

Majority of 50+ Pennsylvania Voters Oppose Chained CPI Say Social Security Debate Should Be Separate from Deficit Discussions



Right now, lawmakers in Washington are considering a proposal to change the way cost of living adjustments are calculated for both current and future Social Security beneficiaries and those receiving veterans' benefits. The change would reduce expected increases each year starting now and reductions would grow over time. The proposal, the so-called "chained" or "superlative CPI", would also affect how the tax code is adjusted for inflation, which would translate into higher taxes for most taxpayers. The proposal is being considered as part of a larger agreement to reduce the deficit. This survey examined Pennsylvania voters' opinions on a proposal to adopt a chained or superlative CPI to reduce the deficit. It also looked at how favorability would be affected towards Members of Congress who voted for such a proposal.

Survey Findings

- **Today's seniors should not be affected by changes to Social Security:** Eighty-seven percent of voters 50+ in Pennsylvania say it is *very* important to them that Social Security benefits are not reduced for current seniors (92% Democrat, 88% Republican, 81% Independent).
- **No cuts to Social Security to reduce the deficit:** Across party lines, a large majority of 50+ Pennsylvania voters (83%) oppose reducing Social Security benefits in order to reduce the deficit (89% Democrat, 80% Republican, 76% Independent). In fact, 74% *strongly* oppose.
- **Pennsylvania voters age 50+ say "no" to the chained CPI:** Voters 50+ in Pennsylvania oppose the chained CPI as a way to reduce the budget deficit.
 - Over seven in ten Pennsylvania voters age 50+ (72%) oppose changing the way the Social Security cost of living adjustment is calculated (80% Democrat, 65% Republican, 63% Independent).
 - Almost eight in ten voters age 50+ in Pennsylvania (77%) oppose changing the way the cost of living adjustment is calculated for retired and disabled veterans' benefits (81% Democrat, 76% Republican, 71% Independent).
 - Roughly half of Pennsylvania voters age 50+ (51%) oppose changing the way the tax code is adjusted for inflation to reduce the deficit (48% Democrat, 55% Republican, 52% Independent). However, 13% said they do not know if they support or oppose this, indicating there is little public understanding of how the chained CPI would affect a person's taxes.
- **Pennsylvania voters less favorable to lawmakers supporting chained CPI:** Sixty-seven percent of Pennsylvania voters age 50+ say they will be less favorable towards their Member of Congress if he or she votes for the chained CPI proposal (74% Democrat, 63% Republican, 66% Independent).
- **A large majority say Social Security should be discussed separately.** Eighty-five percent of 50+ voters in Pennsylvania agree that the future of Social Security should be considered separately from budget reduction discussions (91% Democrat, 82% Republican, 79% Independent).

Methodology: Woelfel Research, an independent research firm, conducted 803 interviews of registered Pennsylvania voters age 50+ March 27 through April 2, 2013. This survey has a margin of sampling error of +/- 3.5%.

**Chained CPI Survey
 Pennsylvania
 Sample 800 Registered Voters Age 50+
 (N=803, sampling error = ±3.5%)**

Hello, this is _____ calling from Woelfel Research, Inc., a national opinion research firm. We are not telemarketers and are not trying to sell you anything. We would like to find out your opinions on some important issues. Your views are important and we would greatly appreciate your participation. All your responses will be kept entirely confidential.

S1. Are you registered to vote?

Base: Total Respondents	N=803
	%
1. Yes	100
2. No	-

1. As you may know, different proposals are being discussed in Washington to reduce the deficit. Do you support or oppose reducing Social Security benefits as a means to reduce the deficit?

Base: Total Respondents	N=803
	%
1. Strongly support	5
2. Somewhat support	8
3. Somewhat oppose	9
4. Strongly oppose	74
5. Don't know (DO NOT READ)	4
6. Refused (DO NOT READ)	<0.5

2. Many leaders in Washington have said that any proposed changes to Social Security would not affect today's seniors. How important is it to you that benefits are not reduced for today's seniors?

Base: Total Respondents	N=803
	%
1. Very important	87
2. Somewhat important	9
3. Not very important	1
4. Not at all important	2
5. Don't know (DO NOT READ)	<0.5
6. Refused (DO NOT READ)	<0.5

3. As you may know, Social Security benefit reductions are on the table to address our nation's federal budget deficit. Given this, which of the following statements do you agree with more? (READ AND ROTATE)

Base: Total Respondents	N=803
	%
1. Reducing Social Security benefits must be part of any agreement in Washington to reduce the budget deficit	12
2. The future of Social Security should be considered separately from the budget deficit discussions.	85
3. Don't know (DO NOT READ)	3
4. Refused (DO NOT READ)	<0.5

4. In order to reduce the deficit, there have been discussions in Washington about changing the way the annual cost of living increase is calculated for federal programs. This change would reduce the expected benefit increase each year and reductions would grow larger over time. The proposed change is often referred to as a chained or superlative CPI. For each one, please tell me whether you would support or oppose it to reduce the deficit. (Rotate A and B)

a. Would you support or oppose changing the way the Social Security cost of living increase is calculated which would reduce the annual benefit increase that individuals receive from Social Security?

	Base: Total Respondents	N=803
		%
1.	Strongly support	8
2.	Somewhat support	13
3.	Somewhat oppose	11
4.	Strongly oppose	61
5.	Don't know (DO NOT READ)	7
6.	Refused (DO NOT READ)	<0.5

b. Would you support or oppose changing the way the cost of living increase is calculated for veterans' benefits which would reduce the annual benefit increase that retired and disabled veterans receive?

	Base: Total Respondents	N=803
		%
1.	Strongly support	9
2.	Somewhat support	8
3.	Somewhat oppose	10
4.	Strongly oppose	67
5.	Don't know (DO NOT READ)	6
6.	Refused (DO NOT READ)	<0.5

5. Changing the way inflation is measured would also affect the tax code which would increase taxes for most taxpayers. Would you support or oppose changing the way the tax code is adjusted for inflation to reduce the deficit?

	Base: Total Respondents	N=803
		%
1.	Strongly support	15
2.	Somewhat support	20
3.	Somewhat oppose	12
4.	Strongly oppose	39
5.	Don't know (DO NOT READ)	13
6.	Refused (DO NOT READ)	1

6. Would you be more or less favorable towards your Member of Congress if they voted for a chained or superlative CPI which would reduce the annual cost of living increase for Social Security and veterans' benefits? Would you be...

	Base: Total Respondents	N=803
		%
1.	Much more favorable	9
2.	Somewhat more favorable	14
3.	No impact on opinion (VOLUNTARY)	4
4.	Somewhat less favorable	20
5.	Much less favorable	47
6.	Don't know (DO NOT READ)	6
7.	Refused (DO NOT READ)	1

DEMOGRAPHICS

Now I'd like to ask you a few questions for statistical purposes only.

D1. What is your age as of your last birthday? [RECORD IN YEARS]

	Base: Total Respondents	N=803
		%
1.	50 – 64	56
2.	65 – 74	24
3.	75 +	20

D2. Record Gender

	Base: Total Respondents	N=803
		%
1.	Male	47
2.	Female	53

D3. Do you consider yourself? (ROTATE FIRST TWO)

	Base: Total Respondents	N=803
		%
1.	Democrat	41
2.	Republican	32
3.	Independent	18
4.	None of the above	4
5.	Don't know	1
6.	Refused	4

Note: Annotation numbers may differ from report numbers by one percentage point due to rounding.



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