

## FEDERAL CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE of the Oregon Progressive Party

June 3, 2012

Congressional estimates suggest that the Social Security Retirement fund will be able to pay only 75% of currently calculated benefits by 2040. Currently, Social Security is funded by a payroll tax and a tax on self-employed persons ("FICA") on annual wages up to \$106,800 (2011).

Which do you support regarding Social Security:

- Tax all earned income equally so that higher income earners pay on all their income, including that over \$106,800 per year
- Tax all income equally (earned and investment) up to \$106,800 per year
- Increase the taxes on earned income below \$106,800
- Reduce or eliminate cost of living adjustments for all retirees
- Raise the "full" benefit retirement age from 67 (current) to 70
- Eliminate Social Security for all workers under 50 and allow them to opt into voluntary personal savings accounts
- Impose some form of means testing so that benefits for high-income seniors are reduced but benefits for lower income seniors remains unchanged
- Leave the system alone
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Congressional estimates suggest that the current Medicare funding system will run out of funds as early as 2017. Medicare is funded separately by a payroll tax and a tax on self-employed persons on all earned income (no ceiling). Currently Medicare provides some hospital coverage (Part A) at no charge to everyone at age 65, and provides other coverage (Parts B, C for equipment, doctor's visits, procedures) for about \$40/month for everyone at age 65 (Rx coverage is another add-on premium).

Which do you support regarding Medicare:

- Raise the age for Medicare coverage
- Expand Medicare to younger workers to spread costs
- Allow Medicare to negotiate drug prices on prescription drugs to lower costs
- Reduce hospital costs and costs of procedures by stricter controls and audits

- Impose means testing so that high-income seniors pay higher premiums for their Medicare (Parts B, C, D) coverage
- Eliminate Medicare and offer coupons or vouchers to cover some part of the cost of private insurance premiums
- Leave the system alone
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Money spent by wealthy individuals and businesses on campaign contributions and lobbying is more important to politicians than opinions of constituents.

- Agree
- Disagree

The United States Supreme Court has ruled (Citizens United) that corporations can make unlimited independent expenditures in federal elections. Do you support or oppose that decision?

- Support
- Oppose

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

How should Congress respond to the Citizens United decision that the First Amendment prohibits limits on independent expenditures by corporations and unions in federal election campaigns?

- Congress should refer to the States for ratification a constitutional amendment stating that the First Amendment does not forbid limits on political campaign contributions or expenditures.
- Congress should by statute remove the jurisdiction of the U.S. Supreme Court to invalidate laws pertaining to political campaign contributions and expenditures.
- Congress should remove all limits on political campaign contributions or expenditures in federal races.
- Congress should do nothing.
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

What should the federal government do to increase jobs in the United States?

- Reduce taxes
- Build and repair infrastructure, such as roads, rails, and schools
- Provide zero-interest money for banks to lend to businesses that create jobs
- Other\_\_\_\_\_

The federal budget deficit has been \$1.3 trillion in each of the past 2 years. What should the federal government do, if anything, to reduce the deficit?

Increase taxes on:

- The wealthy only
- Everyone
- Corporations

Cut spending on:

- Social Security
- Medicare
- Military (and CIA)
- Education
- Agriculture
- Homeland security
- Environmental protection
- Assistance to state and local governments
- Foreign aid
- Other\_\_\_\_\_

Real wages have not increased in the United States for middle class jobs in the past 25 years. Wealth is now more concentrated in the top 10% (and top 1%) of individual taxpayers than it has been since 1929. Anyone born into a low-income family faces great hurdles in financing education and acquiring a secure middle-income job.

- This is fair, because it depends on individuals bringing themselves up by their own initiative and talent.
- This is a problem, because the changes are structural and opportunities do not exist for workers to gain secure employment.

Is there anything government can or should do about it?

- No, it's up to individuals
- Yes, government has to enact appropriate laws and regulations regarding trade, tax rates, and social programs to ensure that all segments of our economy share equally in national prosperity.
- Other\_\_\_\_\_

During the period after the financial crisis of 2008, Congress enacted TARP (Troubled Asset Relief Program) or the "Wall Street Bailout" of \$700 billion to insurers such as AIG and institutions which had held a form of insurance on debt called credit default swaps. In addition, the Federal Reserve offered trillions (\$3.8 - \$4.2 trillion) more in zero interest (taxpayer) loans to large banks (Goldman Sachs, Bank of America, Societe General) which were "too big to fail." Corporate officers paid themselves huge bonuses and stockholders profits increased (about \$104 billion of TARP money flowed between banks and Wall Street and was paid to private interests). As for the zero interest loans to banks, the banks are holding onto that money or loaning it at credit card rates to consumers or loaning it to the government, making "free money" on the float.

Should the federal government file lawsuits to "claw back" the \$100 billion + bonus and profit money paid by Wall Street and banks to themselves with taxpayer money?

- Yes
- No
- Other\_\_\_\_\_

Should the federal government investigate possible crimes committed by financial institutions and prosecute?

- Yes
- No
- Other\_\_\_\_\_

The "auto industry bailout" was separate from TARP and Federal Reserve actions. Congress approved \$80 billion in loans to domestic auto producers, and the U.S. Government now owns stock in GM and Chrysler.

- This was a good investment as those companies are now hiring and GM has become very competitive in the market.
- No, it was a waste of money since Ford improved sales and product without taxpayer money.
- I don't know yet.
- Other\_\_\_\_\_

The average U.S. household pays about 14% of its income in federal income taxes and, effectively, an additional 15.3% of its income for Social Security and Medicare taxes. The combined rate is close to 30%. The average rate of federal taxes paid by households in the top 5% of income is less than 30%, mainly because (1) there are no Social Security taxes on annual income over \$106,800 and (2) capital gains and some dividends are taxed at 15%. The average rate of federal taxes paid by households in the top 1% of income is also about 30%.

- It is fair that people with average incomes pay the same overall federal tax rate as people in the top 5% or top 1% of incomes.
- Federal tax rates should be adjusted so that people in the top 5% or top 1% of incomes pay at a significantly higher overall rate than people with average incomes.
- Other\_\_\_\_\_

Average annual income for the top 1% of households is about \$1.8 million. Adjusted for inflation, it has tripled in the past 25 years, while the average annual income of the median household has dropped by 7% over the past 10 years. Democrats in the U.S. Senate have proposed a 5% surtax on household incomes in excess of \$1 million per year. Do you support such a surtax?

- Yes
- No
- Other\_\_\_\_\_

What other changes should be made to the federal tax code?

- Get rid of all deductions and lower the rates
- Flat income rate tax on all income of 16-22% (average cost of government over last 30 years was something close to 19-20%)
- Tax dividends and capital gains at the same rates as earned income (i.e., wages)
- Increase inheritance taxes
- Reduce inheritance taxes
- Eliminate the step-up basis for assets at death, which allow inheritance of appreciated assets without payment of capital gains tax
- Tax hedge fund income the same as income from wages
- Reduce tax rate on income from controlled foreign corporations, so that money can come back to the United States
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Which federal tax subsidies should be eliminated or greatly reduced:

- Oil and natural gas exploration in the United States
- Ethanol production
- Renewable resources, such as solar cells and wind turbines
- Home ownership (interest deduction; exclusion of capital gain on sale)
- Health insurance
- Retirement plans (including 401k plans)
- Charitable contributions
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

The United States as of May 2012 has 90,000 troops in Afghanistan, which is 20,000 more than 2 years ago.

How many U.S. troops should be there in January 2013? \_\_\_\_\_

How many U.S. troops should be there in January 2014? \_\_\_\_\_

The United States says it has no troops in Iraq, but media reports a number of 17,000 private security personnel under U.S. contract, including up to 10,000 armed "trainers."

How many U.S. armed personnel should be in Iraq now? \_\_\_\_\_

How many U.S. armed personnel should be in Iraq in January 2013?  
\_\_\_\_\_

How many U.S. armed personnel should be in Iraq in January 2014?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Should the Federal Government set the standards for food and consumer product safety or should we rely on manufacturers to self-police?

- The Government needs to enact and enforce minimum standards to protect the consumer from harmful products and ensure food safety.
- We should let the marketplace determine what people want and what risks they are willing to take. If there is harm, the damaged consumer can then sue the manufacturers in court as their remedy.
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Should the United States approve the construction of the Keystone XL Pipeline that would deliver to U.S. refineries synthetic crude oil extracted from tar sands in Canada?

- Yes
- No
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Should the Federal Government continue to subsidize interstate high speed rail and Amtrak service?

- Yes
- No
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

What should be done about the Columbia River Crossing (new planned bridge across the Columbia between Oregon and Washington)?

- Get local leaders to agree on a plan and fight for federal funding
- Tell local leaders the costs are out of control and must be contained before any federal funding
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

What would you do to help the rural areas in the District?

What would you do to help the urban and suburban areas in the District?