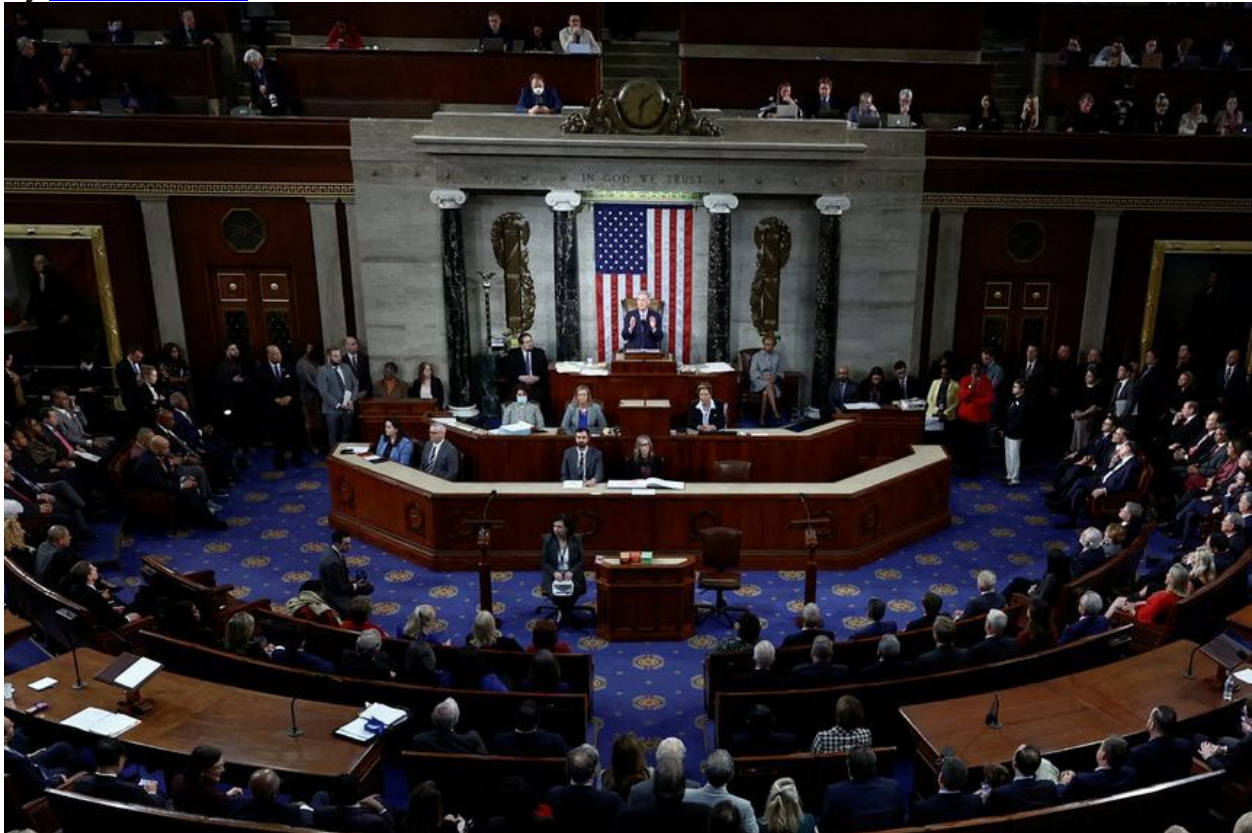


Is the Republican Agenda More Popular Than Republicans?

Some recent polling carries bad news for Fauci and Biden.

By [James Freeman](#)



Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R., Calif.) addresses the House of Representatives for the first time as Speaker on January 7, 2023. PHOTO: EVELYN HOCKSTEIN/REUTERS

There's some bad news for Dr. Anthony Fauci and the Biden family in recent polling data. While the president likes to portray the new Republican House majority as extreme, several items on its agenda appear to be quite popular among voters in the middle.

As for the Republican Party itself, on Thursday this column [noted that](#) for the first time in decades Gallup polling in 2022 found Republicans more popular than Democrats, though by far the largest segment of Americans now identify themselves as independent. It seems that Republicans are still not nearly as popular as many of their ideas.

“Republicans Didn’t Get Less Popular After All That Speaker Drama — They Were Already Unpopular,” says a headline on the polling website FiveThirtyEight. Nathaniel Rakich [writes](#)

The election for speaker of the House may have gripped Washington, D.C., for almost a week earlier this month, but the rest of the country apparently reacted with a big fat shrug.

According to polls, Americans are indifferent about both Speaker Kevin McCarthy's election and the chaotic process that led to it. Despite what some suggestive surveys might lead you to believe, the GOP revolt against McCarthy doesn't seem to have turned more Americans off from the Republican Party. But the nation does have low expectations for the next two years of federal governance.

Mr. Rakich goes on to cite the large number of Americans with an unfavorable view of congressional Republicans in [YouGov](#)/The Economist polling from early January.

Perhaps Mr. Rakich will also be interested in the [latest YouGov/The Economist survey results](#) released on Wednesday.

Survey participants were asked whether they would support or oppose a number of expected congressional actions, and their answers suggest broad support for a number of items on the GOP to-do list.

Among registered voters, 55% supported an investigation of Hunter Biden while just 31% were opposed.

When asked whether Congress should investigate the origins of Covid-19 and the government's response, 63% of registered voters expressed support, with just 26% opposed.

And it's not just the House GOP's oversight agenda that appears to enjoy public backing. A full 71% of registered voters supported congressional action to increase border security, according to the poll.

As for the current debate over federal debt, it does not appear that survey participants were asked whether spending reforms should be tied to any increase in the government's debt limit. But participants gave similarly poor grades to the president and both parties in Congress for their handling of the debt ceiling. So this issue seems up for grabs politically.

House Republicans are mulling how big a spending restraint to demand in exchange for an increase in the federal debt ceiling. As a frame of reference, House Republicans had a similar showdown with President Barack Obama in 2011 and negotiated a deal with then-Vice President [Joe Biden](#). Brian Riedl of the Manhattan Institute figures the agreement ended up netting about \$1.5 trillion in savings over the course of many years.

These days the president is still refusing to negotiate [despite his prominent role](#) in building a government debt pile larger than the entire U.S. economy. This naturally makes one wonder what will happen if he continues to refuse. The Journal's David Harrison [reports](#):

The latest fight over raising the federal debt limit has renewed a debate over whether the government should pay some bills and delay others if the White House and Congress fail to raise the cap before it is breached.

Some Republicans say the Treasury Department can and should give priority to paying holders of U.S. government securities to prevent a default on the debt and to minimize any harm to the financial system. That would mean delaying payment of other government obligations, such as bills for transportation, agriculture and education programs.

There's an argument that the Treasury not only can and should but *must* pay bondholders. Back in 2013 during the Obama era Journal contributors David Rivkin and Lee Casey [wrote](#):

Contrary to White House claims, Congress's refusal to permit new borrowing by raising the debt ceiling limit will not trigger a default on America's outstanding public debt, with calamitous consequences for our credit rating and the world's financial system. Section 4 of the 14th Amendment provides that "the validity of the public debt of the United States, authorized by law . . . shall not be questioned"; this prevents Congress from repudiating the federal government's lawfully incurred debts.

... a failure to raise the debt ceiling -- to prevent new borrowing -- does not and cannot put America's current creditors at risk. So long as this government exists, and barring a further constitutional amendment, those creditors must be paid.

Nor are they at risk in practice, since the federal government's... tax revenue... is more than sufficient to service existing debts. If the executive chose to act irresponsibly and unconstitutionally and failed to make any debt payments when they come due, debt-holders would be able to go to the Court of Federal Claims and promptly obtain a money judgment.

The Ever-Changing Language of the Left

It's amazing how quickly words on the political left can go from trendy to dirty. The signature progressive phrase of 2020 is now so discredited that even Democratic politicians are using the label to smear intraparty rivals. Alice Yin, Gregory Pratt and A.D. Quig [report](#) for the Chicago Tribune:

An often-combative Mayor Lori Lightfoot once again took the offensive against her leading challengers, repeatedly interrupting rival candidates and even the moderator during a forum Thursday as she defended her mayoral record.

As it has during much of the mayoral election, crime became a main focus of the discussion as Lightfoot attempted to portray herself as the one person actually addressing the issue while her opponents were coming at the topic from different sides of the political spectrum.

Turning to U.S. Rep. Jesus "Chuy" García, a progressive congressman from the Southwest Side, Lightfoot labeled him as a supporter of the defund the police movement, declaring: "This man is a (police) defunder, pure and simple. Don't let him fool you."