

Date: February 27, 2013

To: Friends of Democracy Corps and Women's Voices. Women Vote Action Fund

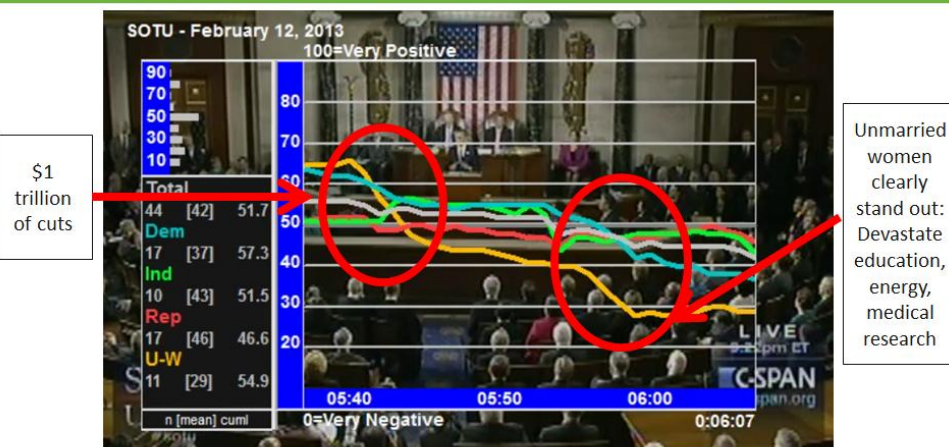
From: Stan Greenberg, Democracy Corps
Erica Seifert, Greenberg Quinlan Rosner
Page Gardner, Women's Voices. Women Vote Action Fund

Public looking for investment and balanced approach in face of sequester

Unmarried women fear sequester budget cuts

As the country approaches the next self-imposed crisis deadline of the prolonged budget battle, politicians in Washington and state capitals across the country would do well to take note: swing voters have no appetite for the severe cuts that will result from the sequester, and they have little patience for the crisis-to-crisis approach to fiscal governance that has defined the last two years. And now, as they are poised to experience painful austerity measures induced by Washington, these voters give clear signals about what the policy priorities should be moving forward. They are also very clear about who should be the priority in any budget deal—the middle class, seniors, and working families, rather than the wealthiest and elites with access to the halls of power.

Deep budget cuts from the sequester worry unmarried women, especially cuts to education, energy and medical research



In 2011, Congress passed a law saying that if both parties couldn't agree on a plan to reach our deficit goal, **about a trillion dollars' worth of budget cuts would automatically go into effect this year.** These sudden, harsh, arbitrary cuts would jeopardize our military readiness, **they'd devastate priorities like education and energy and medical research.** They would certainly slow our recovery and cost us hundreds of thousands of jobs.

10 G Street NE ♦ Suite 500 ♦ Washington, DC 20002

202.478.8300 tel ♦ 202.478.8301 fax

www.democracycorps.com

These voters, especially the unmarried women who formed almost one-fourth of the electorate and were critical to President Obama's success in the 2012 election, are on the edge financially and face immense economic pressure on a daily basis. Yet their approach to the budget and fiscal choices is much clearer than elites' in Washington. These voters can ill-afford to experience these cuts of essential support. And as the country hurtles toward sequestration, all voters, certainly Democrats and independents, prioritize a balanced approach that does not put the burden on the backs of the most vulnerable, and instead invests in education, research, and infrastructure in a long-term and meaningful way.

To find out how these voters are thinking about the big fiscal choices ahead and the President's second term policy agenda, Greenberg Quinlan Rosner, along with Democracy Corps, the Roosevelt Institute, and Women's Voices. Women Vote Action Fund, conducted dial meter and follow-up focus groups with 44 swing voters (including 11 unmarried women) in Denver, Colorado during the 2013 State of the Union address. These voters in Denver watched closely and responded positively to President Obama's speech.¹ The President's supporters cheered his bolder approach and stronger tone. Even those who began the night more skeptical of the President left the speech hopeful that he will take action on some of his key policy proposals.

But most of all, these voters – especially unmarried women – struggle to comprehend how Washington could allow a series of cuts to take effect when the economy is fragile and they are struggling to make ends meet. To them, Washington's dysfunction comes at a steep price.

All these swing voters signal overwhelming agreement on Obama's budget policy choices for balanced growth focused on creating good, middle class jobs, not solely focused on deficit reduction. The President received high marks on having good plans on the economy and looking out for the middle class, and calling for equal pay for equal work.

“Deficit reduction alone is not an economic plan”

More than any other group, unmarried women are deeply opposed to the sharp cuts of the sequester and the crisis approach to fiscal governance. Republicans and independents paused for a moment on not prioritizing a deficit plan. Unmarried women's line climbed more steeply and topped out higher than any other group when the President said, *“Deficit reduction alone is not an economic plan. A growing economy that creates good, middle-class jobs, that must be the North Star that guides our efforts.”* All voters rose with the President's assertion that the priority is growth with middle class jobs.

¹ Based on dial testing focus group research conducted on February 12, 2013, by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner for Democracy Corps, Women's Voices. Women Vote Action Fund, and the Economic Media Project. Research was among 44 swing voters in Denver, Colorado, using Perception Analyzer by Dialsmith.

Unmarried women respond sharply to “deficit reduction alone is not an economic plan.”



Most of us agree that a plan to reduce the deficit must be part of our agenda. But let's be clear: *Deficit reduction alone is not an economic plan. A growing economy that creates good, middle-class jobs, that must be the North Star that guides our efforts.*

Above all, unmarried women responded very positively to the President's investment language. Unmarried women responded more positively than any other group to the idea that Washington should set party aside to replace “reckless cuts with...investments in our future.” Independents topped all others in response to the manufactured crises of the fiscal cliff.

A budget that “replaces reckless cuts with smart savings and wise investments in our future” wins broad support...



So let's set party interests aside and work to pass a budget that replaces reckless cuts with smart savings and wise investments in our future. And let's do it without the brinksmanship that stresses consumers and scares off investors. The greatest nation on Earth cannot keep conducting its business by drifting from one manufactured crisis to the next. We can't do it.

Unmarried women and independents were particularly concerned about the prospect of cutting investments in education, job training, and retirement security. In focus groups following the speech, unmarried women noted that budget cuts have already had a discernible impact on their children's schools. As one woman noted, as a result of budget cuts, her daughter is “never in school! Every week there's a furlough day and half day and service day, have Friday off this week, its driving me insane, I thought that I was in school much more...it's rare they complete an entire week of school anymore without having time off.” Further and future cuts to education, to these women, seemed like the worst approach to balancing the budget.

Not cutting education, jobs training, Medicare and Social Security biggest spike yet – with unmarried women and independents above Democrats



Now, some in this Congress have proposed preventing only the defense cuts by making even bigger cuts to things like education and job training, Medicare and Social Security benefits. *That idea is even worse.*

These women, as well as independents and Democrats, are looking for further, not reduced, investments in the programs that they believe will grow the economy and the middle class. As a result, unmarried women tracked closely with the Democratic line, giving strong support to the President's call to not shift the cost of deficit reduction onto struggling families and communities, and forcing them to "lay off more teachers and more cops and more firefighters."

It's the economy, sisters and brothers

For all these swing voters, the context for this speech and for the impending budget cuts is an economy that still has many struggling to make it work at the end of every month. The President got one of his biggest responses when he talked not about progress, but the decade of people struggling to make ends meet. Unmarried women and Democrats responded more than anyone else, but independents were right with them.

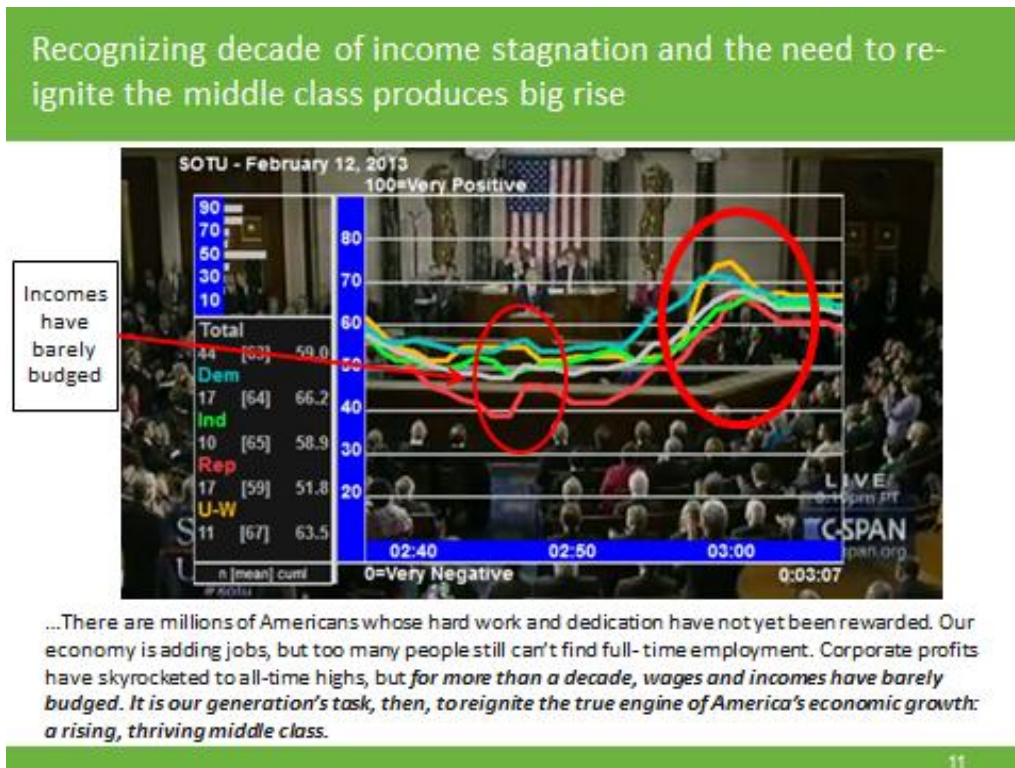
These women in the post-speech focus groups expressed a keen awareness that this is not their parents' economy—that it is increasingly difficult to achieve economic security on a single household income.

You can't survive on one income. You can't buy gas.

I work 7 days a week to afford my house, my car.

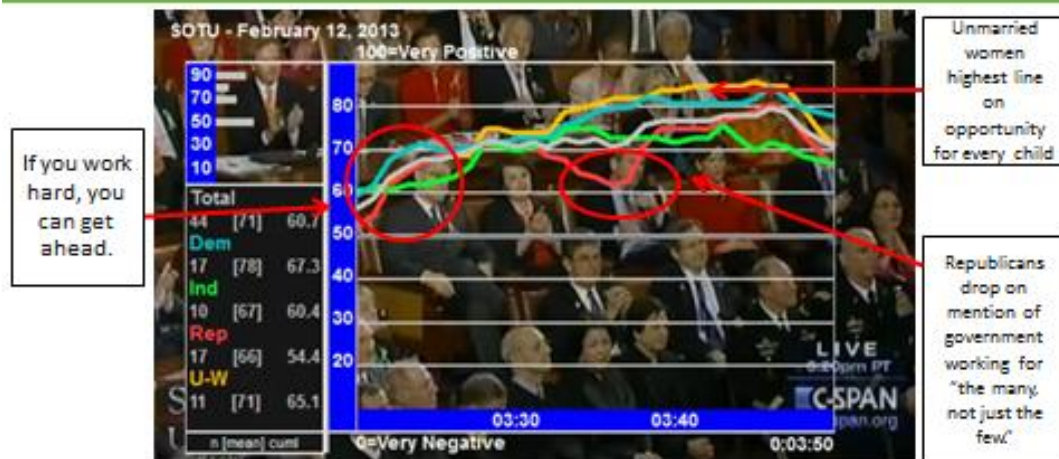
Oftentimes I worked 5 jobs, never saw the kids. They raised themselves. A majority of politicians don't understand the hardship.

All these swing voters rose when the President recognized the struggle of this economy and called for an end to a decade of income stagnation by re-igniting a rising, thriving middle class.



All these swing groups gave the President high support when he invoked the need to “*restore the basic bargain that built this country, the idea that if you work hard and meet your responsibilities, you can get ahead, no matter where you come from, no matter what you look like or who you love. It is our unfinished task to make sure that this government works on behalf of the many, and not just the few, that it encourages free enterprise, rewards individual initiative, and opens the doors of opportunity to every child across this great nation.*” But it is unmarried women who responded strongly to the idea of helping every child have the opportunity to succeed.

All lines rise for restoring middle class bargain; unmarried women highest line on government that works for many, and not just the few



It is our unfinished task to restore the basic bargain that built this country, *the idea that if you work hard and meet your responsibilities, you can get ahead, no matter where you come from, no matter what you look like or who you love*. It is our unfinished task to make sure that *this government works on behalf of the many, and not just the few*, that it encourages free enterprise, rewards individual initiative, and opens the doors of opportunity to every child across this great nation.

13

And strong support for President's agenda, starting with minimum wage and pay equity

To that end, the President's call to raise the minimum wage received an overwhelming response from all but Republican voters, including on linking the minimum wage to the cost of living.

Pay equity—in the form of the Paycheck Fairness Act—was especially well-received by these swing voters; at the end, unmarried women topped the chart at 93 on the dial meter. These women (the ones who would be most impacted by new efforts to achieve pay equity) were very receptive to pay equity, but remain concerned that it is still an issue and fear that the government will not have the capacity to bring about real change. In follow-up conversations, one woman said that she did not realize she was a victim of inequity in the workplace until she finally asked a male colleague what he earned—it was three dollars more per hour than she made.

I can't believe we still have this issue.

A man and I were talking and we do the exact same job. We got to talking and he made \$3 more an hour. But there's no way to prove it. There have to be laws in place that tell employers that they have to do it.

They don't have to tell women the reason why they aren't being hired.

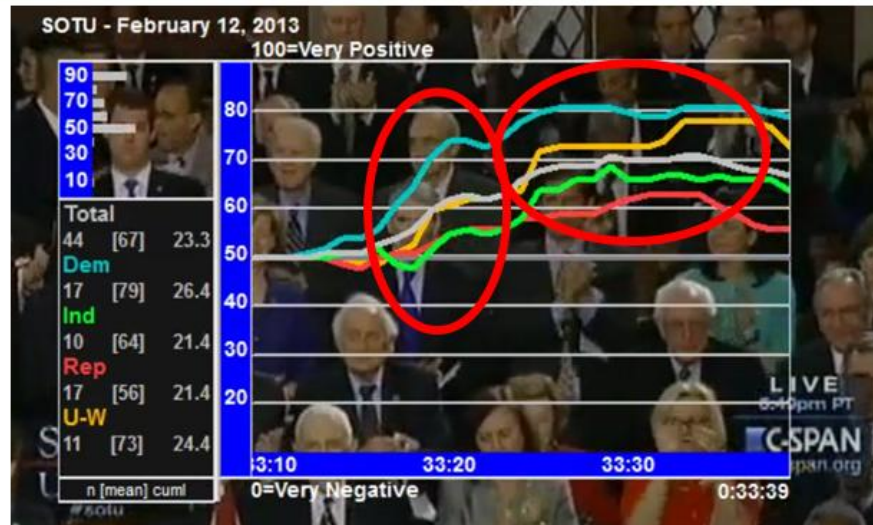
The Paycheck Fairness Act takes unmarried women to 93;
Democrats and independents also very strong



And I ask this Congress to declare that women should earn a living equal to their efforts and finally pass the Paycheck Fairness Act this year.

The women had a lot of solidarity on these issues from Democrats and independents when they responded sharply to the President's line that women should be "free from discrimination in the workplace and free from the fear of domestic violence," and again to the President's statement that the Senate had just passed the Violence Against Women Act.

The Violence Against Women Act produces big spike and sustained support, especially among Democrats and unmarried women



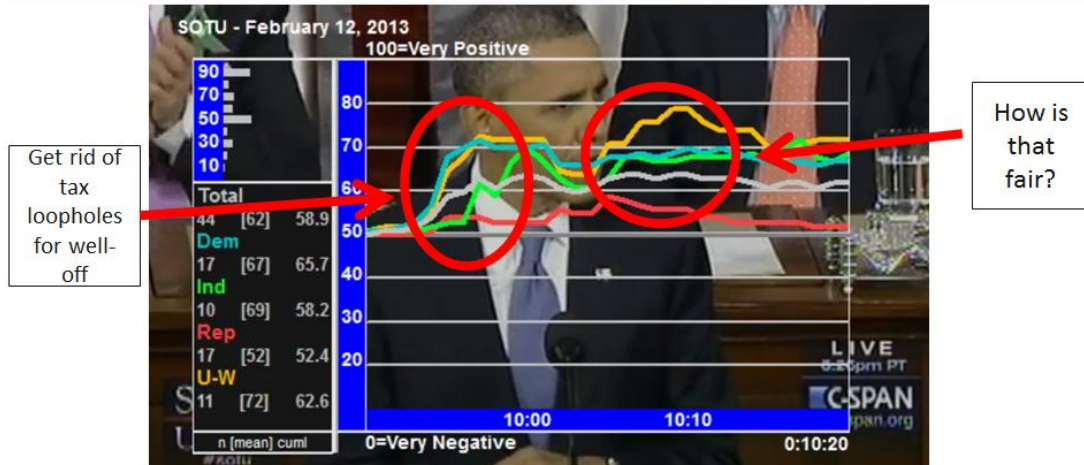
We know our economy is stronger when our wives, our mothers, our daughters can live their lives **free from discrimination in the workplace and free from the fear of domestic violence**. Today, **the Senate passed the Violence Against Women Act** that Joe Biden originally wrote almost 20 years ago. And I now urge the House to do the same.

While Obama's education proposals get strong support from all these swing voters, education is a cornerstone of the economy and survival for these women especially. Not surprisingly, these women were very receptive to universal preschool: their collective dials jumped more than 20 points. And on new policies to make higher education more affordable, the lines for unmarried women surpassed the Democrats' line when the President asked colleges to do their part to keep costs down. As one woman noted in follow-up discussions, *"My grandkids are going to pay off my student loans."*

Special interest tax loopholes and tax fairness

These swing voters, led by these unmarried women, are strongly opposed to balancing the budget on the backs of those who are most vulnerable by making cuts to the programs on which they depend. Instead, they strongly support raising taxes on the wealthiest 1 percent and spiked very high on the dials when the President asked Congress to eliminate tax loopholes for the wealthy and well-connected. Unmarried women were clearly in the lead when the President set up the basic equation of the economy: *"why would we choose to make deeper cuts to education and Medicare just to protect special interest tax breaks? How is that fair?"*

Closing loopholes for well-off jumps all but Republicans, and unmarried women spike on avoiding deeper cuts in education and Medicare

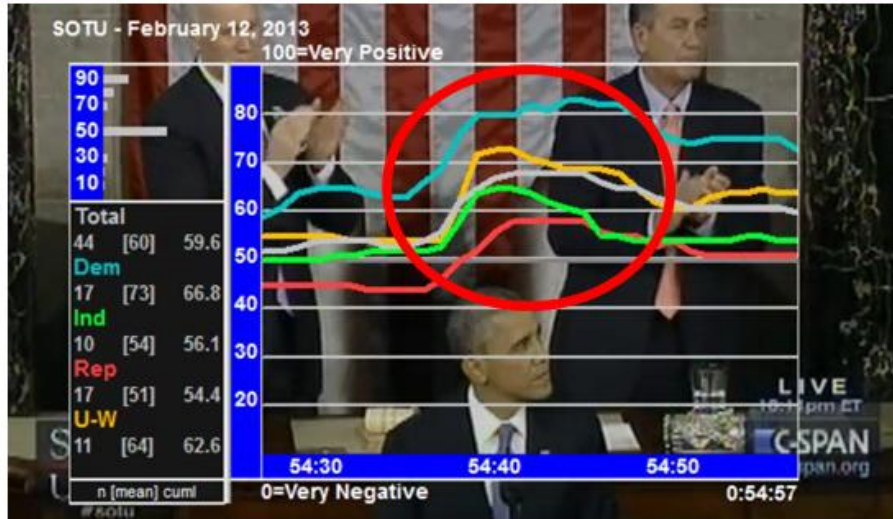


We should do what leaders in both parties have already suggested and save hundreds of billions of dollars by **getting rid of tax loopholes and deductions for the well-off and the well-connected**. After all, **why would we choose to make deeper cuts to education and Medicare just to protect special interest tax breaks? How is that fair?** Why is it that deficit reduction is a big emergency, justifying making cuts in Social Security benefits, but not closing some loopholes?

“They deserve a vote”

The unmarried women’s line rose steeper than any of the others—Democrats led the way but independents followed, too—when the President spoke of Hadiya Pendleton, saying, “*Hadiya’s parents, Nate and Cleo, are in this chamber tonight, along with more than two dozen Americans whose lives have been torn apart by gun violence. They deserve a vote.*” These voters, unmarried women in particular, reacted intensely to this emotional moment in the speech.

These proposals “deserve a vote” spikes all respondents – rhetorically successful



Hadiya's parents, Nate and Cleo, are in this chamber tonight, along with more than two dozen Americans whose lives have been torn apart by gun violence. They deserve a vote.

Universal background checks spiked all voters, and in follow-up focus groups unmarried women (half of whom are gun owners themselves) noted that it is past time that we took smart action on gun reform.

There's no reason on earth why anybody in the United States of America other than military or the law enforcement should have semi-automatic weapons.

I agree, assault rifles and stuff.

Big magazines, and I realize that criminals, you can buy anything you want out on the street. But they need to do something to stop this.

Unmarried women push further

Following the speech, unmarried women gave the President high marks on his leadership. In a survey conducted immediately after the speech, the President gained 9 points on his personal rating among unmarried women. He also made significant gains on having realistic solutions for the country's problems (18-point increase from pre- to post-speech) and looking out for the middle class (28-point increase from pre- to post-speech).

While the unmarried women in our group appreciated the President's calls for pay equity and raising the minimum wage, it was clear that this is just a beginning. These women are keenly aware that a single income, even from a middle class job, is not worth what it was to their parents, many of whom maintained middle class households on a single income—their father's paycheck. One woman noted that at one point she was working five jobs. Another said that she must work seven days a week to make ends meet—and she is a college-educated woman with a middle class career. They are careful about their spending and do not have much left over to put away. For these women, many of whom are raising children on their own, the cost of childcare alone can be prohibitive. One woman noted that the cost of private daycare is almost half of a paycheck.

In order to really win with these voters, the Obama administration will need to show real results on pay fairness, coupled with programs to support single income earners, including better family leave and childcare policies.

There are women who come into our office with disabilities but they have three children in tow and they can make minimum wage, where are they going to get a job where they can put 3 toddlers in day care?

One of my coworkers just had a baby and you know was out on maternity leave, came back, and then kind of looked at day care versus working and she said that if she's going to pay for day care it'd be more than half her salary so it was more economical for her to stay home with her baby than to keep working.

Additionally, while they were very receptive to the speech, unmarried women held back in some important ways. Despite giving him high marks on pay equity and education during the speech, these women believe the President hit only the baseline and must go further. As a result, among unmarried women, the President declined slightly on his ability to understand the challenges facing people like themselves. And in follow-up focus groups, unmarried women noted that pay equity is just the starting point for improving the economy for people like themselves.

<i>Measures</i>	<i>Pre-Speech</i>	<i>Post-Speech</i>	<i>Shift</i>
Looks out for the middle class: Total describes well	45	73	+28
Has good plans for the economy: Total describes well	54	72	+18
Has realistic solutions to the country's problems: Total describes well	55	73	+18
The economy: Obama more than Republicans	63	73	+10
Strong leader: Total describes well	72	82	+10
Obama thermometer rating: Total warm	73	82	+9

Women's Issues: Obama more than Republicans	73	64	-9
Understands challenges facing people like me	63	55	-8
Moving the country in a direction that reflects your values: Obama more than Republicans	73	73	0

Methodology

Research was conducted on February 12, 2013 by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research for Democracy Corps, Women's Voices. Women Vote Action Fund and the Economic Media Project. Participants were 44 swing voters from the Denver, Colorado metro area who split their votes evenly between Democratic and Republican candidates over the past several Presidential and Congressional elections. 25 women and 19 men split their 2012 votes for President based on Colorado statewide results, and split the 2010 votes evenly between U.S. Senate candidates (Bennett/Buck).

Dial testing focus group research was conducted using the Perception Analyzer powered by Di-alsmith. Perception Analyzer measures participant opinions in a real-time, second-by-second methodology that provides instant and precise measurements of quantitative research within a qualitative audience. Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research measured and examined several participant subsets including political identification, candidate preference and many demographic variables to aid analysis.