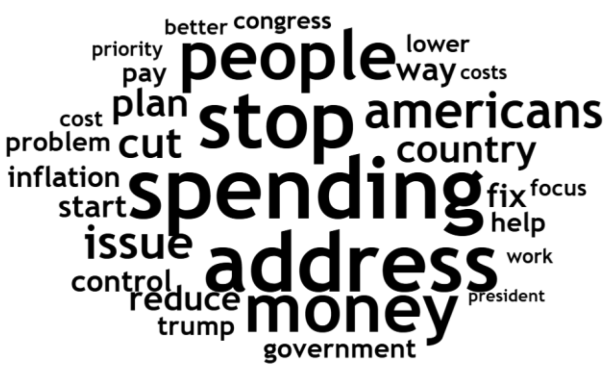
To: Peter G. Peterson Foundation
From: Global Strategy Group & North Star Opinion Research
Date: August 2026
Re: What Voters Are Saying About the National Debt Surpassing $40 Trillion

KEY FINDINGS

News of the national debt exceeding $40 trillion underscores the urgency voters feel. After hearing about the debt passing $40 trillion, voters have a clear message for politicians in Washington: take the issue seriously and come up with a plan to address it.

Survey Question: *As you may know, the national debt is expected to pass $40 trillion this week. This is earlier than previously projected, and it means the national debt has doubled in less than 10 years. On our current path, the national debt will reach $50 trillion in six years, leading to record interest costs and contributing to inflation. In a few words, **what would you say about this issue to elected officials in Washington and candidates running for Congress in this November's midterm elections?***



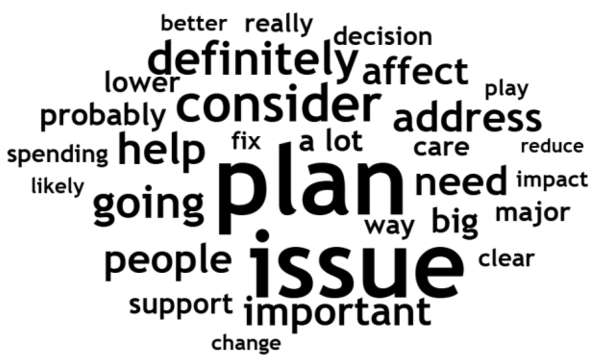
Take Debt Seriously / Urgency	*40%*
Impact on Cost of Living / Inflation	*16%*
General Frustration with Politicians	*14%*
Cut Government Waste/Excessive Spending	*13%*
Need a Plan to Address Debt	*10%*
Blame Specific Party or President	*9%*
Stop Foreign Aid / Military Spending	*8%*
Cut Spending / Spending Priorities	*4%*
Bipartisan Cooperation Needed	*4%*
Debt Affects Voting/Electoral Accountability	*4%*
Debt Burden on Future Generations	*3%*
Tax the Wealthy / Revenue Solutions	*2%*

- *"This needs to be seriously addressed and a solid plan put in place to correct it."* – ***Republican woman, Alabama, 65 years old***
- *"I would say that this should be a main priority and that we need a plan in place to reduce our national debt."* – ***Democratic man, Washington State, 23 years old***
- *"Now is the time to deal with the debt. We can't keep kicking the can down the road. Stand up and do your job."* – ***Republican man, Georgia, 65 years old***
- *"I'd tell them to make the debt a priority and present a concrete plan to reduce deficits and control spending growth."* – ***Independent man, Florida, 30 years old***

The debt will be a major factor for many voters in the midterm elections, with voters strongly preferring candidates with a plan to address the national debt. Before hearing information about the size of the debt, more than eight in ten voters (86%) say that having a plan to address the national debt is a factor in deciding their support, including 34% who say it is definitely a factor. Meanwhile, nearly all voters (96%) say they would be more likely to support a candidate with a plan, with 41% saying they would be much more likely.

Once informed about the debt exceeding $40 trillion, voters' most likely reaction (28%) is to voice their intent to vote for a candidate with a plan to address the debt in an open-ended response. Another 22% of voters voice that the national debt will be the top or a major factor in deciding their vote. Importantly, only 10% of respondents say the debt will not affect their vote.

Survey Question: *And thinking about the national debt exceeding $40 trillion, in a few words,* ***how will the debt factor into your vote this November?***



Will Vote for Candidate with Debt Plan..........28%
Debt as Top/Major Voting Factor.......................22%
Debt One of Many Factors.......................................19%
Debt Will Not Affect Vote...10%
Undecided / Unsure How It Will Factor.............9%
Other Issues More Important..................................5%
Frustration/Outrage at Debt Level......................5%
Skepticism About Debt Being Fixed...................5%
Party-Line Voting Intent (Democrat)..................5%
Government Spending Must Be Cut..................4%
Party-Line Voting Intent (Republican)...............3%
Candidate Must Address Debt to Earn Vote...2%
Will Vote Out Incumbents/Current Administration Over Debt.....................................2%
Will Not Vote / Voting Unlikely............................1%

- *"I won't even think about voting for anyone that doesn't have a road map to fixing the debt."* – ***Democratic man, California, 27 years old***
- *"The national debt would be an important factor in my vote. I would support candidates with a concrete, credible plan to reduce deficits and control debt growth, rather than relying on general promises."* – ***Independent man, Florida, 30 years old***
- *"Regardless which party the candidate is from, if she/he has a viable plan for reducing the national debt they will get my vote."* – ***Republican man, Illinois, 72 years old***

Many voters tie the heightened levels of national debt to the rising cost of living and demand immediate action from congressional candidates on both.

- *"We need to have a plan to decrease the national debt as soon as possible so the people won't be affected by inflation."* ***– Republican man, Florida, 27 years old***
- *"They must find a way to get a grip on the debt because American families are truly struggling with the rising cost of everything."* – ***Independent man, Georgia, 39 years old***
- *"The national debt is the backbone of our economy. If we do not address this issue, the cost of living will continue to rise, and prices will get too high to survive."* – ***Democratic woman, Missouri, 37 years old***

ABOUT THE POLL

Global Strategy Group and North Star Opinion Research conducted an online survey of 1002 nationwide registered voters between August 17 and 19, 2026. The survey has a confidence interval of +/- 3.1% for the full sample; the confidence interval for subgroups varies and is higher. The survey was conducted online, recruiting respondents from an opt-in online panel vendor. Care has been taken to ensure the geographic, political, and demographic divisions of the population of registered voters are properly represented. Results are weighted to demographic groups for gender, age, race, education, partisanship, and region.