start</b> – Likelihood to vote for a candidate who supports Head Start, a program that helps pre-school children from disadvantaged backgrounds, so every eligible child can attend a program.
20%	65%	<b>Child Care</b> – Likelihood to vote for a candidate who supports increasing subsidies for child care so more middle class working families can afford care.
29%	62%	<b>After-School Programs</b> – Likelihood to vote for a candidate who supports expanding after-school opportunities for children and youth.
22%	59%	<b>Preschool Education</b> – Likelihood to vote for a candidate who supports having the federal government work with states like Iowa to provide greater funding so that all parents who want to send their children to a high-quality pre-kindergarten or kindergarten program can afford to do so.

- **Voters of all persuasions find issues of child well-being important to them when they vote.** 88% of likely voters, 90% of general election swing voters, and 74% of likely Republican caucusgoers say children’s issues will play a significant role when they vote next year. General election voters and swing voters (41%) are more likely than Republican caucusgoers (25%) to say that children’s issues will be their primary issue. **Given caucusgoers support for student loans, Pell Grants, and child abuse prevention, no candidate for president can or should avoid saying what they will do to address these and other children’s issues in their platform.**

Importance of Issues of Child Well-Being			
All Voters	GOP Caucus Voters	GE Swing Voters	
88%	74%	90%	<b>Total Important</b>
41%	24%	41%	Very important, they are a primary factor in deciding how you vote
47%	49%	49%	Somewhat important, they are one of several issues you consider
11%	25%	9%	Not very important, they are not necessarily issues you consider
1%	2%	1%	Not at all important, they are just not a consideration in deciding how you vote

- **Economic anxiety permeates throughout the electorate, and they rate it as the most important issue for the winner of the next presidential election to address.** It is impossible to overstate the importance all voters place on the economy and the struggles they face. 88% rate the economy negatively. There are some glimmers of optimism – only 19% believe things in the economy will worsen over the next year. Voters are split on whether they will get better or stay about the same. However, Republican caucus goers are particularly pessimistic.

60% of voters choose the economy and jobs as their top or second most important issue with 43% rating it their highest concern. Reducing the deficit; securing the future of Social Security and Medicare; and improving the health, education, and safety of children rate as the next most important issues -although they trail the economic and job situation significantly.

Issues involving reducing taxes, homeland security, illegal immigration, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and protecting the environment do not have the importance that they have had in past elections. Likely Republican caucusgoers prioritize reducing the deficit over the economy. General election swing voters prioritize the economy over reducing the deficit. Swing voters are nearly as concerned with improving the health, education, and safety of children as they are with reducing the deficit.

## Assessments of the Economy and Top Priority for the Next President

	<u>All Voters</u>	<u>GOP Caucusgoers</u>	<u>General Election Swing</u>
<b>How would you rate the conditions of the nation's economy ...</b>			
Excellent/Good	13%	<.5%	15%
Only Fair	41%	19%	38%
Poor	47%	80%	48%
<b>During the next twelve months, do you think the nation's economy will get ...</b>			
Better	36%	5%	39%
Worse	19%	43%	17%
Stay the Same	38%	51%	37%
<b>Just thinking about your own personal financial situation, do you feel that over the past 12 months things have ...</b>			
Gotten Better	18%	17%	20%
Gotten Worse	27%	37%	27%
Stayed about the Same	55%	46%	52%
<b>Highest Priority for the Next President (First + Second Top Priority)</b>			
Strengthening the economy and creating jobs	60%	56%	63%
Reducing the federal budget deficit	36%	65%	36%
Guaranteeing the financial future of Social Security & Medicare	26%	4%	27%
Improving the health, education, and safety of children	20%	4%	21%

- **Candidates for President risk alienating swing voters they will need in this toss-up state after their nomination.** General election swing voters hold substantially different views on the issues facing children and families, and taxes than those likely to attend a GOP caucus early next year. On the question of protecting children's programs from cuts, 66% of voters overall and 70% general election swing voters believe that programs that promote and protect the health, education, and safety of children should be protected from any cuts. Just 28% of likely caucus goers concur, with 71% disagreeing that these programs should be protected. This extends to support for candidates who favor increased investments in after school programs, Head Start, and child care subsidies. Significant majorities of caucus goers say they would be *less* likely to vote for a candidate who supports these.
- This differs substantially from Republicans who say they are *not* going to attend a caucus. Majorities of these Republicans support candidates who would expand children's programs, believe children's programs should be protected from cuts, and **53% would be more likely to vote for a candidate who favors eliminating the tax cuts passed in 2001 and 2003 for those who make more than \$250K.**
- **Voters support changes in current tax policy and are divided on the most recent budget passed by the House of Representatives.** 69% of likely voters, and 74% of swing voters, agree with the statement that "*the federal budget deficit cannot be closed by spending cuts alone. We must end the tax cuts passed in 2001 and 2003 for those making more than 250 thousand a year first before we start cutting education and child health programs.*" Republican caucus goers strongly disagree with general election

swing voters and oppose any tax increases for the wealthy, even if it means cuts in children’s programs.

<b>Agreement with Statement about Tax Policy and Support for the 2012 House Budget</b>				
	<u>All Voters</u>	<u>GOP Caucusgoers</u>	<u>General Election Swing</u>	
<i>(Agree/Disagree)</i> <b>“The federal budget deficit cannot be closed by spending cuts alone. We must end the tax cuts passed in 2001 and 2003 for those making more than 250 thousand a year <u>first</u> before we start cutting education and child health programs.”</b>				
Strongly Agree	55%	7%	60%	
Total Agree	69%	28%	74%	
Total Disagree	31%	71%	26%	
<i>(Likelihood to support a candidate who supports...)</i> <b>“Eliminating the recent tax cuts passed in the last decade for families earning over \$250,000 a year, requiring those families to pay more.”</b>				
More Likely	67%	31%	74%	
Less Likely	33%	68%	26%	
<b>Initial Support for the House Budget</b>				
Total Favor	53%	86%	48%	
Total Oppose	38%	11%	40%	
(Don’t Know)	9%	11%	12%	
<b>Support for House Budget after Further Information<sup>2</sup></b>				
Total Favor	44%	81%	42%	
Total Oppose	54%	17%	57%	
(Don’t Know)	2%	2%	1%	

On the issue of the budget passed by the House of Representatives in April, when described as a budget that will cut \$6.2 trillion over the next 10 years, 53% support it. When details are provided about the House budget cuts for children, only 44% of likely voters and 42% of swing voters support the budget proposal with majorities opposed. Republican caucusgoers strongly support the budget and few change their minds after hearing a description of it.

- **The races for the Republican nomination and the general election are exceedingly close in this swing state.** Minnesota Representative Michelle Bachmann holds a statistically insignificant lead over former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney with former Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty a distant third. Mitt Romney holds a similarly insignificant lead over President Obama. The President leads Michelle Bachmann

<sup>2</sup> Exact question wording: “Let me read you some more information about the House Republicans' budget proposal. The plan cuts \$6.2 trillion dollars below the president's budget in order to reduce the deficit and balance the budget within 20 years. The plan cuts domestic spending, including in education and other children’s programs, in the coming year by 72 billion dollars and freezes that spending for five years. It repeals the new health care reform law and makes major long-term cuts in spending for Medicaid and Medicare. It reduces the top corporate and top income tax rate from 35 to 25 percent.”

narrowly. Unless the underlying dynamic of the race changes, both contests will go down to the wire next year.

Head to Head Matchups				
		<b>GOP</b>		
		<u>Caucusgoers</u>		
<b>Republican Nomination</b>				
	Michelle Bachmann	32%		
	Mitt Romney	29%		
	Tim Pawlenty	7%		
	Rick Santorum	6%		
	Ron Paul	3%		
	Newt Gingrich	2%		
	Herman Cain	1%		
	Jon Huntsman	0%		
	Gary Johnson	0%		
	(Other)	<.5%		
	(Undecided)	19		
			<b>GOP</b>	<b>General Election</b>
		<u>All Voters</u>	<u>Caucusgoers</u>	<u>Swing</u>
<b>Romney vs. Obama</b>				
	Mitt Romney	42%	90%	38%
	Barack Obama	39%	1%	31%
	Undecided	19%	9%	31%
	Vote or Lean Romney	47%	94%	46%
	Vote or Lean Obama	44%	1%	41%
<b>Obama vs. Bachmann</b>				
	Barack Obama	47%	<.5%	45%
	Michelle Bachmann	42%	96%	37%
	Undecided	11%	4%	15%
	Vote or Lean Obama	47%	<.5%	47%
	Vote or Lean Bachmann	46%	99%	42%

**Methodological Note**

*This final sample of 629 likely general election voters was weighted to reflect the party composition and likely caucus participation of those likely to vote in November 2012. The overall survey has a margin of error of ±3.9 percent. The subsample of 300 likely Republican caucus participants has a margin of error of ± 5.7 percent. The subsample of 329 likely general election voters who will not participate in the Republican caucus has a margin of error of ± 5.4 percent.*

**About the Every Child Matters Education Fund**

*The Every Child Matters Education Fund is a Washington, D.C. based 501(c)(3) organization created to raise the visibility of children and family issues in elections. Michael Petit, founding president of the Every Child Matters Education Fund, served as commissioner of Maine’s Human Services Department and was deputy director of the Child Welfare League of America. Every Child Matters has run a field office since 2003 and this poll represents the third one conducted to examine voter attitudes in advance of the caucuses. For more information, please visit the Every Child Matters Education Fund web site at [www.everychildmatters.org](http://www.everychildmatters.org).*

## ***About Mason-Dixon Polling and Research***

*Mason-Dixon Polling and Research, Inc., is an independent polling firm that conducts voter surveys for news media, lobbyists, interest groups, trade associations, and political action committees. Mason-Dixon is the nation's most active state polling organization, conducting copyrighted public opinion polls for news media organizations in all 50 states. These media clients include over 250 local television affiliates and over 100 daily newspapers. Since 1983, Mason-Dixon has conducted surveys in every state in the country, on almost every public issue, and has tracked every major election and referendum. During this time, Mason-Dixon has earned the reputation as one of the most credible and accurate independent polling firms in the nation.*