

Handout #3: Playing the Game in the Role of Your Assigned Party

Name: _____

Your Assigned Party / Expert Group: _____

Directions: When instructed to do so, open a browser to the Fiscal Ship game (<http://fiscalship.org>) and begin playing the game in the role of your assigned party. While you are playing the game, use the following pages to indicate which governing goals and policy options you choose, how you fare in terms of achieving your chosen goals and meeting the target debt level, and any challenges or other items of note that you encounter. ****Remember that you are the expert for your assigned party and will be expected to share your experience in playing the game with your classmates, so it's very important that you take good notes since you will need to reference them later on.****

1. Governing Goals – Circle the governing goals that you choose while playing the game.

- **Reduce Inequality:** The disparity between Americans who have the most and the least income is growing, mirrored by disparities in education, health, and family structure. You want to narrow the widening gaps in incomes and well-being at the top and the bottom.
- **Strengthen National Defense:** Projections of current policies show defense spending, measured as a share of the economy, falling over the next decade and then plateauing. You'd bolster the U.S. military by providing it with more personnel and more arms. (To reach fiscal sustainability, you'll have to pay for these somehow.)
- **Fight Climate Change:** You want to use government policies to promote a cleaner, healthier environment, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and avoid the damage that could be caused by global climate change.
- **Strengthen Social Safety Net:** You believe it's important for the federal government to give a hand up to those in poverty and protect those at risk of falling down the income ladder when times are tough. You want to expand and protect programs that protect the vulnerable.
- **Tax Cutter:** You believe lower taxes will boost economic growth and want to allow Americans to keep more of what they earn. Your goal is to substantially reduce federal tax revenues as a share of the economy. (To reach fiscal sustainability, you'll have to cut spending, too.)
- **Shrink Government:** You believe that we're better off with a leaner federal government, shifting responsibilities to the private, non-profit and state and local sectors. Spending on general government operations and federal programs (other than health and retirement benefits) is projected under current policy to decline over the next decade. You'd reduce it more.
- **Shield the Elderly:** Under current policy, about 60% of the increase in federal spending over the next decade will go to Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and other major health programs, much of that for the growing number of people who will be over age 65. You want to protect benefits for senior citizens.
- **Invest in the Future:** You believe in planting seeds today that will be harvested in years to come. You want policies to increase, above what's currently projected, government and private investment in children and young adults and in education, infrastructure and research that will pay off in the future. (To reach fiscal sustainability, you'll have to pay for these somehow.)
- **Fiscal Hawk:** You're not satisfied with restraining the projected increase in the federal debt so that in 25 years it's roughly where it is today, measured as a share of the overall economy. To put the government and the economy on a sounder footing, you want to reduce it substantially below today's levels.
- **Rein in Entitlements:** Spending on retirement, health and other government benefits, much of that for the elderly, account for two-thirds of non-interest spending today and threaten to squeeze out spending on everything else—from equipping soldiers with modern gear to repairing old bridges to pursuing cures for cancer. You want to restrain this spending to make room for other priorities.

2. Policy Options – Circle the policy options that you choose while playing the game.

POLICY OPTIONS ON THE FISCAL SHIP



ARTS & SCIENCES

- Boost National Science Foundation funding
- Cut National Institutes of Health funding
- Cut National Science Foundation funding
- End human space exploration
- Increase funding for arts and humanities
- Increase NASA budget
- Increase National Institutes of Health budget
- Reduce funding for arts and humanities

CHILDREN & FAMILIES

- Block grant and cut food stamps
- Expand Earned Income Tax Credit
- Expand housing aid for poor
- Expand the child tax credit
- Increase childcare subsidies
- Paid family leave
- Preschool for four-year-olds
- Tighten eligibility for food stamps

CORPORATE TAXES

- Cut corporate tax rate, close some loopholes
- Increase corporate tax rate
- Reduce taxes on international profits
- Set minimum tax on foreign profits

FOOD & AGRICULTURE

- Block grant and cut food stamps
- Double FDA funding
- Reduce farm subsidies
- Tax sugary drinks
- Tighten eligibility for food stamps

DEFENSE & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

- Build fewer submarines
- Cancel new aircraft carrier construction
- Cut active duty Army by half
- Cut foreign aid
- Expand U.S. Navy fleet
- Increase active duty Army
- Increase defense R&D spending
- Increase foreign aid
- Kill F-35 Joint Strike Fighter

EDUCATION

- Eliminate student loan subsidies
- Eliminate the Department of Education
- Free tuition at public colleges
- Limit Pell grants to neediest students
- Preschool for four-year-olds
- Slash interest rates on existing student debt
- Two years of community college tuition-free

ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

- Double the EPA's budget
- Eliminate renewable fuel subsidies
- Eliminate the EPA
- End tax breaks for fossil fuels
- Extend renewable energy tax credits
- Impose a carbon tax
- Increase the gas tax

TAXES ON INVESTMENTS

- Cut taxes on investment income
- End tax on capital gains, interest, dividends
- Impose new tax on financial transactions
- Increase tax on capital gains and dividends
- Tax carried interest as ordinary income

SEE REVERSE FOR MORE POLICIES →

POLICY OPTIONS ON THE FISCAL SHIP

HEALTH

Boost access to generic drugs
 Boost Medicare Advantage competition
 Bundle Medicare payments for post-acute care
 Cap Medicaid payments to states
 Cap Medicare spending
 Convert Medicare to "premium support"
 Cut National Institutes of Health funding
 Increase Medicare premiums
 Increase National Institutes of Health budget
 Increase taxes on cigarettes
 Means test Medicare
 Raise Medicare eligibility age
 Raise Medicare out-of-pocket costs
 Reduce what Medicare pays for drugs
 Reform malpractice laws
 Repeal Cadillac tax on costly health plans
 Repeal Obamacare's insurance expansions
 Use income taxes to fund Medicare

INCOME & PAYROLL TAXES

Reduce income tax rates, consolidate brackets
 Boost taxes on the super rich
 Eliminate cap on wages subject to payroll tax
 Implement a 15% flat income tax
 Increase all income tax rates
 Increase Medicare payroll tax
 Increase Social Security payroll tax

Lower the inflation adjustment for taxes

Raise taxes on \$150,000+ folks
 Raise taxes only on \$400,000+ folks
 Use income taxes to fund Medicare
 Use income taxes to fund Social Security

INFRASTRUCTURE & TRANSPORTATION

Cut infrastructure spending
 Double subsidies for Amtrak
 Eliminate funding for Amtrak
 Increase infrastructure spending

LABOR & EMPLOYMENT

Expand unemployment benefits
 Reduce federal employees' pensions
 Reduce federal employment through attrition
 Slow increases in government pay

LAW & ORDER

Cut spending on law enforcement
 Enact immigration reform
 Increase Homeland Security spending
 Reduce Homeland Security spending
 Spend more on law enforcement

OTHER TAXES

Eliminate the estate tax
 Extend renewable energy tax credits
 Impose a carbon tax
 Impose a value-added tax
 Increase taxes on cigarettes
 Increase the estate tax
 Increase the gas tax
 Repeal Cadillac tax on costly health plans
 Tax sugary drinks

SOCIAL SECURITY

Boost low-wage workers' Social Security
 Boost Social Security benefits for very old
 Cut Social Security COLA
 Increase Social Security eligibility age
 Lower the COLA for all spending programs
 Reduce Social Security benefits
 Use income taxes to fund Social Security

TAX CREDITS & DEDUCTIONS

End tax breaks for fossil fuels
 Convert mortgage interest deduction to credit
 Curtail charitable deduction
 Eliminate renewable fuel subsidies
 Eliminate state and local tax deductions
 Expand Earned Income Tax Credit
 Expand the child tax credit
 Raise the standard deduction

3. Results – Document your final results below. Did you manage to meet your chosen goals? Did you reach the target debt level, and if not, how close were you able to get?

4. Miscellaneous Notes – Use the space below to indicate any challenges or items of note while you're playing the game.