

Beyond the Beltway: The Economic Forces Driving the Heather Boushey, Carroll Doherty,

MODERATOR: *Neil King Jr.*

THE FISCAL SUMMIT'S final session explored the way the economy has impacted the 2016 campaign, the way the campaigns have reached out to voters on these issues, and the implications for fiscal policy reforms post-election. The *Wall Street Journal's* Neil King Jr. began the conversation by asking panelists about the economic factors driving this year's unpredictable campaign.

Carroll Doherty, of the Pew Research Center, said that despite positive economic indicators, many Americans still “feel left behind ... and you see it play out in the primary campaign.” Trump supporters in particular, he said, are “feeling bad about most things” in the country and are “angry at the government.”

The American Enterprise Institute's James Pethokoukis, agreed that “economic anxiety” exists and is influencing the campaign, but he also pointed to what he called “cultural anxiety,” which occurs when voters feel the country is changing in ways that affect them personally.

Heather Boushey, of the Washington Center for Equitable Growth, added, “It's hard to deny people's economic reality ... and, I think, for many specific communities around the country, the pain has been deeper than expected.” She said discussions in the campaign about income inequality and economic opportunity have highlighted some “real frustration” among voters, but the key question is whether we have “seen the right set of policy issues on the table” to address their concerns.

All three panelists agreed that trade policy has been a flashpoint for voters. In a shift of traditional party views, the panelists described a growing distrust among Republican voters of free trade agreements and, as Pethokoukis explained, “a real wariness about global

Neil King Jr.
Global Economics Editor,
The Wall Street Journal



2016 Election

James Pethokoukis

economic engagement.” Doherty noted that many Republican working-class voters may feel that “trade has not been good for them,” but he added that some of that sentiment may also simply reflect opposition to the current administration.

Boushey argued for more investment in infrastructure, calling it “probably the most important thing we could be doing” to spur economic growth and productivity. “We’ve seen bridges fall down. But what we’ve not seen is ... the political consensus here in Washington be able to focus on this urgent and pressing question,” she added.

Ultimately, she noted the need for candidates to “connect the dots between what is happening in people’s lives in terms of jobs and incomes and what the fiscal capacity is for our nation to act.”

Heather Boushey
*Executive Director and Chief
Economist, Washington Center for
Equitable Growth*

Carroll Doherty
*Director of Political Research,
Pew Research Center*

James Pethokoukis
*Editor, AEIdeas; and Dewitt Wallace
Fellow, American Enterprise Institute*

