

Date: April 4, 2014

To: Friends of Democracy Corps and Women's Voices. Women Vote Action Fund

From: Stan Greenberg, James Carville, and Erica Seifert

Tipping point on 2014 and the Affordable Care Act? Report on national survey of 2014 electorate

Whether we are at a tipping point in the 2014 election depends, first, on whether Democrats can get to a strong economic message— and next week we will be releasing our results on the women's economic agenda. But it will depend further on whether the Affordable Care Act – now at a tipping point – is embraced with enthusiasm by its natural base of supporters and whether they become willing to defend its benefits against the threat of repeal at the ballot box.

The Republicans have bet heavily on Obamacare's unpopularity, but that misreads the public's views on the Affordable Care Act. The latest national survey by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner for Democracy Corps and Women's Voices Women Vote Action Fund finds evidence that prompts us to urge the political class to re-examine its assumptions about the Affordable Care Act and about this being a Republican year.

This is a base and genuine turnout issue for Republicans but public judgment about the new law is dynamic and moving and could come to haunt the GOP. Support for the law is rising, particularly among Democrats and minority voters. Only a minority is opposed because this is big government and only a minority wants to repeal the law.

But to counter Republican intensity and turnout in this off-year, Democrats will have to feel just as strongly about the risks of repeal and the loss of benefits they are increasingly aware of. In this poll, we find that a message on the really positive changes that would be lost if the law were repealed gets the attention of these off-year voters – who do respond with heightened intensity. With more than 7.1 million successfully signing up through exchanges, voters could be at a tipping point – and Democrats need to make the right case.

That could impact turnout on the Democratic side and should prompt the political class to reconsider many of the dominant assumptions about the ACA and the 2014 election.

Key Findings

- **Just 44 percent now clearly oppose the Affordable Care Act because it goes too far.** By a 9-point margin (54 percent to 44 percent) voters support the ACA or wish it went further.



- **Democratic base voters had displayed some ambivalence about the law—but because they worry that it does not go far enough.** Support is very high with the Rising American Electorate, probably the greatest beneficiaries of the law – but enthusiasm is a little tempered by uncertainty and a preference for changes that would have reduced the role of private insurance companies. As the law’s benefits become more visible, they may be shifting and more engaged to defend the reforms at the ballot box.
- **By significant margins, likely 2014 voters want the law implemented and fixed rather than repealed and replaced.** By a 9-point margin (53 percent to 44 percent), likely voters say implement the law rather than repeal it. These margins are much bigger among Democratic base voters—especially minorities, but including young people—who have been central to the public debate about the law’s successes and failures.
- **Most important, a Democratic message saying the law needs fixes but makes critical changes and offers major benefits bests the Republican message crafted by Resurgent Republic – the conservative counter-part to Democracy Corps.** Likely voters choose this Democratic Affordable Care Act message over the Republican offer by 5 points. Critically, the Rising American Electorate favor Democrats’ message in this debate by 22 points, and do so with real intensity (half say they strongly favor this message over the Republican alternative).

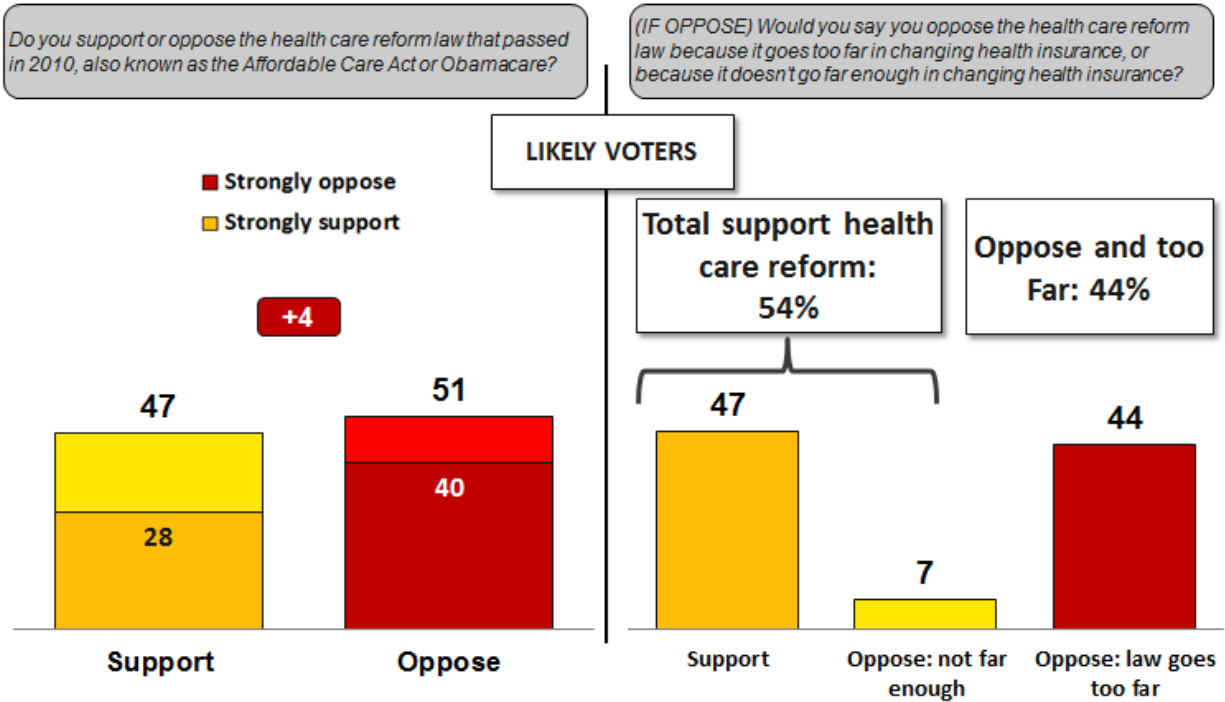
Support for ACA

Just 44 percent of likely 2014 voters oppose the Affordable Care Act because they believe it represents big government overreach. When we ask likely voters whether they support or oppose the Affordable Care Act, half (51 percent) say they oppose the law, with 40 percent strongly opposed to the law. However, when we ask those who oppose the law why they oppose it—because it goes too far or not far enough—we find a significant shift in the balance. While 44 percent remain opposed because the law goes too far, 7 percent say they oppose the law because it went further. Combined, over half—54 percent—either support the law or wish it went further.

Importantly, this survey finds that the Democratic base voters who had displayed ambivalence about the law did so because they were concerned that the reforms do not go far enough. Support is very high with the Rising American Electorate, probably the greatest beneficiaries of the law – but enthusiasm is little tempered by uncertainty and a preference for bigger changes. As these voters begin to experience the law’s benefits, they may become more engaged in the election to defend the reform in November.



Electorate divided on Affordable Care Act– with 44 percent opposed because it goes too far



Democratic base voters express the most ambivalence about the law because higher portions of these voters than the total wish the law went further. Among likely voters in the Rising American electorate, 57 percent support the law, 8 percent oppose it because they wish it went further. And among minorities, 67 percent support the law, 11 percent oppose it because they wish it went further.

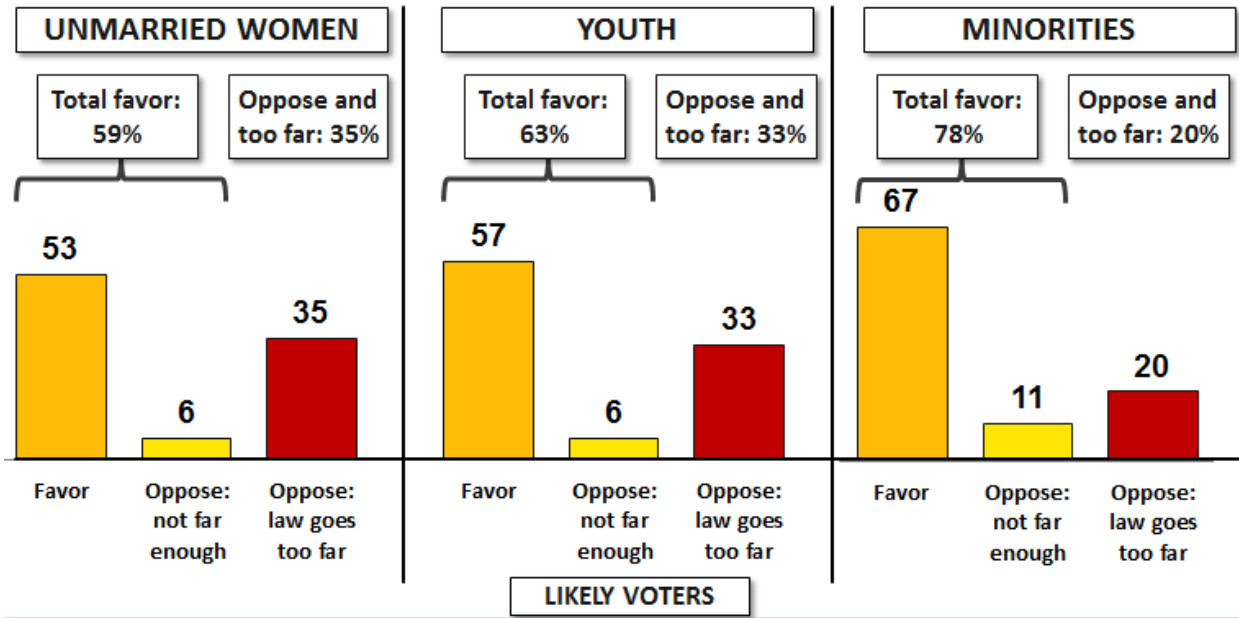
The intensity gap remains a key factor – and the most important opportunity as the country passed the current milestone on enrollment. The opponents are nearly all strongly opposed – over 40 percent – while 28 percent strongly support it. That needs to grow, as proponents and candidates describe the benefits and Republicans threaten to roll back this progress.



Among Rising American Electorate – opposition down but also big bloc that opposed because not far enough

Do you support or oppose the health care reform law that passed in 2010, also known as the Affordable Care Act or Obamacare?

(IF OPPOSE) Would you say you oppose the health care reform law because it goes too far in changing health insurance, or because it doesn't go far enough in changing health insurance?



The Affordable Care Act enjoys significant support in Democratic House districts, where 60 percent either support the law (57 percent) or oppose the law because they wish it went further (3 percent.)

Implement and Fix

When we conducted focus groups about the Affordable Care Act last fall on the eve of implementation, our participants repeatedly told us that they saw the Affordable Care Act as a “first draft” and reminded us that any big change might not be perfect out of the gate but that we needed a big change. Voters are far ahead of politicians on this point. Where the national conversation has been reductive—mostly about implementing or repealing and almost always about the politics of Washington—the voters want to see the law implemented, taken seriously as a big change, evaluated, and then adjusted.

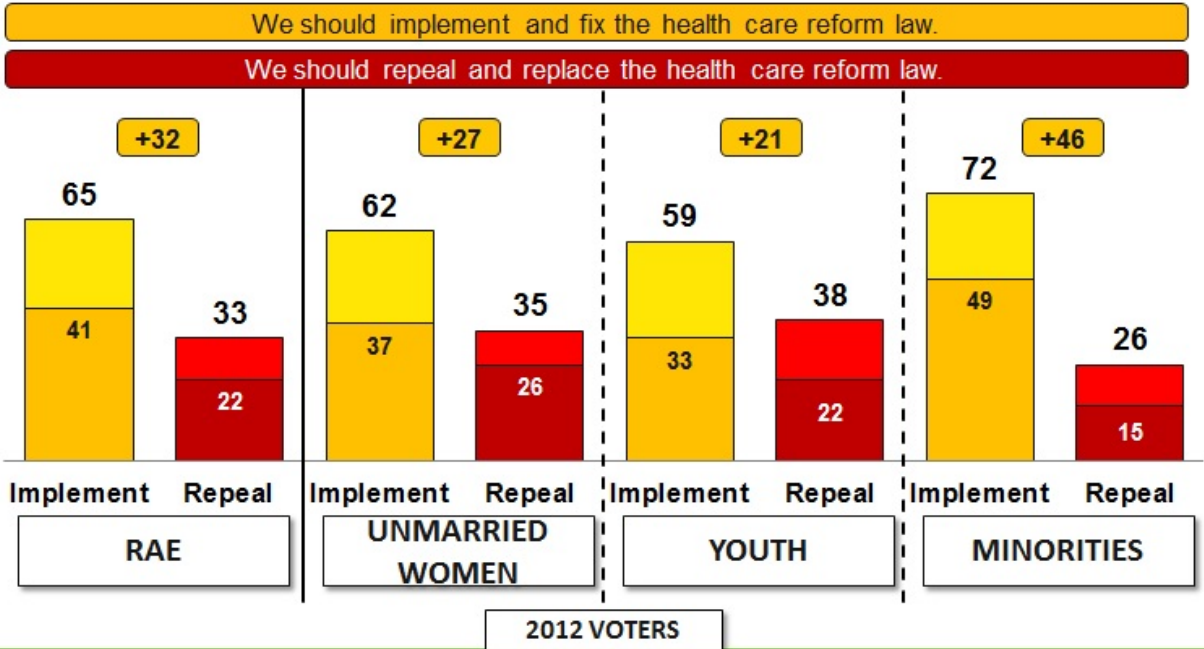
When we ask likely voters whether the health care reform law should be implemented and fixed or repealed and replaced, more than half (53 percent) of likely voters would like to see it implemented, compared to 44 percent who believe it should be repealed and replaced.

Democratic base voters give strong support to implementation, especially minorities. The intensity with minorities and unmarried women suggest an important opening.



Repeal battle is motivating for minority voters – and unmarried women too

I'm going to read you a pair of statements. After I read both statements, please tell me which ONE comes closer to your own opinion, even if neither is exactly right.



In Democratic districts, likely 2014 voters strongly come down on the side of implementation. In Democratic districts, 59 percent want the law implemented, 40 percent strongly.

But even in Republican congressional districts, the issue is tied—49 percent of voters in Republican districts want the law to be implemented, 49 percent would like to see it repealed and replaced. And half (50 percent) of voters in Republican-controlled states (states where Republicans control the state house and Governor’s office) want the law to be implemented.

Democratic message supporting the law’s changes and advocating fixes bests Republican message.

In a head-to-head message test conducted with our counterparts at Resurgent Republic, we tested a Democratic message advocating fixes but highlighting the law’s critical changes against a Republican message composed by their team. The Democratic message in this test bested the Republican message by 5 points—49 percent to 44 percent—with the intensity advantage on the side of the Democratic message.



Democratic candidate wins the health care debate

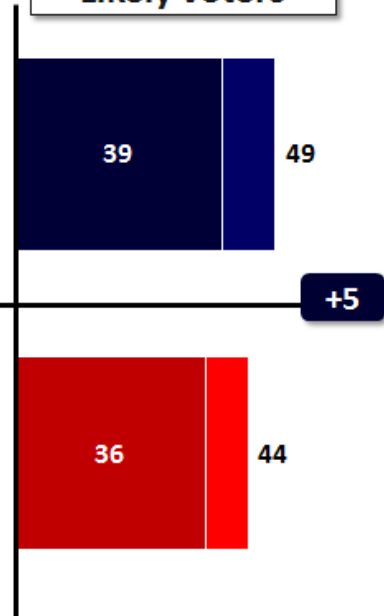
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Health Care Debate

The Democratic candidate says: the health care law is a start, but it's not perfect. We need to make it work for small businesses and get costs down. Give people more time and let them keep their current insurance if they want. So fix it, but build on the really good changes: this law prevents insurance companies from dropping people or raising rates when they get sick or denying people for preexisting conditions. They can no longer charge women more than men and must cover preventive care like cancer screenings. Repealing it with more political fighting will hurt a lot of people.

The Republican candidate says: Obamacare is hurting more people than it's helping, and keeping Washington in control of your health care is making the problem worse. Despite the President's promise, millions of people have had their insurance policies cancelled. Millions more are being forced to buy coverage they don't want or need, or can't afford. Obamacare is raising costs, premiums, and the deficit, and cutting funding and benefits for Medicare. It's time to pass health care reform that lowers costs and allows the people—not the federal government or the insurance companies—to control their own health care.

Likely Voters



Among members of the Rising American Electorate who are likely to vote in 2014, the Democratic message defeats the Republican alternative by 22 points—58 percent to 36 percent. Nearly half of RAE voters strongly embrace the Democratic statement, suggesting this could be the route to closing the intensity gap.



Democrats win resoundingly among RAE on health care

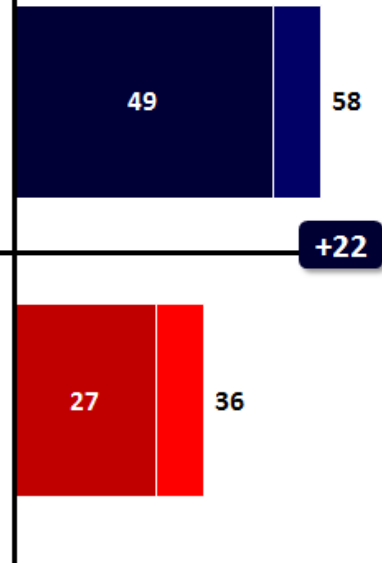
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RAE likely voters



This message concedes that the law is a start and needs fixes, but it also advocates for the law's critical changes. If Republicans are going to run on repeal—and we have every reason to believe they will—Democrats need to highlight what protections and benefits Republicans now want to take away. In other words, repeal now means denying these important reforms.