## \*\*Elections DA\*\*

### 1NC Shell

#### Obama will win now

Silver, 6/7(Nate, chief pollster for New York Times’ 538 election polling center. Regarded as top-level pollster based on distinct mathematical modelshttp://fivethirtyeight.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/06/07/election-forecast-obama-begins-with-tenuous-advantage/)

The first look at the 2012 FiveThirtyEight presidential forecast has Barack Obama as a very slight favorite to win re-election. But his advantage equates to only a two-point lead in the national popular vote, and the edge could easily swing to Mitt Romney on the basis of further bad economic news. Mr. Obama remains slightly ahead of Mr. Romney in most national polls, and he has had a somewhat clearer advantage in polling conducted at the state level. Mr. Obama would be about 80 percent likely to win an election held today, according to the model. However, the outlook for the Nov. 6 election is much less certain, with Mr. Obama having winning odds of just over 60 percent. The forecast currently calls for Mr. Obama to win roughly 290 electoral votes, but outcomes ranging everywhere from about 160 to 390 electoral votes are plausible, given the long lead time until the election and the amount of news that could occur between now and then. Both polls and economic indicators are a pretty rough guide five months before an election.

#### Plan is political suicide – perception of wasteful spending and lack of public support

Orski ‘12

Ken Orski is editor and publisher of Innovation NewsBriefs, an influential and widely read transportation newsletter, now in its 20th year of publication. Orski has worked professionally in the field of transportation for close to 40 years. He served as Associate Administrator of the Urban Mass Transportation Administration under President Nixon and President Ford. He is a magna cum laude graduate of Harvard College and holds a J.D. degree from Harvard Law School. NewGeography – 02/05/2012 – http://www.newgeography.com/content/002662-why-pleas-increase-infrastructure-funding-fall-deaf-ears

Finding the resources to keep transportation infrastructure in good order is a more difficult challenge. Unlike traditional utilities, roads and bridges have no rate payers to fall back on. Politicians and the public seem to attach a low priority to fixing aging transportation infrastructure and this translates into a lack of support for raising fuel taxes or imposing tolls. Investment in infrastructure did not even make the top ten list of public priorities in the latest Pew Research Center survey of domestic concerns. Calls by two congressionally mandated commissions to vastly increase transportation infrastructure spending have gone ignored. So have repeated pleas by advocacy groups such as Building America’s Future, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the University of Virginia’s Miller Center. Nor has the need to increase federal spending on infrastructure come up in the numerous policy debates held by the Republican presidential candidates. Even President Obama seems to have lost his former fervor for this issue. In his last State-of-the-Union message he made only a perfunctory reference to "rebuilding roads and bridges." High-speed rail and an infrastructure bank, two of the President’s past favorites, were not even mentioned. Why pleas to increase infrastructure funding fall on deaf ears There are various theories why appeals to increase infrastructure spending do not resonate with the public. One widely held view is that people simply do not trust the federal government to spend their tax dollars wisely. As proof, evidence is cited that a great majority of state and local transportation ballot measures do get passed, because voters know precisely where their tax money is going. No doubt there is much truth to that. Indeed, thanks to local funding initiatives and the use of tolling, state transportation agencies are becoming increasingly more self-reliant and less dependent on federal funding Another explanation, and one that I find highly plausible, has been offered by Charles Lane, editorial writer for the Washington Post. Wrote Lane in an October 31, 2011 Washington Post column, "How come my family and I traveled thousands of miles on both the east and west coast last summer without actually seeing any crumbling roads or airports? On the whole, the highways and byways were clean, safe and did not remind me of the Third World countries. ... Should I believe the pundits or my own eyes?" asked Lane ("The U.S. infrastructure argument that crumbles upon examination"). Along with Lane, I think the American public is skeptical about alarmist claims of "crumbling infrastructure" because they see no evidence of it around them. State DOTs and transit authorities take great pride in maintaining their systems in good condition and, by and large, they succeed in doing a good job of it. Potholes are rare, transit buses and trains seldom break down, and collapsing bridges, happily, are few and far between.

#### Even tiny shifts matter – our link is low threshold and linear

Silver, 12 (Nate, 5/15, chief pollster for New York Times’ 538 election polling center. Regarded as top-level pollster based on distinct mathematical modelshttp://fivethirtyeight.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/05/15/a-30000-foot-view-on-the-presidential-race/)

The last thing to remember is that when an election is quite close, it does not take very much to shift the race from one candidate being a 60/40 favorite to it being about even. At the betting market Intrade, Mr. Obama’s odds of re-election have consistently been around 60 percent. While, on the one hand, it is good not to overreact to new data at this early stage of the race, it is also worth remembering that even a one-point shift in a president’s approval ratings, or a modest change in the economic forecasts, can move a president’s re-election odds at the margin.

#### GOP wins makes strikes against Iran inevitable

Dilek 9-20-11 (Emine, addicting info, “All Republican Candidates Favor War with Iran” <http://www.addictinginfo.org/2011/09/20/all-republican-candidates-favor-war-with-iran/>)

Prepare yourself my fellow Americans. If you elect a Republican President in the 2012 elections, more than likely we will be at war with Iran before his or her Presidency is over. In a disturbing [new article](http://www.salon.com/news/politics/war_room/2011/09/18/gop_iran) written by Trita Parsi, a columnist for Salon.com, he expertly connects the dots on which single foreign policy issue is uniting all GOP candidates: Iran. He writes that when it comes to Arab Spring and all other foreign policy issues, GOP candidates are all over the place. But when it is about Iran, they all agree; USA must be tougher. Parsi asserts that “Republicans will present a narrative that diplomacy was tried and failed, sanctions are tough but insufficient, and the only remaining option is some form of military action. As the memory of the Iraq invasion slowly fades away, Republican strategists calculate, the American public will return to rewarding toughness over wisdom at the ballot boxes.” Although I agree with Parsi’s claim that Iran is the only foreign policy matter that unites all GOP candidates, I do not believe the memory of Iraq invasion is slowly fading. Contrary to his assertion, I believe Americans are fed up with the unending wars. As more information flows through the independent media about the staggering costs of war, uncontrollable waste by the military contractors and Pentagon, devastating number of human lives lost, their direct effect on American economy and psyche is becoming more palpable. The Obama administration has proven effectively when and how intervention needs to be pursued when it comes to rogue States. We have successfully eliminated bin Laden with a Navy SEAL team and ousted Qaddafi in a few months, with minimum casualties and cost by collaborating with NATO. The administration has the astuteness and the capability of understanding the intricacies of the diplomacy and international relations. Maybe it is about time the GOP wakes up to the new realities of the 21st Century foreign policy making and learn that being a ‘hawk’ is not always the right answer to every international challenge.

#### Iran strikes causes multiple scenarios for nuclear war, CBW use and terrorist attacks.

Russell -09 (James A. Russell, managing editor of Strategic Insights, the quarterly ejournal published by the Center for Contemporary Conflict at the Naval Postgraduate School, Spring 2009, *Strategic Stability Reconsidered: Prospects for Escalation and Nuclear War in the Middle East*, Security Studies Center)

Iran’s response to what would initially start as a sustained stand-off bombardment (Desert Fox Heavy) could take a number of different forms that might lead to escalation by the United States and Israel, surrounding states, and non-state actors. Once the strikes commenced, it is difficult to imagine Iran remaining in a Saddam-like quiescent mode and hunkering down to wait out the attacks. Iranian leaders have unequivocally stated that any attack on its nuclear sites will result in a wider war81 – a war that could involve regional states on both sides as well as non-state actors like Hamas and Hezbollah. While a wider regional war need not lead to escalation and nuclear use by either Israel or the United States, wartime circumstances and domestic political pressures could combine to shape decision-making in ways that present nuclear use as an option to achieve military and political objectives. For both the United States and Israel, Iranian or proxy use of chemical, biological or radiological weapons represent the most serious potential escalation triggers. For Israel, a sustained conventional bombardment of its urban centers by Hezbollah rockets in Southern Lebanon could also trigger an escalation spiral. Assessing relative probability of these scenarios is very difficult and beyond the scope of this article. Some scenarios for Iranian responses that could lead to escalation by the United States and Israel are: Terrorist-type asymmetric attacks on either the U.S. or Israeli homelands by Iran or its proxies using either conventional or unconventional (chemical, biological, or radiological) weapons. Escalation is more likely in response to the use of unconventional weapons in populated urban centers. The potential for use of nuclear retaliation against terrorist type attacks is problematic, unless of course the sponsoring country takes official responsibility for them, which seems highly unlikely. Asymmetric attacks by Iran or its proxies using unconventional weapons against U.S. military facilities in Iraq and the Gulf States (Kuwait, Bahrain, UAE, Qatar); • Long-range missile strikes by Iran attacking Israel and/or U.S. facilities in Iraq and the Gulf States: • Conventional missile strikes in and around the Israeli reactor at Dimona • Airbursts of chemical or radiological agents in Israeli urban areas; • Missile strikes using non-conventional weapons against US Gulf facilities such as Al Udeid in Qatar, Al Dhafra Air Base in the UAE, and the 5th Fleet Headquarters in Manama, Bahrain. Under all scenarios involving chemical/biological attacks on its forces, the United States has historically retained the right to respond with all means at its disposal even if the attacks come from a non-nuclear weapons state.82 • The involvement of non-state actors as part of ongoing hostilities between Iran, the United States, and Israel in which Hezbollah and/or Hamas became engaged presents an added dimension for conflict escalation. While tactically allied with Iran and each other, these groups have divergent interests and objectives that could affect their involvement (or non-involvement in a wider regional war) – particularly in ways that might prompt escalation by Israel and the United States. Hezbollah is widely believed to have stored thousands of short range Iranian-supplied rockets in southern Lebanon. Attacking Israel in successive fusillades of missiles over time could lead to domestic political demands on the Israeli military to immediately stop these external attacks – a mission that might require a wide area-denial capability provided by nuclear weapons and their associated PSI overpressures, particularly if its conventional ground operations in Gaza prove in the mid- to longterms as indecisive or strategic ambiguous as its 2006 operations in Lebanon. • Another source of uncertainty is the Iran Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) – referred to here as “quasi-state” actor. The IRGC manages the regime’s nuclear, chemical and missile programs and is responsible for “extraterritorial” operations outside Iran. The IRGC is considered as instrument of the state and reports directly to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei. So far, the IRGC has apparently refrained from providing unconventional weapons to its surrogates. The IRGC also, however arms and funds various Shiite paramilitary groups in Iraq and Lebanon that have interests and objectives that may or may not directly reflect those of the Iranian supreme leader. Actions of these groups in a wartime environment are another source of strategic uncertainty that could shape crisis decision-making in unhelpful ways. • The most likely regional state to be drawn into a conflict on Iran’s side in a wider regional war is Syria, which is widely reported to have well developed missile and chemical warfare programs. Direct Syrian military involvement in an Israeli-U.S./Iranian war taking the form of missile strikes or chemical attacks on Israel could serve as another escalation trigger in a nuclear-use scenario, in particular if chemical or bio-chem weapons are used by the Syrians, technically crossing the WMD-chasm and triggering a retaliatory strike using any category of WMD including nuclear weapons. • The last – and perhaps most disturbing – of these near-term scenarios is the possible use by Iran of nuclear weapons in the event of conventional strikes by the United States and Israel. This scenario is built on the assumption of a U.S. and/or Israeli intelligence failure to detect Iranian possession of a nuclear device that had either been covertly built or acquired from another source. It is possible to foresee an Iranian “demonstration” use of a nuclear weapon in such a scenario in an attempt to stop an Israeli/U.S. conventional bombardment. A darker scenario would be a direct nuclear attack by Iran on Israel, also precipitated by conventional strikes, inducing a “use them or lose them” response. In turn, such a nuclear strike would almost certainly prompt an Israeli and U.S. massive response – a potential “Armageddon” scenario.

## \*\*Uniqueness\*\*

### Obama Win Now

#### Obama win now – demographic shifts and swing state advantage

Frontrunner, 6/11

The New York Times (6/9, Harwood, Subscription Publication, 1.23M) reported that in several presidential swing states, "demographic changes add another variable to a campaign conversation that has largely revolved around high unemployment and slow growth" -- and could work to President Obama's advantage. An analysis "for the liberal Center for American Progress" concluded that "that in 12 battleground states, the proportion of votes cast by working-class whites, a group Mr. Obama lost lopsidedly in 2008, will drop by three percentage points this fall," while "the proportion cast by minority voters, who backed Mr. Obama by overwhelming margins, will rise by two percentage points." The Chicago Sun-Times (6/10, Sweet, 370K) reported that Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, in an interview to air on CNN's Fareed Zakaria GPS Sunday, "predicted that the presidential election will be decided in 'five states, 500 precincts.'" He did not specify the states. Several Swing States Have A Relatively Low Unemployment Rate. Charles Babington, in a piece for the AP (6/11) titled, "Ohio's Job Growth Doesn't Guarantee An Obama Win," says, "About 10 battleground states will decide the election, and seven of them have employment levels that beat the US average." Babington adds, "Most of the states are led by Republican governors eager to highlight their progress in creating jobs," which "complicates...Romney's claim that the economy has been so mismanaged that Obama deserves to be ousted." Babington says Ohio Gov. John Kasich "tries to finesse the political dilemma by saying jobs have increased despite Obama's policies."

#### Err neg – Obama starts with math edge and campaign advantages in remaining swing states

CNN, 6/4(http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2012/06/04/cnn-electoral-map-seven-states-up-in-the-air-in-fight-for-white-house/)

With just over five months to go until the November election, a new CNN Electoral Map indicates a tight battle between President Barack Obama and Republican challenger Mitt Romney for the 270 electoral votes needed to win the White House. According to the CNN map unveiled Monday, the president leads Romney in 19 states and the District of Columbia, which if he carried those in the general election would give him 247 electoral votes. Romney, the unofficial GOP presidential nominee pending the party's convention, leads in 24 states, which would give him 206 electoral votes. – Follow the Ticker on Twitter: @PoliticalTicker The map currently indicates that seven states are true toss-ups. Those states are Colorado (9 electoral votes), Florida (29), Iowa (6), Nevada (6), New Hampshire (4), Ohio (18) and Virginia (13). Eighty-five electoral votes are up for grabs in those seven states. Four states currently lean towards Obama: Michigan (16), New Mexico (5), Pennsylvania (20) and Wisconsin (10). Four states currently lean towards Romney: Arizona (11), Indiana (11), Missouri (10), and North Carolina (15). "Elections generally break one way late, meaning if you head into the final weeks with six toss-ups, four or five - and sometimes all - break with the winner. And so that could well happen this time. But if you look at the map today, this looks a lot more like Bush vs. Gore than it does Obama vs. McCain," says CNN Chief National Correspondent John King, anchor of "John King, USA." "It's no surprise that Florida and Ohio are toss-ups and potential 'deciders' - they traditionally play that role in presidential politics. What is fascinating is the number of plausible scenarios under which one or two of the 'smaller' battlegrounds could prove decisive," King added. "Iowa and New Hampshire, for example - what a delicious storyline if it all ends in the states where it began. Colorado and Virginia are relative newcomers to the 'swing state' role, and now critical to what amounts to a multi-dimensional chess game." Overall, 15 states right now are either toss-ups or lean towards either the president or Romney. "The 2012 presidential election likely will be decided by these 15 key states, worth a total of 183 electoral votes," CNN Political Research Director Robert Yoon says. "Determining what qualifies as a battleground state is not an exact science, but it's a rough mix of several criteria, including polling, past election results, the state's political, demographic, and economic trends; whether the campaigns and parties will devote resources to the state, such as ad spending, candidate visits, field offices, and staff, and the presence of other high-profile races on the ballot. CNN's Electoral Map will take into account all these factors, as well as its own reporting and analysis." There are factors that aren't as clear as what the map shows, King said. "President Obama starts with a mathematical edge and the psychological advantage of knowing he won each of the tossups last time. A different year, yes, but in most places he has veteran teams who know the states and so also know where there are weaknesses and erosion when compared to 2008. Governor Romney has less room for error - he has to win Ohio and most likely needs to win Florida, too."

#### Electoral college and swing state advantages

Cohen, 5/26 (Micah, Assistant @ FiveThirtyEight.com, The Guardian, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/may/27/michael-cohen-obamas-election-chances?newsfeed=true>)

That Obama is neck and neck with Romney is what should perhaps be most shocking. The track record of presidential incumbents battling high unemployment, sluggish economic growth and an electorate overwhelmingly convinced the country is on the wrong track is generally not good. In fact, there's a name for them: one-termers. If anything, Obama's ability to keep his head above water against Romney is an indication of his unusually high favourability ratings and Romney's improving but still lacklustre personal marks. But anyone who thought Obama was going to have an easy time of it was deluded. And with minefields on the way to November, such as a potential Supreme Court decision that could gut his main domestic accomplishment (in healthcare) and a financial crisis in Europe that could eventually infect the United States, the road ahead may not be so easy for the president. Still, none of this means it is time for liberals to start looking for rental properties in Vancouver or Toronto. In fact, the one place where Obama appears to have something of a political advantage is the only place that actually matters – the electoral college. For British readers not familiar with the electoral college, it is an invention of America's Founding Fathers that makes democracy in the United States messy, complicated and unfair. Rather than simply count up all the votes and give the presidency to the one who has the most, candidates must win states and their resulting number of electoral votes. (This, by the way, is why Al Gore, who won 500,000 more votes than George W Bush in 2000, ended up making documentaries… and the United States invaded Iraq.) In 2000, the key battleground state was Florida. But it wasn't the only showdown state: places such as Wisconsin (which Gore won by 5,000 votes); Iowa (where he won by 4,000) New Mexico (which he won by a mere 500) were incredibly competitive. Even in traditionally liberal states such as Minnesota and Oregon, Gore won by mere percentage points. In 2004, the map was remarkably similar – only New Hampshire, New Mexico and Iowa changed columns and while John Kerry won many of the same states that Gore won, he did so by similarly slim margins. But in 2008, things changed dramatically. States that were once highly competitive such as Wisconsin, Michigan and Nevada moved decisively into the Democratic column; states that were perennial swing states, such as Florida and Ohio, were won by Obama and even states such as Virginia and North Carolina that were barely on their radar screen in 2004 went Democratic. Part of this was a function of the Republicans' broken political brand, but it was also a function of Obama himself and his appeal to blacks, Hispanics and college-educated whites. This new electoral map was a reflection of the Democratic coalition he was seeking to create. Conversely, for Republicans, their electoral map remains disturbingly static. Since 2000, the number of solid Republican or Republican-leaning states is largely unchanged – and no state that even Kerry won in 2004, except perhaps New Hampshire, Wisconsin or Pennsylvania, is considered a Republican target this year. With the caveat that one can only read so much into polls taken five months before election day, Obama enjoys a small but noteworthy advantage in the Electoral College. According to a recent tally by the RealClearPolitics website, Obama has 227 solid or "leaning" electoral votes, while Romney has 170. Combined, that represents 39 of the 50 states (plus the District of Columbia). These are places where residents will for the most part hear more about the election than experience it first hand since candidates will likely not make more than a token appearance in them. Of the 11 other states, Obama is either leading or tied in nine of them. For Romney to become president, he needs to win the majority of these swing states, not just perennial targets such as Florida and Ohio, but also North Carolina and Virginia (places where Obama is leading or tied). Amazingly, if he were to win all four of these states he could still lose the election. In fact, for Romney, it's extremely difficult to construct a scenario where he wins the election while losing Florida. Barring an electoral free-fall for Obama, places that were highly competitive such as Wisconsin, Minnesota, New Mexico, Michigan and Nevada will likely not be seriously contested. In the end, what this means for election day is that more likely than not the battle will be waged on turf that strongly favours the president.

#### Narrow swing state lead

Burns, 5/24(Alexander, Politico.com, <http://www.politico.com/blogs/burns-haberman/2012/05/nbcmarist-polls-obama-leads-close-swingstate-races-124438.html>)

Obama leads close swing-state races New battleground polling out this morning from NBC News and Marist College: President Barack Obama holds a narrow advantage over presumptive Republican nominee Mitt Romney in three of the most pivotal presidential battleground states — Florida, Ohio and Virginia — according to new NBC-Marist polls. But in each of these states, Obama's share of the vote is below the 50 percent threshold usually considered safe haven for an incumbent president, and Romney has narrowed the margin in these three battlegrounds since earlier this year. In Florida and Virginia, Obama leads Romney by identical 4-point margins, 48 percent to 44 percent … In Ohio, the president is ahead by 6 points, 48 percent to 42 percent. As NBC points out, those are tighter margins than in the network's last round of swing-state polling. Democrats are also up in the Virginia, Florida and Ohio Senate races, though by small gaps that indicate all three are likely to be close in November.

#### Obama lead but its close

CSM, 6/10

Polls show the election close, but Obama still has the edge, according to recent voter surveys. Three recent polls (Gallup, Rasmussen, and Fox News) show Obama very near the critical 50 percent mark on public approval. Meanwhile, Congress' approval rate dwindles below 20 percent - useful to the Obama campaign if it intends (like Harry Truman in 1948) to run against a "do-nothing" Congress. Looking at a wide range of national and state polls, analyst Nate Silver of the FiveThirtyEight blog at the New York Times gives Obama an 80 percent chance of winning if the election were held today. "However, the outlook for the Nov. 6 election is much less certain, with Mr. Obama having winning odds of just over 60 percent," Mr. Silver writes. "The forecast currently calls for Mr. Obama to win roughly 290 electoral votes, but outcomes ranging everywhere from about 160 to 390 electoral votes are plausible, given the long lead time until the election and the amount of news that could occur between now and then." Any major gaffes between now and Election Day - by either Obama or Romney - could tip the results.

#### Obama win now – Virginia lead

Conroy, 6/13(Scott, Political Reporter @ RealClearPolitics, http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2012/06/13/northern\_virginia\_edge\_could\_be\_pivotal\_for\_obama\_114458.html)

Northern Virginia Edge Could Be Pivotal for Obama SPRINGFIELD, Va. -- For President Obama's organizational machine in Virginia, Tuesday's jam-packed statewide schedule was typical. There was a voter registration drive outside a Bonnie Raitt concert in Charlottesville, an afternoon phone bank at the Hopewell library just south of Richmond, and a volunteer recruitment meeting at a private home in this distant suburb of Washington, D.C. All told, the Obama campaign listed on its website 62 separate events throughout the Commonwealth that day. Recent weeks have seen regular openings of new Obama field offices across Virginia (there are now 15), and the dozens of paid staffers working out of the campaign headquarters in Richmond and elsewhere around the state have become increasingly visible. In what both sides regard as one of the election’s three or four most critical swing states, Obama has opened up a slim yet significant three-point lead in the latest RCP average of Virginia polls. Though he shows strength in other regions of the state, the president largely has the expansive D.C. suburbs to thank for that advantage.

## \*\*Link\*\*

### 2NC Highways Links

#### Highway/Surface Transportation Funding Uniquely unpopular – public has lost all confidence

A.G.C. ‘11

(“THE CASE FOR INFRASTRUCTURE & REFORM: Why and How the Federal Government Should Continue to Fund Vital Infrastructure in the New Age of Public Austerity” – THE ASSOCIATED GENERAL CONTRACTORS OF AMERICA – AGC’s Case for Infrastructure & Reform in based in large part on comments from leaders, including those who participated in a March 2, 2011 panel discussion hosted by the association and The Weekly Standard, including Reason Foundation’s Robert Poole, Virginia Secretary of Transportation Sean Connaughton, Oklahoma Congressman James Lankford and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce’s Bruce Josten. May 19th – http://www.agc.org/galleries/news/Case-for-Infrastructure-Reform.pdf)

Just because our federal infrastructure investments have delivered tremendous national benefits, that doesn’t mean many current federal infrastructure programs aren’t in need of a change. On the contrary, there is little doubt that our current federal approach to investing in infrastructure is flawed. Indeed, many of those flaws undermine and devalue federal infrastructure investments, helping reinforce public skepticism in the government’s ability to efficiently and effectively meet basic needs. Nowhere are those flaws more glaringly apparent than with our current approach to surface transportation funding. The once-focused federal program that was the envy of the world for building the Interstate Highway System has fallen out of favor with the public and many policy analysts. Yet since the completion of the original Interstate Highway System, there has been no clear role or purpose for the federal transportation program. As a result, politicians have used an ever-greater share of Highway Trust Fund revenue to pay for programs that have little or nothing to do with transportation priorities, or even with transportation at all in some cases. Depending on who is counting, today there are over 100 different federal programs funded by the Highway Trust Fund, including programs to protect historic covered bridges, encourage students to walk to school and to build local bike lanes. While these may all be worthwhile, it is hard to understand why any of those initiatives serve a national objective and should be funded from a Trust Fund financed primarily by highway users that was intended to pay for construction and maintenance of a national highway system. As a result of these continued diversions of Highway Trust Fund revenue, today only about 68 percent of Trust Fund dollars goes to construction and maintenance of highways. This is problematic for many reasons. First, these diversions from the primary purpose of the Trust Fund have turned the gas tax and its other funding sources from user fees into taxes. A user fee is something people pay to use a system, with the understanding that those fees will be reinvested into the system. A tax is something you pay so the government has the revenue needed to fund a host of programs. For much of its existence, the gas tax and other highway user fees were a way for drivers to pay for maintenance and upkeep of the highway system. Today it is a way for them to pay some money into the highway system and a lot of money into programs that do little or nothing to benefit them or the highways they use. As a result of these diversions, the size of the federal surface transportation program continues to grow at rates far greater than increases in highway maintenance and expansion. So even as motorists read about hundreds of billions of dollars going into the Highway Trust Fund, they see comparatively little new capacity or maintenance work underway. Americans are savvy consumers. They know when they are getting a good deal, and they know when they aren’t. And what used to be a good deal – paying a modest gas tax to finance access to the world’s most efficient highway system – is now a bad deal – paying a modest gas tax to finance, among other things, fitness and recreational facilities, covered bridges and other unrelated programs that a small number of politicians favor. It is no coincidence that the gas tax now rates among the least popular of all forms of revenue collection in the U.S.

### 2NC Wasteful spending link wall

#### Transportation funding is distinct from other wasteful spending – triggers unique public backlash unique –

#### a) key symbolism

Pittsburgh Post Gazette, 9 (5/18)

"I think that transparency is a good thing. Some of the biggest abuses in the process [in the past] were transportation projects," said Mr. Altmire, D-McCandless, citing the infamous "Bridge to Nowhere," a $223 million earmark in the last highway bill for a project in Alaska that came to symbolize wasteful pork barrel spending.

#### b) most visible earmarking

Natter, ‘8(Ari, Columnist @ Bloomberg news, Ranking Member Transportation Committee, Pacific Shipper, 11/3, lexis)

Perhaps more than any national campaign in recent history, the major candidates have staked out very clear and decidedly different stances on transportation infrastructure investment. McCain has made criticism of earmarks something of a crusade in his campaign, and says he wants to send more decisions on spending priorities to the states. "I believe that a higher share of the taxes collected at the gas pump should go back to the state where those taxes were paid," the Arizona Republican told the American Automobile Association in an interview with AAA newsletter, "and I've co-sponsored legislation that would allow states to keep almost all of their gas tax revenues for their own transportation projects without interference from Washington." "We've got a problem," Mortimer Downey, a former deputy secretary of transportation in the Clinton administration and an adviser to the Obama campaign, told a public forum in Washington last week on transportation policy. "Infrastructure needs more investment. It is important, it is crumbling, and other countries are doing more than we are. We've got national issues we need to deal with, and transportation is the critical tool for doing that." He said the Obama camp has "a vision" for the next highway bill. "It should be a much better bill than the last couple. It shouldn't have so many earmarks in it," Downey said. At the same forum, Douglas Holtz-Eakin, chief economic adviser to the McCain campaign, said the spending priorities are critical. "There is no area where earmarking has been more visible than in highway bills. We have to get more bang for the buck." James Burnley, a former DOT secretary under two Republican presidents who also has advised the McCain campaign, said in an interview that if McCain is elected, "You will have two additional issues; one, he has said he is against increasing any taxes; second, he is deadly serious when he says he is not going to accept earmarks, so I think you would have the ultimate historic constitutional clash about the earmarking issue." Downey notes the earmark approach "is going to be a very tough diet to get off of," and comments from transportation backers in Congress suggest just how strong the opposition to a McCain plan would be. "If John McCain wants to say earmarks to build bridges on the I-5 so trucks don't have to detour across the Cascade Mountains are pork, well then he's an idiot," Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Ore., said at an American Road and Transportation Builders Association conference in September. "If John McCain is elected, we are going to have a diminutive surface transportation bill," DeFazio said last month. "McCain's attitude on infrastructure is like that of the public's, that it's just a bunch of boondoggle pork barrel bridges to nowhere," said Robert Dunphy, a senior resident fellow at the Urban Land Institute.

#### thats electoral suicide – no perception of economic benefit and fiscal discipline is top issue for key independent voters

Schoen, 10

Douglas, Schoen, who served as a pollster for President Bill Clinton, is author of "Declaring Independence: The Beginning of the End of the Two-Party System.", NY Daily News, 7/11, http://articles.nydailynews.com/2010-07-11/news/29438716\_1\_fiscal-discipline-swing-voters-president-obama

What Bam can learn from Bill: President Clinton's ex pollster tells Obama how to win independents The news for President Obama is bad. Very bad. This week's Gallup tracking poll indicates that public support for Obama has fallen to a record low - with his job approval rating dropping to 45% among all voters and 38% among Independents. With ratings this low, the President and his party will almost certainly be unable to avoid devastating losses in the fall midterm elections. The only hope is a fundamental midcourse correction. What then should the President do? The independent swing voters who hold the fate of the Democratic Party in their hands are looking for candidates and parties that champion fiscal discipline, limited government, deficit reduction and a free market, pro-growth agenda. They respect leadership that bucks the Washington establishment and the special interests. Above all else, these swing voters will not tolerate any lack of focus on the most pressing economic concerns: reigniting the economy and creating jobs while simultaneously slashing the deficit and exhibiting fiscal discipline. Some say these are mutually exclusive objectives. They are not. I should know. When I first met with former President Bill Clinton privately in late 1994, jobs and the deficit were major concerns. In the aftermath of that year's devastating mid-term elections when the Republicans gained control of Congress for the first time since 1954, I emphasized that unless Clinton simultaneously stressed fiscal discipline and economic growth, he simply could not be reelected in 1996. By adopting a bold new agenda that included a balanced budget, frank acknowledgment of the limits of government, welfare reform, as well as the protection of key social programs, we were able to win a decisive victory over former Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole in 1996. Without that fundamental repositioning, Clinton would almost certainly have lost. While the circumstances are different, the electorate now wants the same things that it wanted back then. The American people, exhausted and demoralized by a sluggish economy, recognize that the stimulus package, as currently crafted and implemented, has at best produced short-term results through subsidization of the public sector. And they are increasingly uneasy about rising deficits, which remain the independent voter's touchstone. The left-wing economists urging Obama to ignore the latter concern and pour more taxpayer money into the economy now, regardless of the impact on the deficits, are prescribing electoral suicide.

### Ext – Wasteful Spending Link

#### Triggers election backlash - Public opposition growing and GOP base hates it

Reinhardt, 12

William, Founder Public Works Financing, Engineering News Record, 2/27, lexis

Peter Ruane, CEO of the American Road and Transportation Builders Association, calls Washington a «fact-free zone.» The firewall that for 56 years has protected the federal Highway Trust Fund from being used for deficit reduction is in grave danger of being breached. «We're going to be fighting for every penny,» he says. The battle lines will be drawn next November. If the «no compromise» wing of the Republican Party gains ground, then the «starve the beast» option will be on the table, and nothing is sacred. Certainly not the Highway Trust Fund, which conservative activist Grover Norquist views as a deep barrel of pork. If not direct federal investment, then what about tax credits and other leveraging tools? Advocates for these programs have been pulling their hair out for years over how tax credits are scored for infrastructure programs. There is no acknowledgement of the federal revenue upside created by public investment in mobility, safe water, etc. That's not going to change easily because those rules are embedded in the federal budget bureaucracy. Because so much is political, the members of the elite infrastructure technocracy in the U.S. too often are forced to bow to the politicians who dispense the subsidies. Compliance with unending regulations is seen as a cost of doing business, but taxpayers, not contractors, pay full price. U.S. construction companies are carrying a much heavier regulatory burden under the Obama administration than ever before. EPA is an untethered driver of regulations. Owners, public and private, are as likely to find themselves in court as under construction. Enforcement actions under federal set-aside programs are up by 10 times in the past three years, and U.S. Dept. of Labor audits are up by 25 times. «There is a huge new regulatory component to our work and more political impact,» says Bruce Grewcock, CEO of Kiewit Corp., whose managers generate 50 million man-hours of craft labor a year. «The Obama administration is listening to a different audience,» he says. Powerful advocates for smaller government charge that the federal public-works budget is so skewed toward social goals and political insiders that any increase in taxes or user fees should be opposed as wasteful. They have a large and growing audience of believers because they are partly correct. Consider this from the director of a major U.S. infrastructure investment fund: «Every big transportation project in America is political now. It has very little to do with delivering infrastructure projects when there's big money involved.» He continues, «Lobbyists have found out that the money is at the project level, not in Washington. They add a political tone to everything, and they've convinced local governments that they need political influence to get anything done.» Too little gets built because decisions are not made based on merit. Ever-growing competition for scarce public investment capital is embedded in our social contract. In a study last year, venture capitalist Mary Meeker noted that, since 1965, the GNP grew by 2.7 times and entitlements grew by 11 times. Frighteningly, Meeker identified an 82% correlation between rising entitlement spending and falling personal savings rates. Posterity is rarely mentioned these days. So, we are at a crossroads. No amount of «needs» surveys will spur voters or politicians to support a major commitment to meet future demands for transportation, water, public buildings and other critical infrastructure services. The best hope is for public and private planners, designers, builders and operators of these facilities to convince a skeptical public that it is getting the services it pays for at a fair price and without political favoritism. Build local support for good projects. A good place to start is for the infrastructure technocracy to take back its industry from the political operatives who promise subsidy but deliver mainly invoices. ?

#### That spurs massive fiscal backlash - it’s a hot button election issue

Moore, 10(Robert, Columnist @ Gannett News, Gannett News, 7/14)

Hundreds of millions of dollars in unspent transportation earmarks would be returned to the federal treasury under a bill introduced Wednesday. The bill drew praise from two government waste watchdog groups, which cited it as an example of long-overdue reform. "Long-term economic growth and recovery can't happen unless we cut wasteful government spending and tackle our exploding deficit," said the bill's sponsor, Rep. Betsy Markey, D-Colo. "These old earmarks are a waste of taxpayer money and cutting them just makes sense." The unexpended earmarks in some cases go back more than two decades and range in amounts from 2 cents to $26.8 million. Earmarks are specific directives from Congress on how an appropriation should be spent. Current law allows the Transportation Department to allocate some unspent transportation earmarks to other projects. Markey's bill would require that all unspent money be returned to the treasury and used to reduce the national debt, now at about $13.2 trillion. Markey's office included a list of projects totaling $713.2 million that could be affected. If all that money were returned to the treasury, it would reduce the debt by about five-thousandths of a percent. "This is good stuff. This is the kind of thing we like to see from members of Congress, that they're taking this seriously," said David Williams, vice president of policy for Citizens Against Government Waste. Erich Zimmerman, a senior policy analyst for Taxpayers for Common Sense, sounded a similar note. "Cutting more than $700 million in unneeded and unnecessary transportation earmarks is as good a place as any to start," he said. "This should serve as a cautionary tale as Congress begins to cobble together the next highway bill and ensure that we don't return to the wasteful days of the past. Too often, an earmark is a tiny down payment on a project that a state cannot afford and has not prioritized," Zimmerman said. Williams said lawmakers have known for years about the unspent transportation earmarks but haven't done anything about it. "I suspect that we're in such a political climate where government spending, especially during an election year, is such a hot-button issue, and everybody wants to be seen as a fiscal conservative," he said.

#### 2010 election proves

Crawley, 10(John, Journalist @ Reuters, 11/10, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/11/08/us-infrastructure-congress-idUSTRE6A749F20101108>)

John Mica, who is expected to chair the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, told Reuters in a post-election interview that he would conduct a close review of how money was spent from the 2009 economic stimulus package approved by the Democratic-controlled Congress. He also plans to reevaluate grant programs that bypassed congressional review. The new look at spending comes after voters last week questioned Obama infrastructure priorities in electing Republican governors who campaigned against what they considered unworkable transportation spending. To start, Mica will focus on more than $10 billion in high-speed rail awards and a $1.5 billion transportation construction financing under the so-called TIGER grant program in which funds were sent directly to states on the merit of proposed projects. "We had unelected officials sitting behind closed doors making decisions without any hearings or without any elected officials being consulted. There was no rational explanation," Mica said. "I'm going to have a full review of that." TIGER grants have been oversubscribed and state capitals want them extended, but there is no commitment from Congress to do that. Some of the money could come back to the federal government, according to Mica, who also said that he would look at how to expedite funding in other cases. Mica's scrutiny of high-speed rail projects and other construction spending is shared by some critical Republicans at the state level. Republican gubernatorial candidates who won their races in Ohio, Florida and Wisconsin last week campaigned against high speed rail development, an Obama transportation priority.

### Ext – Public Opposes

#### Transportation spending unpopular – bipartisan public opposition and support decreasing

Kull, ‘5(Stephen, Principal Investigator, Program on International Policy Attitudes, 3/5, http://www.pipa.org/OnlineReports/DefenseSpending/FedBudget\_Mar05/FedBudget\_Mar05\_rpt.pdf)

When presented most of the major items in the discretionary federal budget and given the opportunity to modify it, Americans make some dramatic changes. The largest cut by far is to defense spending, which is reduced by nearly one-third, followed by spending on Iraq and Afghanistan, transportation and justice. The largest increases are to reductions in the deficit, various forms of social spending and spending on the environment. Nearly all respondents were able to complete the exercise. And overall, there were many changes made to the proposed budget. The budget items that were most deeply cut were defense spending, the Iraq supplemental, transportation, and federal administration of justice. The budget items that were increased the most were allocations to reduce the budget deficit and spending on education, conserving and developing renewable energy, job training and employment, and medical research. A more detailed analysis follows. There were also domestic spending items that majorities chose to reduce. Transportation was cut $12.6 billion, from $69.4 billion to $56.8 billion (an 18% cut), with 58% making cuts. The federal administration of justice went from $41.1 billion to $32.4 billion (a 21% cut), with 56% making cuts. Space science and research was reduced slightly from $24.7 billion to $23.5 billion (5%), with 53% making cuts. Partisan Variations For 16 out of 18 budget areas, the average changes that were made by Republicans and Democrats went in the same direction relative to the Administration’s proposed budget. There were only slight differences in their allocations for seven of the items: energy and renewable resources, homeland security, transportation, veterans’ benefits, space and science research, medical research, and the federal administration of justice. The remaining items, though, do show noteworthy trends. The category of job training and employmentrelated services has gotten increasingly sharp average increases over the last decade—96% in 1996, 128% in 2000, and a startling 263% in 2005. Perhaps this expresses a growing concern about the impact of globalization and international trade on the capacity of the US work force to adapt and retain its standard of living. For reasons that are unclear, willingness to fund the federal administration of justice has steadily dropped, shifting from an average 10% increase in 1996, to a 12% cut in 2000, to a 21% cut in the 2005 exercise. Willingness to spend on transportation relative to other needs has shown a long-term decline. In 1996 it was increased 40% on average; in 2000, it was kept nearly flat (2% increase); and in 2005, it was cut by 18%.

#### Public opposes federal spending on transportation

Kull, ‘5(Stephen, Principal Investigator, Program on International Policy Attitudes, 3/5, <http://www.pipa.org/OnlineReports/DefenseSpending/FedBudget_Mar05/FedBudget_Mar05_pr.pdf>

A new poll finds that the American public would significantly alter the Bush administration’s recently proposed federal budget. Presented a breakdown of the major areas of the proposed discretionary budget and given the opportunity to redistribute it, respondents made major changes. The most dramatic changes were deep cuts in defense spending, a significant reallocation toward deficit reduction, and increases in spending on education, job training, reducing reliance on oil, and veterans. These changes were favored by both Republicans and Democrats, though the changes were generally greater for Democrats. Sixty-one percent of respondents redirected some funds to reducing the budget deficit, with the mean respondent reallocating $36 billion (Democrats $39.4 billion, Republicans $29.6 billion), though they were not told anything about the size of the deficit. Defense spending received the deepest cut, being cut on average 31%—equivalent to $133.8 billion—with 65% of respondents cutting. The second largest area to be cut was the supplemental for Iraq and Afghanistan, which suffered an average cut of $29.6 billion or 35%, with two out of three respondents cutting. Also cut were transportation (cut $12.6 billion or 18%), federal administration of justice ($8.7 billion or 21%), and space research and science ($1.2 billion or 5%). Majorities of 53-58% of respondents favored cuts in each of these cases.

#### Voters perceive as wasteful spending and fuels deficit concerns

Rockefeller Foundation, 11(Survey Methodology: From January 29 to February 6, 2011, Hart Research (D) and Public Opinion Strategies (R) conducted a national survey of voters on behalf of the Rockefeller

Foundation. <http://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/uploads/files/80e28432-0790-4d42-91ec-afb6d11febee.pdf>)

American voters see room for improvement in how government spends money on infrastructure: With a high federal deficit, Americans overwhelmingly say that that current government spending on building and maintaining transportation infrastructure is inefficient and unwise – 64% overall and 72% of Republicans. Americans support a host of reforms aimed at making spending more efficient while still producing results. For instance, 90% support allowing local regions to have some input on how transportation dollars are used in their area.

### 2NC Turn Shield - Funding

#### Funding collapses theoretical support – becomes key election issue regardless of how its paid for

Berstein Research, 12 (Sanford C. Bernstein is widely recognized as Wall Street’s premier sell-side research firm. Our research is sought out by leading investment managers around the world, and we are annually ranked at the very top of acknowledged arbiters. In independent surveys of major institutional clients, Bernstein's research is ranked #1 for overall quality, industry knowledge, most trusted, best detailed financial analysis, major company studies, most useful valuation frameworks, best original research, and most willing to challenge management. In Institutional Investor’s 2010 annual client survey, the leading survey by which analysts in our industry are evaluated, 100% of our U.S. Analysts were recognized as among the best in their respective fields -- more than any other firm on Wall Street, 2/3, <http://www.fraternalalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Washington-Research-2012-Preview-Transportation-Funding.pdf>)

Expected passage of a long-term aviation financing bill next week gives ground transportation advocates

cause for hope, but that's likely a red-herring. The politics surrounding how to pay for infrastructure

financing simply remain too hot to handle in an election year. President Obama has run away from any

discussion of increasing the 18.4 cents per gallon federal gasoline tax, while Republicans won't support a

tax increase of any kind to pay for new spending, even if some groups are willing to pay additional taxes.

Those views are generally consistent with a voting public that wants to spend more on transportation

infrastructure – but does not want to foot the bill out of their own wallets.

#### Forces gas Tax Hikes – causes massive public backlash on key issue

Grant, 12(David, Staff Writer, CSM, Christian Science Monitor, 5/8, <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Politics/2012/0508/Transportation-bill-not-yet-passed-already-blasted-by-critics>)

The problem is that paying for American infrastructure more fully means raising taxes on someone. One solution, pegging the gas tax to inflation – or raising it outright – would risk further angering Americans already angry about gas prices. A recent Washington Post/ABC News poll showed 65 percent of Americans disapprove of how President Obama has handled gasoline prices, compared with 26 percent who approve.

### 2NC Turn Shield – Credit/Blame trick

#### Obama gets blame for “wasteful spending” but doesn’t get credit for local economic gains in key swing states– link only one way

Skelley, 12

Geoffrey Skelley, Political Analyst, U.Va. Center for Politics, 5/23, <http://www.centerforpolitics.org/crystalball/articles/unemployment-update-who-gets-the-credit/>

So far, the Obama campaign has run ads promoting the president’s handling of the economy, such as spots that tout the auto industry bailout and mention increased job growth. But are voters buying the pitch and giving Obama credit? That’s up for debate, especially with Republican governors in key swing states, such as Virginia and Ohio, competing with the president for the public’s applause. In Virginia, in what can mainly be described as a campaign to improve his chances of being Romney’s running mate, Gov. Bob McDonnell’s (R) Opportunity Virginia PAC has run an ad highlighting Virginia’s economic improvement during McDonnell’s tenure. The spot notes that Virginia has its lowest unemployment rate in three years and the lowest in the Southeast. As our chart shows, Virginia’s 5.6% figure is at least 1% better than any other Southern state. Federal spending, particularly defense expenditures, is a big reason why, of course — a point often left unmade in a state whose politicians regularly launch broadsides against “wasteful spending by Washington.” Meanwhile, Ohio and much of the Rust Belt have seen stirrings of economic improvement. But the president has not necessarily received a significant bump from this news. A recent Quinnipiac poll found that Ohioans who think the Buckeye State’s economy has improved give Gov. John Kasich (R) credit for the change by a 68% to 22% margin over President Obama. Voters who think the economy is worse also blame the sitting governor more than the president, 49% to 27%. Considering Ohio’s unemployment rate has gone from 8.8% in April 2011 to 7.4% last month, both incumbents can brag about the change. But it is far more important for Obama, who is on the ballot this November while Kasich isn’t up for reelection until 2014. Strategically, the Obama campaign wants to convince voters that the economy is in fact improving. Tactically, this has meant running ads in key swing states that generally promote Obama’s economic stewardship. Yet the campaign might be losing an opportunity if it doesn’t take greater ownership of positive state-specific numbers. Obama’s generic television ads might do more than simply target all the swing states as a bloc. Instead, he could focus on each state separately. If a state’s unemployment rate has improved over the past year, then the president’s campaign could run general election ads that trumpet the success. Ohio and especially Virginia are ideal for such advertising. In politics, a president gets the blame for anything bad that happens on his watch. Conversely, he gets the credit for anything good that unfolds during his term — that is, if he doesn’t let others take the credit from him. To this point, President Obama has failed to take advantage of the improved jobs numbers in some competitive states with unemployment lower than the national average. In this close election, Obama has little margin for error.

### 2NC Link O/W Turn

#### Its not just the GOP base – fiscal discipline concerns massively outweigh transportation for dem and independent voters

Pew, 11(Pew Research Center, 1/20, http://www.people-press.org/2011/01/20/about-the-surveys/)

Reducing the budget deficit, or national debt, rated as a top policy priority during the 1990s, declined in importance in the early part of this decade, and has made a comeback in recent years. In January 2002, four months after the 9/11 attacks, just 35% said that reducing the budget deficit should be a top policy priority for President Bush and Congress. By the beginning of Bush’s second term, in January 2005, 56% said that reducing the budget deficit should be a top priority. In January 2009, shortly before Obama took office, 53% rated the deficit as a top priority. That increased to 60% last year and 64% in the new survey. Currently, about as many rate the deficit as a top priority as did so in December 1994 (65%), at the end of Bill Clinton’s second year in office. Deficit an Out-of-Power Concern? Typically, members of the party that does not hold the White House view reducing the deficit as a more important priority than do members of the president’s party. This pattern was particularly evident during the Bush administration. From 2002 to 2008, substantially more Democrats than Republicans rated reducing the budget deficit as a top priority. On several occasions during the Clinton administration, more Republicans than Democrats said that reducing the deficit – or paying off the national debt — was a top priority. In the new survey, 68% of Republicans and 61% of Democrats see reducing the budget deficit as a top policy priority (this difference is not statistically significant). While deficit reduction ranks fifth among Republicans, it is the 9th-ranking priority for Democrats. Crime Declines as Public Priority With declining crime rates, the proportion saying that reducing crime should be a top national priority has fallen dramatically. The percentage rating crime as a major priority fell nearly 30 points – from 76% to 47%– between 2001 and 2003. But these percentages subsequently increased – to 53% in 2004 and 2005, and 62% in 2006 and 2007. Since January 2007, the proportion saying that crime should be a top priority for the president and Congress has fallen by 18 points to 44%. Compared with a decade ago, there has been an across-the-board decline in the percentage viewing crime as a major priority. However, as was the case in 2001, poor people and less-educated people are far more likely to rate crime as a top policy priority than are better educated and more affluent people. More than half of those with no more than a high school education (58%) and those with family incomes of less than $30,000 (54%) say that reducing crime should be a top priority. That compares with just 27% of college graduates and an identical percentage of those with family incomes of $75,000 or more. Notably, these gaps were about as wide in 2001, when overall concern over crime was much greater. Persistent Partisan Differences over Priorities Roughly four-in-ten Democrats (41%) say that dealing with global warming should be a top priority for the president and Congress, compared with 29% of independents and just 10% of Republicans. The wide partisan gap over the importance of dealing with global warming is not new – it was approximately as large in 2010 and 2009. Democrats also are far more likely to view reducing health care costs (28-point partisan gap), dealing with the problems of the poor (26 points), protecting the environment (24 points), and improving the educational system (23 points) as top priorities than are Republicans. These differences also are in line with previous policy priority surveys. Improving the nation’s roads, bridges, and transportation does not rank as a particularly high priority for Democrats, Republicans or independents. Still, Democrats are more likely to see this as important (41% top priority vs. 30% of independents, 26% of Republicans. This is the case for dealing with obesity as well.

## \*\*Internals\*\*

### Economy Key

#### Only economic issues will matter

Cook, 12(Charlie, Cook Political Report, National Journal, 5/14, http://cookpolitical.com/node/12496)

It’s unlikely that same-sex marriage is going to push the economy out of the dominant role in this election. Indeed, short of a major international incident, it is unlikely that any other issue will displace the economic ones. But gay marriage was the most discussed issue last week. The most remarkable thing was not President Obama’s announcement that he would embrace same-sex marriage, even if it wasn’t exactly premeditated. Instead, it was a memo from a very prominent and well-respected Republican pollster suggesting that his party should treat the issue with considerably more caution than it has in the past.

#### Economic Issues key and even small perception of changes create big swing

Cook, 12

(Charlie, Cook Political Report, National Journal, 4/26, <http://cookpolitical.com/node/12429>)

Regular readers of this column know that in analyzing the 2012 presidential race, I have been preoccupied—some would say obsessed—with the state and direction of the U.S. economy. Presidential elections have many moving parts and can turn on many things, but rarely is a single factor more important than the economy when an incumbent is up for reelection. The latest NBC News/Wall Street Journal poll, conducted among 1,000 adults from April 13-17, supports that view. Overall, 49 percent said they approve of the job that President Obama is doing, and 46 percent said they disapprove. The poll, conducted by Democrat Peter Hart and Republican Bill McInturff, pegs Obama’s approval rating just 1 point higher than the current averages by RealClearPolitics and Huffpost’s Pollster.com, as well as the Gallup tracking average, for the week of April 16-22. Not much disparity there. Obama’s lead in the horse race with Mitt Romney was 6 points in the NBC/WSJ poll, 49 percent to 43 percent. His advantage was a little less in some of the other surveys. RealClearPolitics pegged Obama’s lead at 3.7 points; Pollster reported 2.7 points. For April 18-23, the Gallup tracking poll had the president up by 7 points, 49 percent to 42 percent. If you focus on the economy, though, the situation looks more complicated. Obama’s NBC/WSJ job rating on handling the economy is 45 percent approval and 57 percent disapproval. Those numbers are less favorable than his overall approval rating. When respondents were asked whether they thought Obama’s policies had helped or hurt economic conditions, or had made no difference at all, 36 percent said they had helped, 30 percent said they made no difference, and 33 percent said they had hurt. Obviously, you can push the “made no difference” group in either direction. But the 63 percent who said that Obama’s policies either made no difference or hurt economic conditions do not bode well for the president. When asked whether they thought the economy would get better, get worse, or stay about the same over the next 12 months, 38 percent said that it would get better, 42 percent said it would stay the same, and 19 percent predicted that things would get worse. With 61 percent believing that the economic picture will either get worse or stay the same, the public clearly remains very nervous about the economy—again, not good news for the president. Respondents were given a choice of 13 positive attributes and asked whether each better describes Obama or Romney; the good news for the president is that the respondents associated 10 attributes more with him than with his challenger. They are, in descending order of advantage: “being easygoing and likable”; “caring about average people”; “being compassionate enough to understand average people”; “dealing with issues of concern to women”; “looking out for the middle class”; “being knowledgeable and experienced enough to be president”; “being consistent and standing up for his beliefs”; “sharing your positions on the issues”; and “being honest and straightforward.” Obama also had a narrow advantage, within the margin of error, on “setting the proper moral tone for the country.” Taken together, the results suggest that Obama’s reelection should be a slam dunk, right? Not necessarily. Although Romney had the advantage on only two attributes, they were “having good ideas for how to improve the economy” (by 6 points) and “changing the business as usual in Washington” (by 7 points). Those sound a lot like central tenets of Obama’s campaign four years ago. So Obama had the advantage on most of the attributes, but Romney led on two of the most important ones. The results aren’t convincing enough to give the advantage to either Romney or Obama. All of these findings reinforce the view that the economy will be a very important factor in the election, regardless of whether it improves or just bumps along. Obama badly needs the country’s economic performance over the next six months to validate his policies and decisions. If the overall economy improves, job creation increases, and consumer confidence goes up, those markers will serve as validation. If the economy is bouncing along, with growth at a subdued level and unemployment still at or above 8 percent—not the 9 percent of a year ago, but hardly in the 7.2-to-7.4 percent range that boosted President Reagan’s 1984 reelection fortunes after the 1982 recession—the public will be in no mood to validate Obama’s policies and decisions. Gallup’s most recent polling suggests that Obama has received a bit of a boost from the decline in gasoline prices; his approval rating bumped up to 50 percent in three consecutive days of Gallup’s three-day moving averages. The bump shows just how volatile public attitudes are, particularly when important economic issues are involved. That volatility isn’t likely to change between now and Election Day. The economy will determine this election.

#### Economy and jobs are the key issue

**Pew, 12** (Pew Research Center, 1/23, <http://www.people-press.org/2012/01/23/public-priorities-deficit-rising-terrorism-slipping/>)

With the nation’s economy still struggling and unemployment still high, economic concerns continue to top the public’s policy agenda for President Obama and Congress. More than eight-in-ten cite strengthening the economy (86%) and improving the job situation (82%) as top priorities. These numbers have fluctuated only slightly since the start of 2009.

### Fiscal Discipline key – general

#### Fiscal discipline is key issue for voters and gop base – fastest growing public priority

**Pew, 12** (Pew Research Center, 1/23, <http://www.people-press.org/2012/01/23/public-priorities-deficit-rising-terrorism-slipping/>)

The new poll finds that the federal budget deficit stands out as the fastest growing policy priority for Americans, largely because of growing Republican concerns about the issue. In the national survey, conducted Jan. 11-16 among 1,502 adults, 69% rate reducing the budget deficit as a top priority – the most in any of the Pew Research Center’s annual policy priority updates going back to 1994. The number of Republicans rating the budget deficit as a top priority has spiked to 84% from 68% a year ago and just 42% five years ago. Meanwhile Republicans are placing far less emphasis on terrorism, which was their top priority in every year between 2002 and 2008. Today 72% rate it as a top priority, down from 83% a year ago and 93% five years ago. By contrast, the emphasis Democrats and independents give to terrorism and the budget deficit has changed far less.

#### Spending is key issue – top voter priority

**Pew, 12** (Pew Research Center, 1/23, <http://www.people-press.org/2012/01/23/public-priorities-deficit-rising-terrorism-slipping/>)

Concern about the nation’s budget deficit, on the other hand, has been increasing in recent years. Currently, 69% say reducing the deficit is a top priority. In January 2009, only about half (53%) rated this as a top priority. The proportion citing the deficit as a top priority is now on par with the number that said this in December 1994 (65%), during Bill Clinton’s second year in office. Reducing the deficit or paying off the national debt became less of a priority in the late 1990s as the nation – and the federal government – benefited from a strong economy. Concern was also modest in the early years of the Bush administration, especially in the immediate aftermath of the Sept. 11 attacks. But concern about deficits has increased steadily since 2009.

### Fiscal Discipline key – GOP Base

#### It’s the vital issue for GOP base -

**Pew, 12** (Pew Research Center, 1/23, <http://www.people-press.org/2012/01/23/public-priorities-deficit-rising-terrorism-slipping/>)

A Spike in GOP Deficit Concerns More than eight-in-ten Republicans (84%) say reducing the federal budget deficit is a top priority, up 16 points since last January and the highest percentage in a Pew Research Center survey. During the Bush administration, at most only about half of Republicans viewed reducing the budget deficit as a top policy priority. In January 2009, shortly before George W. Bush left office, 51% of Republicans rated reducing the deficit as a top priority. That percentage jumped 17 points (to 68%) by January 2011 and has increased by about the same amount (16 points) in the last year alone.

#### Unifies conservatives and mobilizes GOP base

**Walsh, 12**

Kenneth, Chief White House Correspondent, US News and World Report, USNews.com, 5/30, lexis

2. Unify conservatives. GOP strategists say Romney still has not shown some on the right that he is truly one of them. Many see him as a "moderate from Massachusetts," as his GOP rivals labeled him during the primaries based on his record as governor of the Democrat-leaning state of Massachusetts. Political scientist Bill Galston of the Brookings Institution, says one theme that would unify conservatives and not alienate independents is a blunt and often-repeated pledge to make government smaller, more efficient, and attuned to everyday people. This is something, ironically, that President Bill Clinton did when he declared that the era of "big government" was over. It went over very well. Galston is a former senior White House adviser to Clinton.

### Fiscal Discipline key – independents

#### Our link outweighs for swing voters - Fiscal discipline is top issue for independent swing voters and they don’t trust federal investments so there’s no perception of benefit

NSOR, 10 (North Star Opinion Research, Resurgent Republic, Dr. Whit Ayres, president of North Star Opinion Research, co-founded Resurgent Republic with former RNC Chair Ed Gillespie and Impacto Group CEO Leslie Sanchez. North Star partners with Resurgent Republic to conduct surveys and focus groups on popular issues and trends that help shape public debate over the proper role of government, 7/7, <http://www.resurgentrepublic.com/summaries/independents-support-conservative-policies-in-health-care-energy-and-fiscal-issues>)

With Independent voters siding overwhelmingly with Republican voters again in our latest survey, conservative and market-oriented policies now consistently trump the liberal and government-oriented policies pursued by President Obama and the Democrats in Congress. In three key policy areas – health care, energy, and fiscal issues – conservative policies are more popular than liberal ones. Voters agree that offshore drilling should continue by a 56 to 37 percent margin, including a 56 to 36 percent margin among Independents and a 71 to 24 percent margin among Republicans. (Democrats oppose any new offshore wells by a 50 to 44 percent margin). This survey also finds that predictions of increased support for the health care bill once voters learned more about it have proved inaccurate. Voters support an argument urging repeal of the new health care reform law by a 53 to 41 percent margin, even when juxtaposed against a strong populist message that “we should stand up to the insurance companies, not give in to them.” Independents agree that the health care law should be repealed by a 52 to 39 percent margin, compared to a 77 to 21 percent margin among Republicans. Democrats oppose repealing the law by a 61 to 33 percent margin. Fiscal issues, starting with the passage of the stimulus package last spring, are at the vanguard of Independent dissatisfaction with Congress, and this survey shows Independents continue to oppose new spending and support corporate and capital gains tax cuts. In fact, voters overall agree that “we should freeze total federal spending at 2010 levels for the next five years,” by a 54 to 38 percent margin, even against a counterargument that “freezing total federal spending at 2010 levels for five years is irresponsible. That would require either not paying guaranteed benefits like Social Security and Medicare, or making drastic cuts in the defense budget.” Independents agree that we should freeze federal spending for five years by a 52 to 35 percent margin.

#### Our link outweighs perception of economic benefits for swing voters

NSOR, 11 (North Star Opinion Research, Resurgent Republic, Dr. Whit Ayres, president of North Star Opinion Research, co-founded Resurgent Republic with former RNC Chair Ed Gillespie and Impacto Group CEO Leslie Sanchez. North Star partners with Resurgent Republic to conduct surveys and focus groups on popular issues and trends that help shape public debate over the proper role of government, 11/8, <http://www.resurgentrepublic.com/summaries/independents-support-conservative-policies-in-health-care-energy-and-fiscal-issues>)

As shown repeatedly in past Resurgent Republic surveys, a majority of Americans continues to believe that the federal government should be "spending less to reduce the deficit" rather than "spending more to help the economy recover." Voters overall want the federal government to spend less by 54 to 40 percent, including Republicans by 78 to 20 percent and Independents by 58 to 35 percent. Only Democrats want to spend more, by 63 to 30 percent.

#### Our link outweighs for independent swing voters -

NSOR, 10(North Star Opinion Research, Resurgent Republic, Dr. Whit Ayres, president of North Star Opinion Research, co-founded Resurgent Republic with former RNC Chair Ed Gillespie and Impacto Group CEO Leslie Sanchez. North Star partners with Resurgent Republic to conduct surveys and focus groups on popular issues and trends that help shape public debate over the proper role of government, 7/7, <http://www.resurgentrepublic.com/summaries/independents-support-conservative-policies-in-health-care-energy-and-fiscal-issues>)

Fiscal Issues 1. Likely voters say the federal government should freeze spending for five years. Even when voters are given a counterargument that a spending freeze would mean deciding between cutting benefits or defense spending, they agree that a spending freeze is a good idea by a 54 to 38 percent margin, including a 52 to 35 percent margin among Independents. Congressman A says freezing total federal spending at 2010 levels for five years is irresponsible. That would require either not paying guaranteed benefits like Social Security and Medicare, or making drastic cuts in the defense budget. Congressman B says we should freeze total federal spending at 2010 levels for the next five years. By funding only the top priorities, we will get the budget deficit back under control, and stop bankrupting the country and mortgaging our children's future. 2. Voter concern about deficits is also evident in support for a balanced budget amendment and a constitutional convention to pass a balanced budget amendment. These voters agree by a 54 to 37 percent margin that we should adopt a balanced budget amendment because “it is the only way we will instill some fiscal discipline in politicians and stop them from bankrupting the country,” despite a counterargument that a balanced budget “could force draconian cuts in Medicare and national defense, and hurt the government’s ability to respond to emergencies like 9-11.” Voters also agree that state legislatures should call for a convention to adopt a balanced budget amendment by a 46 to 39 percent margin, and agree that we should require a super majority of two-thirds to approve new spending by a 57 to 36 percent margin. 3. Voters support extending the capital gains tax cut and cutting corporate taxes. By a 54 to 40 percent margin, voters agree that we should “keep the capital gains tax rate at 15 percent where it is today. Raising capital gains taxes now would hurt economic growth at a time when the economy desperately needs to create more jobs,” over the argument that letting the “Bush tax cuts on capital gains expire…would raise the tax rate on capital gains from 15 to 20 percent, which would provide critically needed revenue, and ensure that the rich pay their fair share.” Voters agree that “we should cut the corporate income tax rate from 40 to 25 percent to stimulate job growth in the private sector” over “cutting corporate taxes is a giveaway to the rich which would increase the deficit at the worst possible time” by a 50 to 43 percent margin. 4. In contrast to focus group findings, voters indicate some questions about the shrinking tax base. Our research has found mixed responses to questions focused on the fact that the highest earning 53 percent of Americans pay all income taxes, while nearly half pay none. In focus groups, voters were skeptical that was the case, even when presented with information that tax credits eliminate the tax liabilities for many tax filers. This survey framed the issue more in terms of fairness: Congressman A says it is good for the country if the poorest half of Americans pays no income taxes. Those who can best afford to pay should carry most of the burden of funding the federal government. Congressman B says it is bad for the country if half the population pays all the income taxes and half pays nothing. Every American citizen should contribute at least something to support the federal government. In that context, voters agree that it is bad for the country if half the population pays all the income taxes by a 65 to 28 percent margin. Education 1. Voters have a middle-of-the-road attitude when it comes to education, with arguments on either side splitting the electorate. For example, voters agree that the federal government should not set national education standards by a narrow 49 to 47 percent margin, (51 to 44 percent among Independents) given these statements: Congressman A says we need national education standards that are tougher than those in other countries. Only with national standards will we be able to ensure a world-class education for our students. Congressman B says federal government has no business setting national education standards. Education is a state and local responsibility, and the states are best able to meet the needs of their own students. 2. Voters narrowly agree that federal education dollars should be spent exclusively on public schools, that teacher pay should not be tied to teacher performance, and that all teachers should be required to complete teacher training classes. Voters agree that federal education dollars should be spent exclusively in public schools by a 50 to 47 percent margin when presented with these arguments: Congressman A says federal education dollars should go exclusively to public schools. We should not take funding away from struggling public schools to subsidize private education. Congressman B says federal education dollars should follow the student when parents move them from failing public schools. Federal money should support the best possible education for a child, whether public, private, or parochial. Voters also oppose tying teacher pay to performance by a 51 to 42 percent margin (47 to 45 percent among Independents), “given the many factors that affect student achievement like the home environment.” Finally, the argument against alternative certification draws majority support, 55 to 40 percent, when presented with these arguments: Congressman A says we need the best trained people teaching in our public schools. Just because someone knows a lot about a field does not mean they will be an effective teacher. All teachers should be required to complete teacher training classes. Congressman B says we should recruit our most talented people to teach in public schools. Many mid-career professionals could make superb teachers, and it makes no sense to require them to take a full curriculum of teacher training classes. Conclusion Voters seem not only to be rejecting big government policies in response to the actions of the Obama Administration and the Democratic Congress, but also seem ready to embrace conservative policies. That movement is driven by Independents, who have been moving away from liberal policy choices for more than a year. The Obama Administration’s policy choices have created very fertile ground for conservative alternatives this fall.

### Fiscal Discipline Key – Dem Voters

#### Key issue for dem voters – top priority

Pew, 12(Pew Research Center, 1/23, <http://www.people-press.org/2012/01/23/public-priorities-deficit-rising-terrorism-slipping/>)

Democrats’ concerns over the deficit also have risen in recent years, though less sharply than Republicans’. Currently, 66% of Democrats say reducing the budget deficit should be a top priority for the president and Congress, up from 52% in January 2009.

### Obama gets credit

#### Obama gets involved and disproportionately targets funds to key political states

Bilotkach, 10

Volodymyr, Department of Economics, University of California, Irvine, October, <http://www.socsci.uci.edu/~vbilotka/Draft_September10.pdf> (the october date is correct even though the web address says September)

The federal government plays a crucial role in the infrastructure investment in the United States, including allocation of funds to the airports. Given that airports are perceived to bring substantial benefits to the respective communities, federally funded airport infrastructure projects are both sought after, welcomed, and should be beneficial to the politicians capable of securing the funds. Complicated structure of the American political system creates possibilities for strong influence of political factors on the process of allocation of infrastructure investment funds. Understanding the role of politics in this area is of no trivial importance, as currently perception of the airports’ role is being revised. An increasing number of countries have started viewing airports as the firms rather than the infrastructure objects. Privatization and deregulation of the airports is also becoming more common. It is believed that involvement of the private sector will bring about efficiency gains, and that privately run airports may be more willing and able to contribute to solving the congestion problem. This study offers the first look at the issue of impact of political factors on the aviation infrastructure investment in the USA. We take advantage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 (more broadly known as the Stimulus) to examine contribution of political factors to allocation of the $1.1 billion worth of the airport grants included into the package. The Stimulus provides an excellent case for studying political economy of airport (and more generally, infrastructure) investment, at least as far as involvement of the federal government is concerned. The law was set up rather hastily – Barack Obama was elected President in November of 2008, inaugurated on January 20, 2009, and ARRA became law on February 17, 2009. The criteria for the airport infrastructure projects to be funded under the ARRA were rather vague 2 . We can therefore suspect that the airport infrastructure grants could have been used by the Administration, or the Congress as a mechanism to reward districts which brought more votes in the latest election. Additionally, members of the corresponding Congress Committees (in particular, of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure) might have used ARRA as an opportunity to bring more money to their districts. Empirical research on the impact of politics on transport infrastructure investment deals mostly with the European data. The studies examining US evidence are rare, and include McFadden (1976) and Knight (2004). The former study looks at determinants of highway project selection by the California Division of Highways, while the latter examines congressional voting on transportation projects. Our data analysis showed the association between the airport’s location in the Congressional District with the larger Obama-McCain vote differential in November 2008 Presidential election, and the amount of the ARRA grant received by the airport. At the same time, district level election results are poor predictors of whether the airport receives the grant; and estimation results are not entirely robust to taking election results from the adjacent districts into consideration. We also detect rather robust evidence of the impact of Senate on the grant allocation process. This paper contributes to two broad strains of literature. First, we extend the literature on public provision of infrastructure. Research in this area has been addressing the issues of both effects of the publicly provided infrastructure on private sector productivity, and the determinants of the infrastructure investment. The former literature (e.g., Aschauer, 1989; Holz-Eakin, 1994) is much richer than the latter. Studies of the determinants of public infrastructure investment include Cadot et al. (2006), Castells and Sole-Olle (2005), Kemmerling and Stephan (2002, 2008), Fridstrom and Elvik (1997), Bel and Fageda (2009). All the listed papers study infrastructure investment in Europe, and the latter has the most relevance to our paper, as it examines (and confirms the existence of) the impact of political factors on airport investment in Spain. On the US side, we find a lot of studies asserting the disproportionate power of the Senate 3 (e.g., Hoover and Pecorino, 2005) and Congressional Committees (e.g., Garrett et al., 2006) in allocation of the federal funds across the jurisdictions. Garrett and Sobel (2003) find that states which are politically important to the president will have a higher rate of the disaster declaration; the authors also find the election year effects on the amounts of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) disaster payments. The only studies of political determinants of transport infrastructure investment in the US are McFadden (1976) – an examination of project choices by California Division of Highways, finding limited impact of political determinants on the selection process; as well as Knight (2004), asserting that congressmen respond to common pool incentives when voting for transportation projects.

#### Obama will play the largest role and voters love it

Bilotkach, 10

Volodymyr, Department of Economics, University of California, Irvine, October, <http://www.socsci.uci.edu/~vbilotka/Draft_September10.pdf> (the october date is correct even though the web address says September)

The literature suggests three possible sources of political influence: the White House (President), the US Senate, and the Congressional Committees. We hypothesize that the impact of the White House should be the strongest in this particular case – recall that passing the economic stimulus legislation was one of Barack Obama’s priorities as a candidate. As for hypotheses related to the impact of the White House, we can suppose that ARRA grants might have been used to reward districts which showed support to Obama, as evidenced by the election results. An alternative explanation – grants could be used to sway voters in the districts where support for Obama was not sufficiently strong – is less plausible, as the grants have been appropriated after the election and almost four years before the next Presidential election is scheduled to take place. Cont… Moreover, study of aviation related infrastructure offers an attractive environment for examining the more general issue of political factors behind the allocation of federal funds. Airports and airfields are ubiquitous, unlike, for instance, tornadoes or corn fields. Also, airports are generally viewed favorably by the public, unlike some other kinds of federally provided infrastructure (e.g., prisons). For this study, we make use of information on the airport infrastructure grants, appropriated under the ARRA of 2009. We supplement this data with airport characteristics, simple demographic measures, congressional district level results of November 2008 election (both Presidential and House), and Senate election results. Data analysis suggests the following general conclusions about the supposed impact of political factors on allocation of ARRA airport infrastructure grants. First, results of the presidential election appear to affect the amounts of grants, but do not have an impact on whether the airport receives the grant. Second, controlling for the State level composition of the Senate, we find that airports located in the States carried by a Republican at the latest Senate election show higher likelihood of obtaining the grant; the amounts involved are also higher. At the same time, airports located in States represented by two Democratic Party senators are also more likely to obtain the grants, other things equal. Third, we do not find strong evidence of impact of the House of Representatives election results or membership in Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. Throughout the world, regulators have been reconsidering the role of the airports. Also, our understanding of the determinants of public infrastructure investment, and especially of the role of political factors, is far from complete. This study is one of the first attempts at looking into both issues together. We find that political factors matter. The next issue to be addressed – and the one which will require a more thorough investigation of these political factors – is what our results imply for such important public policy issues as airport regulation, privatization, and congestion.

### AT - Too Soon

#### Now is key to the election -- voters make up their minds several months out and once a trend sets, it will determine the winner

Malone, 6/7/12

Jim Malone, “Romney Rising, Obama Slipping,” Voice of America News, 6-7-2012 (http://blogs.voanews.com/2012-election/2012/06/07/romney-rising-obama-slipping/)

So yes, five months is a long time for the voters to decide.  But recent presidential election history shows that many voters begin to make up their minds at this point in the election cycle, and that relatively few minds can be changed between now and Election Day. If it’s true that the cement is beginning to set, the Obama White House may not have a lot of time to change the dynamics of a race that shapes up as a straight up or down vote on how this president has handled the national economy.

#### Not too early – historical data disproves

Abramowitz, 12

(Alan, Senior Columnist, Center For Politics.org, Prof Poli Sci @ Emory, 5/23, <http://www.centerforpolitics.org/crystalball/articles/what-does-president-obama%E2%80%99s-may-approval-rating-tell-us-about-his-reelection-chances/>)

According to a Gallup Poll analysis of recent polling data on the mood of the American public, President Obama appears to face a difficult road to winning a second term in November. The specific indicators of the national mood included in Gallup’s analysis were economic confidence, the percentage of Americans citing the economy as the country’s most important problem, satisfaction with the state of the nation and approval of the president’s job performance. While all of these indicators have shown some improvement in the past year, according to Gallup they all remain at levels that suggest trouble for the incumbent. For example, only 24% of Americans said that they were satisfied with the direction of the country and 66% cited the economy as the most important problem facing the nation. There is little evidence about how indicators like satisfaction with the direction of the country or perceptions of the most important problem facing the nation affect the outcomes of presidential elections. However, there is strong evidence that an incumbent president’s approval rating, even several months before Election Day, has a strong relationship to the eventual outcome of the election.

#### Early voting is a game changer- pushes every deadline forward and makes early organization and fundraising critical- Romney is especially adept means now is key for Obama

Slate, 3-12-2012 <http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/victory_lab/2012/03/mitt_romney_s_early_voting_mastery_his_rivals_never_stood_a_chance_.html>

The political media may have welcomed the closing of polls on recent evenings in Florida, Michigan, Arizona, and Ohio with an air of suspense, but the members of Mitt Romney’s team knew they already had more votes than their opponents. In the case of Florida, Romney’s advisers believed Newt Gingrich would need an extraordinary Election Day performance to catch up; in Arizona, they were certain it was mathematically impossible for either Gingrich or Rick Santorum to do so. Even a late surge or Romney’s own collapse was unlikely to redraw the outcome. “You want to get as many people to vote absentee-ballot as you can—it saves money and banks votes,” says Rich Beeson, Romney’s political director. “So no matter what happens in the last week you have votes in the bank they can’t take away.” Once-meaningful distinctions between early voting, voting-by-mail, and absentee ballots are being erased as 32 states now offer voters the chance to cast their ballot before Election Day without a justifying excuse (as traditional absentee balloting required). It probably amounts to the most radical change to American voting culture since the abolition of poll taxes. In 2008, one-third of Americans are believed to have voted by a method other than showing up in person at a polling place on the first Tuesday in November, some doing so as early as September. Romney’s canny and competent handling of these varied early-voting processes this year has helped him accumulate a seemingly insurmountable lead in delegates. He is running the only modern, professional campaign against a field of amateurs gasping to keep up, and nowhere is that advantage more evident than in his mastery of early votingWhen state authorities searched for ways to update their election procedures after the chaos of the 2000 recount, many decided to expand the window for voting. Political scientists, campaign consultants, and election administrators speculated about who stood to benefit most. Those who said such reforms would boost democratic participation cited an economic logic: Reducing the inconveniences involved in voting would, in effect, lower its cost and make it appealing to more people. A decade later, there is scant evidence that new opportunities to vote have significantly affected the electorate: The limited research in the area suggests that those who are already predisposed to vote—and make up their minds well in advance—are the most likely to seize on the lower costs to cast a ballot on their own schedule. But early voting has changed electoral economics. In effect, candidates have to administer Election Day operations for a period as long as two months. In general elections, those costs are often saddled by party organizations that can share the benefits across multiple candidates. In primaries, campaigns are on their own, and the expansion of early voting reinforces existing advantages for campaigns that are rich, skilled, and experienced. “It looks like the better organized campaign does better,” says Christopher B. Mann, a former Democratic campaign consultant and party official who ran early-vote programs and now studies them as a University of Miami political scientist. “If you look at the primaries, it’s largely to Romney’s advantage because he has the funding, the infrastructure, and the sophistication to take advantages of things in a way the other candidates couldn’t.”

## \*\*Impacts\*\*

### 2NC Solves Case

#### Obama will do plan if he wins

Levy, 12(Alon, transportation commentator @ market urbanism and urbanophile, profiled in national review online as transportation expert, 1/25, http://www.thetransportpolitic.com/2012/01/25/on-infrastructure-hopes-for-progress-this-year-look-glum/

I don’t think there’s much hope coming from the current Congress. Obama probably realizes it. Both the correct strategy and the strategy that the administration seems to be pursuing is to wait until 2013. Obama will probably win reelection, and if Gingrich manages to defeat Romney in the primary, then Obama will win by a considerably margin and probably get enough coattails to obtain a friendly Democratic Congress. In that situation, the Tea Party’s influence will drop to close to zero, and a transportation bill that includes nonzero money to local transit and to HSR becomes an option. At this stage even Romney looks vulnerable, but still less so than Gingrich.

### 2NC Warming Impact

#### Obama win key to EPA regs – solves CO2 and oil dependence

Star Ledger, 12(6/3, <http://blog.nj.com/njv_editorial_page/2012/06/scary_times_for_environment_--.html>)

The grim report on jobs Friday greatly improves the odds that Republicans will win in November, putting Mitt Romney in the White House and bolstering GOP positions in the House and Senate. If that happens, they promise to roll back the progress made under President Obama and Environmental Protection Agency administrator Lisa Jackson. Romney wants to strip the EPA of its power to regulate carbon emissions. Jackson relied on that power to enact rules that will double automobile efficiency standards by 2025 and toughen truck standards, too. Transportation is the largest single source of air pollution. So cutting emissions in half will make a profound change, especially in a car-centric state such as New Jersey. It also will reduce oil imports sharply, lessening our dangerous dependence on unstable regimes in the Mideast. Jackson’s tough limits on coal-fired power plants rely partly on carbon controls, as well. So those gains would be endangered. Again, the air in New Jersey will get dirtier. Because, while our own coal plants have exotic pollution control equipment, those to the west and south do not. Many lack even the most basic filters, known as scrubbers, and rely only on tall smoke stacks to push the toxins higher into the atmosphere.

#### Solves runaway warming and climate leadership

**Parenti ’10** (Christian Parenti, a contributing editor at The Nation and a visiting scholar at the Center for Place, Culture and Politics, at the CUNY Grad Center, 4-20-10, “The Nation: The Case for EPA Action,” http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=126129216)

On April 1 the Environmental Protection Agency established rules restricting greenhouse gas emissions from cars and trucks, starting in 2012. This is the first of what could become a sweeping series of regulations stemming from the agency's conclusion that greenhouse gases harm human health. If the EPA were to act robustly, it could achieve significant and immediate greenhouse gas emissions reductions using nothing more than existing laws and current technology. Doing so would signal to a waiting world that America is serious about addressing climate change. But a dangerous assault on the agency is gathering momentum in Congress, corporate boardrooms, the media and the courts. The swarm of counterattacks all seek to strip the EPA of its power to regulate greenhouse gas emissions from stationary sources like coal-fired power plants. Some legislative proposals would even undo the EPA's finding that greenhouse gases are hazardous, taking the EPA out of the climate fight altogether. Wonkish at first glance, the fight over EPA rulemaking may be the most important environmental battle in a generation. The UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change says rich countries like the United States must cut emissions 25 to 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2020—only ten years away—and thereafter make precipitous cuts to almost zero emissions. If we don't act now, average global temperatures will likely increase by more than 2 degrees Celsius and trigger self-compounding runaway climate change, resulting in a massive rise in sea levels, devastated agriculture and attendant social chaos. Not one of the climate change bills up for discussion meets this threshold, and it is looking increasingly unlikely that Congress will be able to pass any comprehensive climate change legislation this session. The failures of Congress and the harrowing facts of climate science mean that aggressive and immediate EPA action is essential. From a legal perspective, the EPA has all the tools it needs to respond adequately to the climate crisis. In fact, "the United States has the strongest environmental laws in the world," says Kassie Siegel, an attorney with the Center for Biological Diversity. The center specializes in suing the government when it violates green laws. "We don't need new legislation. The Clean Air Act can achieve everything we need: a 40 percent reduction of greenhouse gas emissions over 1990 levels by 2020." The two most important things the EPA can do are to halt any permitting of new coal-fired power plants—about fifty new plants are seeking approval—and to force all existing coal-fired facilities to make the technologically feasible switch to natural gas. If this "fuel switching" happened, total nonvehicle US emissions would be reduced by 13 percent or more in a matter of a year or two, say various experts. Natural gas is generally half as polluting as coal. But in the case of old, inefficient coal-fired plants, switching to gas can reduce emissions by as much as two-thirds. And there is plenty of natural gas: discoveries have glutted the market, and prices are down more than 60 percent from their recent peak. Gas is not a solution; it merely offers a realistic "bridging fuel" as we move toward power generated from wind, solar, geothermal and hydro sources. Perhaps the most far-reaching impact of EPA regulation would be to put a de facto price on carbon by leveling fines on greenhouse gas polluters. Such penalties could reach thousands per day, per violation. If targets for emissions reductions are tough enough, few coal plants will be able to meet them and will instead pay fines—what amounts to a carbon tax. Then a cheap source of energy would become expensive, which would drive investment away from fossil fuels toward carbon-neutral forms of energy. At first, President Obama seemed ready to use executive power to do an end run around a sclerotic Congress, when he authorized the EPA to start regulating greenhouse gas emissions under the Clean Air Act. Obama was merely complying with the law: the EPA has been mandated to act since 2007, when the Supreme Court ruled, in Massachusetts v. EPA, that the agency should determine whether greenhouse gases threaten our health. The Bush administration refused to use this authority, but when Obama took office he allowed the EPA to do its job again.

#### Extinction

**Tickell 08** [Oliver, “On a planet 4C hotter, all we can prepare for is extinction]

We need to get prepared for four degrees of global warming**,** *Bob Watson told the Gurdian last week. At first sight this looks like wise counsel from the climate science adviser to Defra*. But the idea that we could adapt to a 4C rise is absurd and dangerous. Global warming on this scale would be a catastrophe that would mean*, in the immortal words that Chief Seattle probably never spoke*, "the end *of living and the beginning of survival"* for humankind. Or perhaps the beginning of ourextinction***.*** The collapse of the polar ice caps would become inevitable, bringing long-term sea level rises of 70-80 metres. All the world's coastal plains would be lost, complete with ports, cities, transport and industrial infrastructure, and much of the world's most productive farmland***.*** *The world's geography would be transformed much as it was at the end of the last ice age, when sea levels rose by about 120 metres to create the Channel, the North Sea and Cardigan Bay out of dry land*.Weather would become extreme and unpredictable, with more frequent and severe droughts, floods and hurricanes. The Earth's carrying capacity would be hugely reduced. Billions would undoubtedly die.

## \*\*AFF Answers\*\*

### Obama Lose Now

#### Obama lose now – but could still shift

Cass, 6/2(Connie, writer @ AP, Business Week, <http://www.businessweek.com/ap/2012-06/D9V4SLHO1.htm>)

Nothing upsets a president's re-election groove like ugly economic numbers. A spring slowdown in hiring and an uptick in the unemployment rate are weighing on Barack Obama, while enhancing Republican challenger Mitt Romney's argument that the president is in over his head. Some questions and answers about how Friday's economic news may play in a close presidential race: Q: How bad is this for Obama? A: Pretty awful. Polls show Obama's handling of the economy is his biggest weak spot. Americans overwhelmingly rate the economy as their biggest worry. And jobs are what they say matters most. But the president still has time for the jobs outlook to improve. Five more monthly unemployment reports are due -- the last coming just four days before the Nov. 6 election. The fall numbers will mean more when voters head to the polls.

#### Romney win now – polls, turnout, economy

Ponnuru, 6/25

Ramesh Ponnuru, Senior Editor, National Review, lexis

'We've gotta wake up," James Carville wrote in a May 31 fundraising e-mail. "Everywhere I go, people are telling me that 'Obama has it in the bag.' Newsflash: nothing is in the bag." He's right: Democrats have been overconfident about President Obama's chances this fall. Only slowly, if at all, is it dawning on them that Mitt Romney poses a serious challenge. For months now, the polls have suggested that Obama, while not a sure loser, is in trouble. In the Real Clear Politics average of polls, the president has not cracked a 50 percent approval rating so far in 2012. In both its average and Pollster.com's, the candidates have since the first week of May been consistently less than three points apart. There are several reasons Romney is giving Obama a tough race. The primary campaign distorted perceptions of the general-election campaign. It seemed to take forever for Romney to win the Republican nomination, and his poll numbers sank during the long slog. (Except for his "negatives": the percentage of people who told pollsters they had an unfavorable impression of him. That number rose.) Plenty of coverage suggested that Romney was going to have trouble unifying the party. Republicans grew pessimistic. But it should have been obvious that these perceptions were dependent on circumstances that were already changing. The primary highlighted Romney's deficiencies from the point of view of conservatives. In the general election, Republicans were never going to be choosing between Romney and Santorum or Gingrich. They were going to face a choice between Romney and a candidate who favors higher taxes, took health care farther down the road to government control, and will continue to appoint liberal judges as long as he can. On each of these issues Republicans strongly prefer Romney's position. That is why they quickly consolidated behind him once he wrapped up the nomination. While Romney has his weaknesses as a candidate, the arduousness of the primary campaign made them look more fatal than they are. The timing of the elections worked against him. Jay Cost, a writer for The Weekly Standard, points out that winning the Florida primary in 2008 gave John McCain the momentum to do well on Super Tuesday. This time around, Romney won Florida, his poll numbers improved, and then . . . and then the next actual primary was held four weeks later, and Super Tuesday a week after that. Momentum dissipated. Some of Romney's vulnerabilities in the primary won't matter much in the general election. His primary opponents had an incentive to use his record of flip-flops to portray him as unconservative and untrustworthy, but Obama can't simultaneously portray him as a right-wing extremist and a flip-flopper. All signs point to his deploying the right-wing-extremist attack, since it's scarier. The country is closely divided. After the 2006 and 2008 elections, some analysts decided that the country now had a natural Democratic majority. In retrospect -- and again, this should have been obvious at the time -- those seem like abnormally Democratic years (as 2010 seems like an abnormally Republican one). Even if 2008 had been a happy year for our nation, Republicans would have had to contend with the public's instinct that it was time for a change after eight years of their party in the White House. But there was also an economic crisis, which hit just weeks before the election. The Republican presidential nominee nonetheless won 46 percent of the vote. Republicans were always likely to do significantly better in 2012, simply because the odds of their facing similarly awful circumstances again were so low. You can't make history twice. There's another reason the Republicans' 2008 performance was likely to represent a floor for the next election. Strong turnout among voters who were young, black, or both swelled Obama's totals. Both black voters and young white voters are likely to vote for Obama again, but probably not in the same numbers, because the excitement of voting in the first black president has faded. Obama didn't change the map. Because his 2008 victory reached deep into "Republican territory" -- that is, he carried seven states that had gone for George W. Bush twice -- some analysts thought Obama had made assembling an Electoral College majority harder for the Republicans. But his sweep was a function of a national Democratic wave, not a permanent geographic realignment. As Sean Trende points out in his book, The Lost Majority, Obama's winning coalition was actually narrower geographically than Bill Clinton's. Missouri, which was very recently a swing state, seems now to be a lost cause for the Democrats. And Obama's hold on the states he carried in 2008 is weak. Florida seems to have become more Republican over the last decade, too. The Democrats have written off Indiana, and are surely ruing their decision to hold their national convention in North Carolina, not least because its state Democratic party is immersed in scandal. Even some states long in the Democratic fold look iffy. Wisconsin, which has not voted for a Republican presidential candidate since 1984, seems to be in play. Minnesota last voted for a Republican in 1972, but its Democratic tilt (compared with the national electorate) declined a little in the 2008 election, and a solid Romney victory nationally could well sweep it in. The economy hasn't cooperated. We haven't had a strong recovery, or one that most people trust will last. Democratic optimism about Obama has been tied not only to Romney's primary struggle but also to a few months of data suggesting the economy was picking up. But we have now had a few months of more recent, ominous data -- and the continuing crisis in Europe, or heightened tension in the Middle East, could tip us back into recession.

#### Romney win but its close – undecided voters will break for Romney now

CBS News, 6/12(Lexis)

(CBS News) President Obama and presumptive Republican nominee Mitt Romney are in a close race now but the president's approval rating below 50 percent is good news for his rival, a former Republican party chairman said Tuesday. "When you look at President Obama's numbers, he's consistently somewhere between, you know, 44 and 47 percent, which historically is a danger zone for an incumbent president running for re-election," Romney campaign adviser Ed Gillespie said on "CBS This Morning." Gillespie noted that most voters have already formed an opinion about Mr. Obama. "Often, at the end of an election with an incumbent president, the undecideds tend to break pretty strongly in favor of the challenger candidate," Gillespie said. Still, Gillespie cautioned that the nation is pretty evenly divided, especially in the crucial "swing states" that will decide the election.

#### Obama lose now – turnout

US News and world report, 6/8(lexis)

Folks are still crunching the numbers coming out of Gov. Scott Walker's victory in Tuesday's Wisconsin recall, which is only producing more bad news for President Barack Obama. In its aftermath the race is shaping up as a proxy for the president's potential performance against his likely opponent in the November 2012 election, former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney. Wisconsin is critical to both campaigns, with Obama unlikely to be able to win without it and Romney much more easily able to reach the "magic number" of 270 electoral votes if he carries it. What the president will be able to do depends in large part on how much of his winning coalition he can reassemble later this year. It's not looking good, especially among the younger voters who were such an important part of Obama's 2008 victory. [Check out our editorial cartoons on President Obama.] According to Crossroads Generation, a group dedicated to reaching young people with the messages promoting individual liberty, limited government, and free enterprise, in the recall election Walker carried the vote of those under the age of 25. "According to exit polling," the group said, "for voters aged 18-29, the Democrats' advantage among this group was cut in half compared to 2010. While Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett held a ten-point advantage among 18-29 year olds in the 2010 election, that gap was reduced to five points in Tuesday's election." Younger voters were a significant presence in Tuesday's election. Voters under the age of 30, Crossroads Generation said, made up 16 percent of all voters in the recall election, a higher proportion than in the 2010 gubernatorial election. [See a collection of political cartoons on the 2012 campaign.] "Wisconsin is a state where young voters make a big difference," said Crossroads' Kristen Soltis, who see the results as predictive for the fall. "When an election is focused on the economy and fiscal responsibility, my generation is ready to support candidates with plans for getting us back on track," she said. If Obama is having trouble attracting younger voters to his coalition, as the results from Wisconsin suggest may be the case, then it will be just that much harder for him to go on to victory in the presidential race. The White House is hoping for a "base election," one in which each party turns out as many of its most stalwart supporters as it can while independents, moderates, and occasional voters stay home, as was the case in George W. Bush's victory over Massachusetts Sen. John Kerry in 2004. Romney, on the other hand, looks to be running a campaign that broadens the base, reaching out to everyone who is unhappy with the way the president has governed over the last four years, as Ronald Reagan did in 1980. At the moment anyway, it looks like more voters help Romney while fewer voters are the key Obama's re-election.

#### Obama losing now because democrat divisions

The Hill, 6/11/12

The Hill, “Divisions in Dem Coalition Resurface,” 6-11-2012 (http://thehill.com/homenews/campaign/231967-as-november-election-nears-splits-in-democratic-coalition-resurface)

Divisions in the Democratic coalition have burst into view, endangering both President Obama and his party colleagues in Congress as November’s election nears. Fissures have opened over everything from tax policy and former President Bill Clinton’s  off-message comments to recriminations following the party’s fiasco in the Wisconsin recall, which some say should have been avoided. Democrats disagree over the wisdom of Obama’s attacks on Republican Mitt Romney’s private equity background at Bain Capital and are split over the proposed construction of the Keystone XL pipeline from Canada’s vast oil sands. The divides are opening just as Republicans appear more unified, which underlines the danger for Democrats and highlights an abrupt reversal in the two major parties’ fortunes.

#### Obama suffering severe losses now and will soon on Health Care and Immigration

Cassata, 6/6/12

Donna Cassata, Writer for the Associated Press, Republished in the Green Bay Press Gazette, “Walker’s Victory is More Bad News for Obama, Democrats,” 6-6-2012 (http://www.greenbaypressgazette.com/article/20120606/GPG010403/120606081/Wisconsin-governor-recall-election-Scott-Walker-Barack-Obama-president)

Just one week old, June already is proving a cruel month for President Barack Obama and the Democrats — and it could get a lot worse. The **political blows** from Tuesday's bitter loss in Wisconsin's gubernatorial recall and from last week's abysmal unemployment numbers, bad as they were, **could multiply before the month is out**. The Supreme Court will pass judgment shortly on the president's **signature legislative achievement** — the 2010 law overhauling the nation's health care system — and also will decide on his administration's challenge to Arizona's tough immigration law. If Chief Justice John Roberts and the court strike down all or part of the health care law, it could **demoralize Democrats** who invested more than a year — and quite a few political careers — to secure the bill's passage. And in Arizona, aside from the big immigration case, the Democrats are fighting to hold onto the House seat of Gabrielle Giffords, who resigned in January to focus on recovering from her gunshot wound. In next Tuesday's special election, former Giffords aide Ron Barber is locked in a close race with Republican Jesse Kelly, who lost to her in 2010 by just 4,156 votes. Facing an election-year summer fraught with political peril, the Democrats are struggling to revive supporters' spirits and counteract developments that could energize Republicans and solidify public opinion that the country is on the wrong track and in need of new leadership.

#### Obamas in trouble but it could go either way

Cass, 6/2(Connie, writer @ AP, Business Week, <http://www.businessweek.com/ap/2012-06/D9V4SLHO1.htm>)

It's a toss-up so far. There hasn't been time to measure the impact of Friday's figures. But in an Associated Press-GfK poll last month, people were split over who they'd trust most to handle the economy, Romney or Obama. Asked specifically whether they approve of the way Obama has dealt with unemployment, about half did and half didn't, mostly along party lines. Still, jobs are clearly a weakness for Obama. His poll numbers are stronger than Romney's on many other qualities, such as which candidate understands regular people, is a strong leader and says what he really believes.

### Link Turn - Public

#### Roadway infrastructure investments most highly perceived – massively boosts public confidence

McGahan, 12

Will, 4/2, National League of Cities, <http://citiesspeak.org/2012/04/02/the-state-of-the-cities-in-2012-focus-on-infrastructure-investment/>

Roadway improvements are the obvious first place you think when the topic of transportation infrastructure is brought up. Cities are of course making the necessary improvements there, but they are focusing their efforts on the bigger picture as well. Light rail is a transportation option that a number of communities are focusing on. Oklahoma City is starting construction this year to bring street cars back to the city by connecting the downtown area to the suburbs, while Pasadena is investing $735 million in extending their Gold Line after seeing a record number of riders. The city of Baltimore is making the effort to preserve its position as a bustling port. Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake said “We are preparing the port for growth by reinvesting in our roads and bridges that support freight movement.” For cities, transportation is not simply about the movement of goods and people. Quality transportation infrastructure is vital to the health and happiness of a community. In Eugene, OR Mayor Kitty Piercy spoke about the importance of updating transportation and land use plans to match the overarching goals of the city. Those goals include, “accessible and attractive transportation choices that reduce carbon emissions, set us on the path to the future, and continue to keep our road infrastructure safe and efficient for all modes to move people and goods.” In Pasadena, Mayor Bill Bogaard has set similar goals for his city. The land use and mobility elements of the general plan are being updated to “reflect community priorities such as sustainability, historic preservation, urban design and public participation.” Infrastructure man at Delaware rest stop on I-95. Let’s not pretend that infrastructure improvements aren’t a powerful economic driver as well. The time to improve infrastructure is now, with cheap goods and services. The city of Washington, DC, has leveraged $2.1 billion of investment into 3,000 construction jobs, and anticipates 6,000 permanent jobs upon the completion of fourteen major projects. Mick Cornett, Mayor of Oklahoma City, knows that even the sight of construction can have lasting effects. “When the dirt is flying, people realize that their local businesses and their governments are investing in their future. There may be no better way to visually fuel consumer confidence.” Most recently, Mayor of Chicago Rahm Emanuel announced the Building A New Chicago campaign, which will invest $7 billion over three years in infrastructure improvements, and will create 30,000 new jobs.

### Link Turn – GOP Obstructionism

#### Plan removes key weapon from obama’s campaign arsenal

Berstein Research, 12(Sanford C. Bernstein is widely recognized as Wall Street’s premier sell-side research firm. Our research is sought out by leading investment managers around the world, and we are annually ranked at the very top of acknowledged arbiters. In independent surveys of major institutional clients, Bernstein's research is ranked #1 for overall quality, industry knowledge, most trusted, best detailed financial analysis, major company studies, most useful valuation frameworks, best original research, and most willing to challenge management. In Institutional Investor’s 2010 annual client survey, the leading survey by which analysts in our industry are evaluated, 100% of our U.S. Analysts were recognized as among the best in their respective fields -- more than any other firm on Wall Street, 2/3, <http://www.fraternalalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Washington-Research-2012-Preview-Transportation-Funding.pdf>)

Passing a multi-year ground transportation funding bill, something Republicans achieved in 1998 and 2005 when they controlled Congress, would take away an issue that Obama and the Democrats have been hammering them on. It would also demonstrate to voters that the GOP is capable of governing, a departure from the dysfunction-marred view of House Republicans held by the public after last year's payroll tax cut debacle. House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) reminded his troops of the mantle of leadership in a closeddoor meeting this week: "Whether we like it or not, the reality is that dealing with our nation's crumbling infrastructure is part of the responsibility of governing. Infrastructure is vital to our economy," Boehner told the House Republican Conference on Wednesday, according to remarks provided by his office.

#### Plan key to avoid perception of GOP obstruction on jobs issues – prevents Obama win

Dorsey, 12(Thomas, CEO, Soul of America, 1/25, <http://www.thetransportpolitic.com/2012/01/25/on-infrastructure-hopes-for-progress-this-year-look-glum/>)

2. In the next 2-3 weeks American public’s appetite for GOP personal attacks will wane. Even though many voters are disappointed that more jobs have not been created on Obama’s watch, they have not seen Gingrich, Santorum or Romney detail realistic job creation plans. To become the GOP presidential nominee, one of them must differentiate from the pack and Transportation funding is a proven means to illustrate realistic job creation. So Congress may negotiate a Transportation bill that includes Highway, Transit and some HSR funding. In that scenario, Romney is most likely to endorse the new Transportation bill to differentiate himself from Gingrich and Santorum. Despite flip-flopping, Romney remembers that significant Highway, transit and HSR investment and job creation (Boston Big Dig, Boston Transit and more Amtrak NEC) made a positive difference to jobs under his watch. If Romney is the leading GOP candidate by then, it would give air cover for more Congressional GOP to split from the Tea Party on Transportation funding. Of course, Romney and Congressional GOPs in battleground states may continuing to pander to the Tea Party until the election. But if they do, President Obama wins this valuable leadership point leading up to the election because he’s been asking for more “job creating” Transportation funding since day one, while the Tea Party GOP has contemplated its navel.

#### Plan removes key election issue for obama

Dorsey, 12(Thomas, CEO, Soul of America, 1/27, <http://www.thetransportpolitic.com/2012/01/25/on-infrastructure-hopes-for-progress-this-year-look-glum/>)

Nevertheless, the Tea Party GOP has painted themselves in such a corner against rebuilding infrastructure/job creation, they are enhancing reelection prospects for Obama and the Demos. How ironic that a platform Repubs and Demos have traditionally found common ground prior to November 2010, will be a platform to separate one over the other.

#### Obamas best chance is to run against GOP obstructionism – only risk of turn because its too late to sell a narrative of successful economic policy

Krugman, 12

Paul, Professor of Economics and International Affairs at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University, NYT, 6/4, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/04/opinion/krugman-this-republican-economy.html?src=me&ref=general>

At this point, however, Mr. Obama and his political team don’t seem to have much choice. They can point with pride to some big economic achievements, above all the successful rescue of the auto industry, which is responsible for a large part of whatever job growth we are managing to get. But they’re not going to be able to sell a narrative of overall economic success. Their best bet, surely, is to do a Harry Truman, to run against the “do-nothing” Republican Congress that has, in reality, blocked proposals — for tax cuts as well as more spending — that would have made 2012 a much better year than it’s turning out to be.

### No Link – Non-Issue

#### Its politically irrelevant – not perceived as key issue, no significant jobs perception and Obama can’t spin it

Freemark, 12

Yonah Freemark is an independent researcher currently working in France on comparative urban development as part of a Gordon Grand Fellowship from Yale University, from which he graduated in May 2008 with a BA in architecture. He writes about transportation and land use issues for The Transport Politic and The Infrastructurist, 1/25, http://www.thetransportpolitic.com/2012/01/25/on-infrastructure-hopes-for-progress-this-year-look-glum/

In the context of the presidential race, Mr. Obama’s decision not to continue his previously strong advocacy of more and more transportation funding suggests that the campaign sees the issue as politically irrelevant. If the Administration made an effort last year to convince Americans of the importance of improving infrastructure, there seems to have been fewer positive results in terms of popular perceptions than hoped for. Perhaps the rebuffs from Republican governors on high-speed rail took their toll; perhaps the few recovery projects that entered construction were not visible enough (or at least their federal funding was not obvious enough); perhaps the truth of the matter is that people truly care more about issues like unemployment and health care than they do for public transit and roads.

#### Voters don’t care – not high priority

**Pew, 11** (Pew Research Center, 1/20, http://www.people-press.org/2011/01/20/about-the-surveys/)

Improving the nation’s roads, bridges, and transportation does not rank as a particularly high priority for Democrats, Republicans or independents. Still, Democrats are more likely to see this as important (41% top priority vs. 30% of independents, 26% of Republicans. This is the case for dealing with obesity as well.

### Too Early

#### Too early – uniqueness and link should be treated with grain of salt

Sabato, 5/31/12 (Larry, Director, UVA Center For Politics, <http://www.centerforpolitics.org/crystalball/articles/presidential-polling-in-june-flip-a-coin-instead/>)

With all of the polls, models and history at their disposal, political analysts should be able to figure out who is going to win a November presidential election by June, right? Well, not quite. While we would modestly suggest to Socrates and our readers that we know more than nothing about the election, declaring the winner with certainty at this point is a fool’s errand, particularly when the current data argue only that the contest will be a close one. In the RealClearPolitics average of national horse race polls as of Wednesday, President Obama was narrowly ahead of Mitt Romney by 2.0 percentage points. Meanwhile, in last week’s Crystal Ball, Alan Abramowitz showed how his respected presidential election model forecasts a very tight race at this point, with Obama as a slight favorite. But surely, this year is an outlier, many would assert. Because of the unique circumstances surrounding this election, including the great economic dislocation caused by the 2008 crash and the restless mood of Americans even after three straight wave elections, it’s understandable that this contest would remain hazy late into the spring. That’s true. But uncertainty in June is not unique, at least not in modern history. If anyone doubts that a reassessment — maybe several of them — will come as 2012 wears on, consider this: Over the past eight elections, Gallup — the most recognizable of polling organizations — has only identified the eventual popular vote winner twice in its early June horse race polling: In June 1980, President Jimmy Carter led Ronald Reagan 39% to 32%, with independent John Anderson at 21%. In November, Reagan defeated Carter, 51% to 41%, with Anderson getting less than 7%. Remember that this race appeared close until the very end, with some polling even indicating that Carter might actually win just a few days before the election. But Reagan proved his mettle in a late debate, and Carter’s attempt to negotiate freedom for the American hostages in Iran failed. Those late developments helped turn a close election into a blowout. Note, also, Anderson’s strong early performance in polls: Third party candidates sometimes appear formidable in early surveys and then fade away as the election gets closer, victims of the voters’ desire not to “waste” their ballots. The polling was fairly stable in 1984. In June, Reagan already led Walter Mondale by 53% to 44%. The incumbent won 59% in the fall. Such early polling, and Reagan’s strength, prompted Mondale to throw a Hail Mary by selecting Geraldine Ferraro as his running mate. Like most Hail Marys, the pass was incomplete. By 1988, the June polling was far more misleading: Michael Dukakis was ahead of George H.W. Bush by a landslide, 52% to 38%. Bush ended up winning more than 53% in November. The June 1992 polling projected the nation’s first independent president, Ross Perot. At 39%, Perot easily topped Bush (31%) and Bill Clinton at 25%. Less than five months later, the order was reversed: Clinton won with 43%, Bush (37%) was ousted and Perot finished last with 19%, failing to win a single electoral vote. However, Perot maintained his support to a greater degree than most independent candidates do down the stretch. Gallup’s June 1996 survey got Clinton’s reelection percentage right on the nose (49%), but Bob Dole, at 33%, was well below his eventual 41% and Perot had 17% in June but finished with about 8% in November. Like 1984, Clinton’s reelection bid lacked drama. The squeaker of 2000 was close even in June, but Gallup had George W. Bush up over Al Gore, 46% to 41%. Come November, Gore won the popular vote by half a percentage point, though of course he lost the Electoral College vote. Gallup had John Kerry well on his way to avenging Gore’s loss in June 2004. Kerry led Bush outside the margin of error at 49% to 43%. Instead, Bush grabbed his second term with 51% in November. It’s rarely recalled, but John McCain actually led Barack Obama by a whisker in Gallup’s daily tracking at the beginning of June 2008, 46% to 45%. It wasn’t close in the fall, with Obama winning 53%. And the uncertainty goes back further. Jimmy Carter looked as though he would roll Gerald Ford in 1976; instead, the election ended up incredibly tight. So did the 1960 and 1968 contests. As we never tire of repeating, Harry Truman shocked the world in 1948 by defeating “President-elect” Thomas E. Dewey. This is not meant to cast aspersions on Gallup; rather, it’s to say that presidential races are not static, and that polling conducted five months before the election is only a snapshot in time, as opposed to a reliable prediction as to how the race will eventually shake out. As of Wednesday, Obama and Romney were tied, 46%-46%, in the Gallup poll. Obviously, this is a matchup that could go either way. Almost everything can change, and frequently does, during the course of the summer and fall in a presidential race. The economy can get decidedly better or worse. International crises can pop up — or peace can break out. Unexpected scandals can engulf one or both major party candidates. One or more independents or third-party candidates may prove influential in the presidential tally. Politics, as we’ve insisted for years, is a good thing. And a fun thing, too, for people who do not treat American elections as a life or death affair. There will be many spectacles between now and Nov. 6, and plenty of unexpected developments in this semi-scripted human drama. But while we know the road to the finish line will be fascinating, let’s also grant that it will be somewhat unpredictable. For those of you who can’t wait, just join the partisans on both sides who absolutely, positively know their side will win — in a landslide! One side will be right, more or less, and after the election, the winners will lord their perceptiveness over friends, family and the opposition. And if your partisanship isn’t intense enough for this route, there’s always that coin in your pocket. With the prospect of a tight presidential race, a good flip may tell you as much as June polls.

#### Too early – nothing matters now and voters aren’t paying attention

Silver, 5/15/12(Nate,chief pollster for New York Times’ 538 election polling center. Regarded as top-level pollster based on distinct mathematical models <http://fivethirtyeight.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/05/15/a-30000-foot-view-on-the-presidential-race/>)

What I am less convinced by is the idea that anything in the campaign — the day-to-day stories that the news media covers — has mattered very much so far. One of the reasons that campaign stories have been so trivial lately is because if one of the campaigns has an especially strong line of attack on their opponent, or a great piece of opposition research, it does not make a lot of sense to drop it now when most voters are not paying attention yet. It is still extremely early for a general election campaign. If the period after Labor Day qualifies as the pennant race, and the summer of the general election year the regular season, we are still playing preseason baseball now.

#### Can’t predict the election – unforeseen alt causes trump

Cunningham 11 (Pat, Columnist – RRS, “Here’s Why Outcome of Next Presidential Election is Impossible to Predict at this Point”, Rockford Register Star, 12-13, http://blogs.e-rockford.com/applesauce/2011/12/13/heres-why-outcome-of-next-presidential-election-is-impossible-to-predict-at-this-point/)

Forty-seven weeks from today, tens of millions of Americans will flock to polling places all across the country to cast ballots in the presidential election of 2012 — and right now it’s anybody’s guess as to what kind of collective judgment they will make. I mean anybody’s guess. That’s not just a profound grasp of the obvious. Rather, it’s a confident prediction that many, many weeks will pass before any confident prediction of the election outcome can be made. The principal reason for this is that, in my 50 years of following these matters, I’ve never seen such volatility in the national political mood. I say this as a pundit whose own smug predictions, in some cases, have been made to look silly in recent months. To wit, as recently as a few months ago, I was saying that Newt Gingrich had absolutely no chance — none, zip, zilch, nada — of winning the Republican presidential nomination. But look at him now. As some other pundit put it just the other day, Gingrich has gone from an afterthought to a juggernaut in the pro verbial blink of an eye. But the topsy-turvy race for the GOP nomination isn’t the only reason why it’s foolish to say how the election of 11 months hence is likely to play out. Another is that President Obama, for all his troubles, has maintained a fairly steady position in the polls and has yet to fall far behind any of his potential Republican rivals in hypothetical match-ups. Just yesterday, the difference between Obama’s overall approval and disapproval ratings in the Gallup Daily Tracking poll was within the survey’s margin of error. Nor has Obama’s approval rating ever been as low as Ronald Reagan’s was at one point in his first term. All of this suggests that the president may or may not be in terrible shape by the time Americans begin making up their minds before voting next year. Then, too, Obama’s standing among voters inevitably will be influenced by public perceptions of the person the Republicans choose to run against him. It’s one thing to say that the incumbent looks less than strong in a hypothetical race with a generic opponent. But his GOP challenger won’t be a generic person. It will be an actual person with actual strengths and weaknesses. In the final analysis, the following are among the most important factors that will make the election outcome impossible to predict with any confidence until the final days of the campaign: –Money: Well more than a billion dollars is likely to be spent in efforts to influence the electorate. The sum will dwarf anything we’ve ever seen before. Many of these expenditures will be relatively ineffective, but some of them could well tip the balance in a few key states. –Personalities: Beyond the issues of governance on which civic-minded voters are supposed to base their ballot choices, there’s the all-important matter of likability. I’ve often told the story of how Ronald Reagan still would have defeated Democrat Walter Mondale in 1984, even if they had switched all their positions on the issues. Reagan’s likability trumped almost all other considerations. Unpredictable events: Elections can pivot, at times, on occurrences that no one saw coming — natural disasters, foreign crises, foolish gaffes, sudden scandals, etc. Given all these factors and more, I’m not even ready to subscribe to the conventional political wisdom that the presidential race of 2012 is likely to be a close one, with the winner prevailing only by a small margin. For all we know at this point, it might turn out to be a landslide.

#### It’s complex, non-linear, and history proves prediction’s impossible

Teitelbaum 11 (Robert, Reporter – Daily Deal, “Prediction and Its Discontents”, Daily Deal, 9-7, Lexis)

I guess you could have predicted this. With the world a mess -- call it disequilibrium, nonlinear perturbations, turbulence, possibly a phase change, perhaps a revolution, certainly a damn load of woe -- prediction as a respectable way to expend mental energy has suddenly become about as popular as Osama bin Laden futures. Now the truth is I've had serious doubts about the ability of anyone (including myself) to predict -- economists, analysts, especially pundits, most spectacularly anyone on television -- for some time now, certainly as long as I've realized the irrefutable fact that most stock pickers really stink, and that even the best have a lot of trouble sustaining a market-beating run. I would boast about this (well, I am) except that skepticism about prediction doesn't require genius, just a modest appreciation for history and a distrust of authority figures, like local weathermen and politicians. Living through the last decade has been one tutorial after another on the failure of prediction, in particularly, but not exclusively, the failure of markets to see around the corner: the dot-com bust, Sept. 11, the mortgage bubble, the financial crisis, the euro-zone mess, right on down to Hurricane Irene. In fact every decade teaches that lesson, though we are, as a species, very poor students in that regard. That's a long preamble to the fact that the papers and blogosphere seem to be awash in denunciations of prediction today. The cover of this week's Bloomberg Businessweek is http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/the-god-clause-and-the-reinsurance-industry-09012011.html|artfully apocalyptic in the run-up to the Sept. 11 anniversary, with a cover line for a story on reinsurance that declares, "Risk: A Decade of Disaster Has Made Predicting Impossible." Not a lot of nuance in that statement. In the Financial Times, the always-estimable John Kay, who was very early and sophisticated on such topics, http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/b1972594-d874-11e0-8f0a-00144feabdc0.html#axzz1XHOfPSna|hammers economists one more time Wednesday about why they're often wrong. Kay has come back from his holiday clearly re-energized to dismantle economic pretensions, as we've noted http://www.thedeal.com/thedealeconomy/the-continuing-critique-of-economics.php|here and http://pipeline.thedeal.com/tdd/ViewBlog.dl?id=39112|here. But in this column, he dwells on reflexivity generated by human systems when folks believe a prediction may be right, thus either leading to an efficient market or to predictions short-circuited by feedback loops. "The economic world, far more than the physical world, is influenced by our beliefs about it," writes Kay, who is nothing if not nuanced. "It is a mistake to ignore the efficient market; it is also a mistake to take it too seriously." Andrew Sullivan, who does not usually paddle about in such waters (although skepticism about prediction does seem to be part of a certain kind of classical conservatism: If you can't see the future clearly, then be careful of advocating for change), http://andrewsullivan.thedailybeast.com/2011/09/countering-expert-failure.html|gathers up a handful of posts from Robin Hanson's Overcoming Bias http://www.overcomingbias.com/2011/09/predict-yourself.html|on personal prediction models and Erica Grieder at The Economist http://www.economist.com/blogs/freeexchange/2011/09/perils-prediction|on journalistic prediction. Sullivan asks, "How can we make prediction more valuable?" He then http://thefifthwave.wordpress.com/2011/09/06/analyzing-events/|links to a long and interesting summation of the issues from a blog called The Fifth Wave, which wrestles mostly with the difficulties of applying linear, Newtonian billiard-ball cause-and-effect concepts to nonlinear human events, that is to history. The Fifth Wave in turn links to two other attacks on prediction, Duncan Watts' book "http://www.amazon.com/Everything-Obvious-Once-Know-Answer/dp/0385531680/ref=sr\_1\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1315241074&sr=1-1|Everything is Obvious," and a book on punditry and its failings by Philip Tetlock, "http://www.amazon.com/Expert-Political-Judgment-Good-Know/dp/0691128715/ref=sr\_1\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1315241122&sr=1-1|Expert Political Judgment," that suggests that "great experts in world politics have been wrong often enough to put in doubt the whole concept of expertise." No knock on Tetlock, but that was pretty obvious. Still, the Fifth Wave does set up the problem nicely. "In brief, we love to stretch common sense and Newtonian (or billiard-ball) causation beyond the breaking point. When we fail, we take it for granted it was because of insufficient information. This too is a failure of understanding. It's not that we lack enough information, it's that no amount of information can ever be enough. Human events unfold within complex systems governed by weird, nonlinear dynamics. Prediction by means of billiard-ball mechanics is impossible, in principle. Because each complex system develops in unique ways, events are also rarely susceptible to probabilistic analysis. Rightly considered, a question like "Who will win the 2012 presidential elections?" refers to a single token. There have been no previous 2012 presidential elections to average out with this one.

### AT – Iran Impact

#### Iran retaliation will stay limited – multiple factors prevent escalation

Kroenig, 12(Matthew, professor of Government at Georgetown University and a Stanton Nuclear Security Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, Foreign Affairs, Feb, http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/136917/matthew-kroenig/time-to-attack-iran)

SETTING THE RIGHT REDLINES The fact that the United States can likely set back or destroy Iran's nuclear program does not necessarily mean that it should. Such an attack could have potentially devastating consequences -- for international security, the global economy, and Iranian domestic politics -- all of which need to be accounted for. To begin with, critics note, U.S. military action could easily spark a full-blown war. Iran might retaliate against U.S. troops or allies, launching missiles at military installations or civilian populations in the Gulf or perhaps even Europe. It could activate its proxies abroad, stirring sectarian tensions in Iraq, disrupting the Arab Spring, and ordering terrorist attacks against Israel and the United States. This could draw Israel or other states into the fighting and compel the United States to escalate the conflict in response. Powerful allies of Iran, including China and Russia, may attempt to economically and diplomatically isolate the United States. In the midst of such spiraling violence, neither side may see a clear path out of the battle, resulting in a long-lasting, devastating war, whose impact may critically damage the United States' standing in the Muslim world. Those wary of a U.S. strike also point out that Iran could retaliate by attempting to close the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow access point to the Persian Gulf through which roughly 20 percent of the world's oil supply travels. And even if Iran did not threaten the strait, speculators, fearing possible supply disruptions, would bid up the price of oil, possibly triggering a wider economic crisis at an already fragile moment. None of these outcomes is predetermined, however; indeed, the United States could do much to mitigate them. Tehran would certainly feel like it needed to respond to a U.S. attack, in order to reestablish deterrence and save face domestically. But it would also likely seek to calibrate its actions to avoid starting a conflict that could lead to the destruction of its military or the regime itself. In all likelihood, the Iranian leadership would resort to its worst forms of retaliation, such as closing the Strait of Hormuz or launching missiles at southern Europe, only if it felt that its very existence was threatened. A targeted U.S. operation need not threaten Tehran in such a fundamental way. To make sure it doesn't and to reassure the Iranian regime, the United States could first make clear that it is interested only in destroying Iran's nuclear program, not in overthrowing the government. It could then identify certain forms of retaliation to which it would respond with devastating military action, such as attempting to close the Strait of Hormuz, conducting massive and sustained attacks on Gulf states and U.S. troops or ships, or launching terrorist attacks in the United States itself. Washington would then need to clearly articulate these "redlines" to Tehran during and after the attack to ensure that the message was not lost in battle. And it would need to accept the fact that it would have to absorb Iranian responses that fell short of these redlines without escalating the conflict. This might include accepting token missile strikes against U.S. bases and ships in the region -- several salvos over the course of a few days that soon taper off -- or the harassment of commercial and U.S. naval vessels. To avoid the kind of casualties that could compel the White House to escalate the struggle, the United States would need to evacuate nonessential personnel from U.S. bases within range of Iranian missiles and ensure that its troops were safely in bunkers before Iran launched its response. Washington might also need to allow for stepped-up support to Iran's proxies in Afghanistan and Iraq and missile and terrorist attacks against Israel. In doing so, it could induce Iran to follow the path of Iraq and Syria, both of which refrained from starting a war after Israel struck their nuclear reactors in 1981 and 2007, respectively.

#### Even if that fails – US can deescalate quickly and no regional war

Kroenig, 12(Matthew, professor of Government at Georgetown University and a Stanton Nuclear Security Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, Foreign Affairs, Feb, http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/136917/matthew-kroenig/time-to-attack-iran)

Even if Tehran did cross Washington's redlines, the United States could still manage the confrontation. At the outset of any such violation, it could target the Iranian weapons that it finds most threatening to prevent Tehran from deploying them. To de-escalate the situation quickly and prevent a wider regional war, the United States could also secure the agreement of its allies to avoid responding to an Iranian attack. This would keep other armies, particularly the Israel Defense Forces, out of the fray. Israel should prove willing to accept such an arrangement in exchange for a U.S. promise to eliminate the Iranian nuclear threat. Indeed, it struck a similar agreement with the United States during the Gulf War, when it refrained from responding to the launching of Scud missiles by Saddam Hussein.

### AT – Warming Impact

#### Even if Romney and GOP win – dems block EPA rollback

Star Ledger, 12(6/3, <http://blog.nj.com/njv_editorial_page/2012/06/scary_times_for_environment_--.html>)

Yes, there are restraints on how bad this could get. Some of the EPA’s toughest regulations were put in place as a result of lawsuits. One example is the rule limiting mercury emissions from coal plants. New Jersey, in the pre-Christie era, was one of the states that filed that lawsuit. A President Romney might not be able to reverse those regulations without new legislation. And even if Republicans make gains, Democrats will be able to block the worst legislation with 41 votes in the Senate. The dreaded filibuster rule could finally come in handy.

#### Romneys bluffing – its just a campaign tactic

Star Ledger, 12(6/3, <http://blog.nj.com/njv_editorial_page/2012/06/scary_times_for_environment_--.html>)

And, of course, you never know how seriously to take Romney. You get the sense he might not believe some of the crazy things he says, that he wouldn’t be as bad as he promises to be. As governor of Massachusetts, he imposed tough emissions rules on coal plants, and even stood outside one and said, "This plant kills people."