The Politics of Eating
Food Policy and the Midterm Elections

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April 2014
An Exasperated Populace

Direction of the country
• 26% right direction, 65% wrong track

Barack Obama job approval
• 41% approve, 54% disapprove

Feelings toward Democrats in Congress
• 35% positive, 38% negative

Feelings toward Republicans in Congress
• 27% positive, 45% negative

57% believe the US is in a recession

Source: NBC/WSJ, March 2014
Ten Years of Negativity

*Yearly Averages*

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<tr>
<th>GHW Bush</th>
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<td>2014</td>
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Source: NBC/WSJ
Personal Economic Indicators Are Heading the Wrong Way

I expect the value of my home will increase in the next 12 months
I expect my wages will increase in the next 12 months

Source: CNBC, March 2014
The Problem: Nothing Gets Done In Washington

Likelihood of voting for an incumbent running for reelection:

- More likely: 10%
- Less likely: 27%

My representative to Congress is:

- Working to solve the problems in Washington: 40%
- Contributing to the problems in Washington: 43%

Sources:
- NBC/WSJ, March 2014
- NBC/WSJ, October 2013
Where You Stand Depends on Where You Sleep

What is your preference for the outcome of this year’s Congressional elections?

- Prefer Democratic-controlled Congress
- Prefer Republican-controlled Congress

- **All voters**: 43% (Democratic) vs. 44% (Republican)
- **Democratic districts**: 52% (Democratic) vs. 35% (Republican)
- **Republican districts**: 37% (Democratic) vs. 51% (Republican)

Source: NBC/WSJ, March 2014
“Middle” Has Practically Disappeared

134 Number of “cross-over” seats in 1980

26 Number of “cross-over” seats in 2012

Source: Realignment and Party Revival: Understanding American Electoral Politics at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century by Arthur Paulson
Shutdown Lessons for Our Leaders

What lessons do you hope that Speaker John Boehner and the Republicans/President Obama and the Democrats learn from the confrontation over the budget and the recent government shutdown?

Source: NBC/WSJ, October 2013
The Three I’s for 2014

➡️ Insurance
➡️ Immigration
➡️ Inequality in the economy
Fundamentally Differing Views of Wealth and Poverty

**Democrats’ View on:**
- **Americans living in poverty:**
  - This is because of their own actions/decisions: 24%
  - This is because of circumstances beyond their control: 68%

**Republicans’ View on:**
- **Americans living in poverty:**
  - This is because of their own actions/decisions: 33%
  - This is because of circumstances beyond their control: 58%

- **Wealthy Americans:**
  - This is because of their own actions/decisions: 56%
  - This is because of circumstances beyond their control: 30%

Source: CNBC, March 2014
But Much Agreement on Ensuring that Low-Income Families Have Enough to Eat

The federal government DOES NOT play a major role in ensuring that low-income families and children have the food and nutrition they need. 73%

The federal government plays a major role in ensuring that low-income families and children have the food and nutrition they need. 27%

Democrats 85%
Independents 76%
Republicans 57%

Source: FRAC/Tyson Foods survey, February 2011
Ambivalence about Food Stamps

Support for cutting government spending on food stamps for low-income families to help reduce federal budget deficit

Support for New Rules on Food Stamps: tighten eligibility, limit how long recipient can collect, increase work requirements, drug testing; estimated nearly 4 million people removed from program as a result

Source: Quinnipiac University September 2013

Source: United Technologies/National Journal December 2013
Obstacles to Public Buy-In for Food Policies

- Priority – from a funding standpoint
- Priority – from a personal standpoint
- Distrust of government
- Americans ♥ choice!
OBSTACLE FUNDING: Obesity Continues to be Seen as a Huge Problem

Proportions rating each as an extremely or very serious public health problem

- Cancer: 79%
- Obesity: 69%
- Mental illness: 67%
- Rx drug abuse: 63%
- Alcohol abuse: 54%
- Cigarette smoking: 53%
- AIDS: 51%

Source: Pew Research Center November 2013
### But it’s Not a Priority for Spending

*Given the deficit, what should be priorities for federal spending this year?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Priority</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60%</td>
<td>Fund veteran’s health care</td>
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<tr>
<td>59%</td>
<td>Prep/response to health problems/injuries from disasters or terrorist attacks</td>
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<tr>
<td>58%</td>
<td>Increase research for cures/treatments for major disease threats</td>
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<tr>
<td>52%</td>
<td>Prevent spread of infectious diseases, including providing vaccinations</td>
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<tr>
<td>51%</td>
<td>Prevent chronic illnesses, such as heart disease, cancer and diabetes</td>
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<tr>
<td>47%</td>
<td>Ensure safety/effectiveness of prescription drugs</td>
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<tr>
<td>40%</td>
<td>Provide screening tests for major health problems</td>
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<tr>
<td>36%</td>
<td>Detect/prevent foodborne illnesses</td>
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<tr>
<td>36%</td>
<td>Prevent spread of HIV/AIDS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34%</td>
<td>Funding to hospitals for free/subsidized care to people without insurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33%</td>
<td>Ensure workplace safety</td>
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<tr>
<td>31%</td>
<td>Funding to state public health departments</td>
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<tr>
<td>26%</td>
<td>Reduce smoking and tobacco use</td>
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<tr>
<td>26%</td>
<td>Reduce obesity by promoting healthy lifestyles</td>
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<tr>
<td>17%</td>
<td>Prevent injuries, such as burns, poisoning and falls</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation/Harvard School of Public Health January 2013
OBSTACLE PERSONAL PRIORITY: Labels Are Important

93% of consumers say that genetically modified ingredients should be indicated on food labels.

58% frequently (and 20% occasionally) check nutrition labels.

Source: CBS News January 2013

Source: AP/Ipsos May 2006
Except When They’re Not
OBSTACLE: Lack of Trust in Gov’t

Trust & Confidence in Federal Government to Handle Domestic Problems

Source: Gallup, September 2013
OBSTACLE: Americans Want Choice

Parents pan the nutritional value of food served in schools, BUT many want kids to have the “choice” to buy unhealthy food.

52% oppose the idea of prohibiting restaurants from using trans fats.¹

70% oppose having a New York-style “ban” on sales of large sodas in their town.²

Sources: ¹Pew Research Center November 2013, ²Quinnipiac University April 2013
New Yorkers Loathe the Soda “Ban”

New York’s Ban on Large Sodas

Public Thinking about Food and Politics Is More Superficial than Substantive