

Date: March 9, 2010
To: Friends of Democracy Corps
From: Stanley B. Greenberg, James Carville, Andrew Baumann and Bryan Bennett

Support for Health Care Reform on the Rise after Massachusetts

Analysis of Recent Public Polling Data Shows Optimism for Proponents of Reform

At President Obama's recent health care summit, Republican Minority Leader Mitch McConnell and other Republicans breathlessly touted an "average" of recent public polls showing large majorities opposing health care reform. McConnell's polling average [was dubious](#) to begin with, but he was also getting well ahead of himself.¹ In fact, a flurry of recent polls show support for health care reform slowly but surely on the rise. A new survey from [The Economist/YouGov](#) released yesterday shows majority supporting passage of reform for the first time since December. Moreover, recent polls that dig deeper than the topline numbers demonstrate even more support for passage of reform, with the most recent Ipsos survey showing a majority of Americans either supporting the current reform option or hoping for an even stronger reform package.

Increase in Support for Reform Across the Board

In the wake of the Massachusetts special election, public surveys showed support for health care reform declining to record lows. Yet, in recent weeks, support for reform has started to recover in nearly every public survey and now stands almost even - 46 percent in support compared to 47 percent opposed according to Pollster.com's current average of public surveys. This is a far greater level of support than the supposed 55 to 37 percent opposition touted by McConnell.²

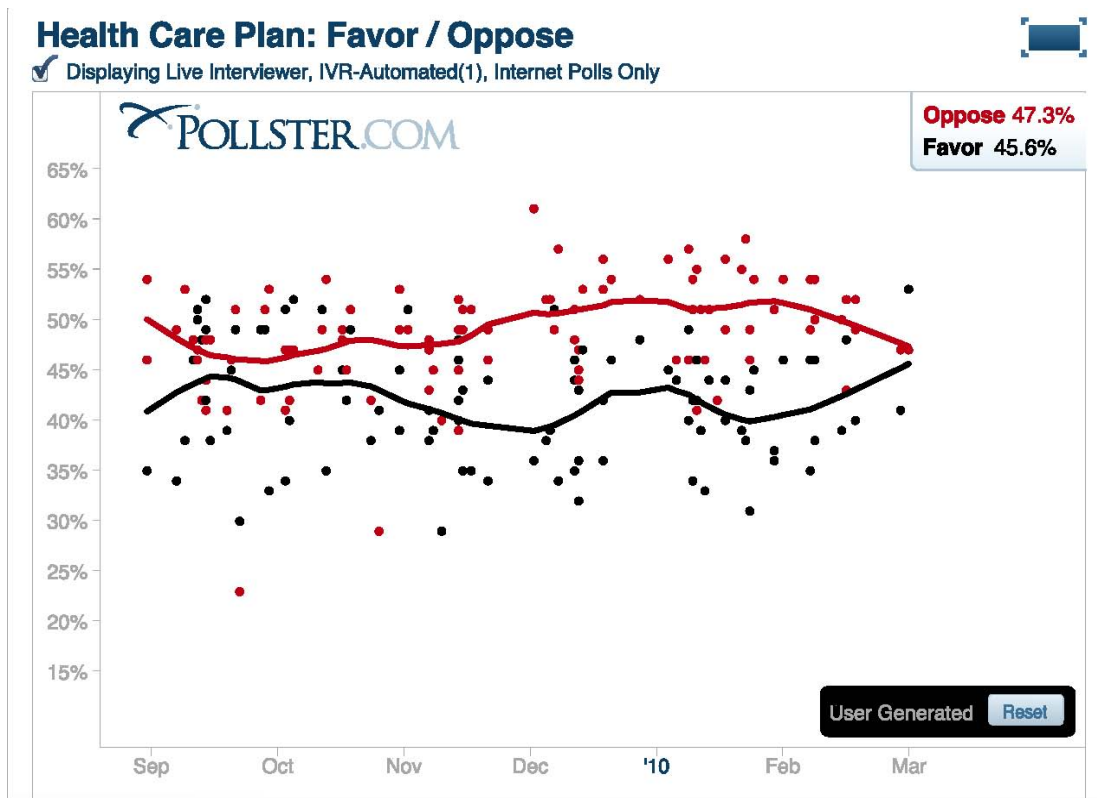
¹ Mark Blumenthal, *National Journal*, "[A Poll for Every Side at Health Summit.](#)" March 1, 2010.

² [Pollster.com](#) average shows trends from surveys released through March 9, 2010. Note that this set has been filtered to exclude Rasmussen polls, which have shown to be extreme outliers.



■ **Table 1: Support for Health Care Sees Uptick in Recent Public Polling**

Survey	Conducted	Favor	Oppose	Net Difference	Change from Previous Survey
The Economist/YouGov ³	2/28-3/2	53	47	Favor +6	+7/-7 since 2/9/2010
Kaiser Health ⁴	2/11-2/16	43	43	Tied	+1/+1 since 1/10/2010
Ipsos/McClatchy ⁵	2/26-2/28	41	47	Oppose +6	+4/-4 since 1/31/2010
Public Policy Polling (D) ⁶	2/13-2/15	39	50	Oppose +11	+3/-1 since 1/31/2010



³ [The Economist/YouGov](#), conducted 2/28-3/2, 2010 among 1000 general adult respondents.

⁴ [Kaiser Health Tracking Poll: February 2010](#), conducted 2/11-2/16, 2010 among 1201 adults.

⁵ [Ipsos/McClatchy](#), conducted 2/26-2/28, 2010 among 1076 adults.

⁶ [PPP](#), conducted 2/13-2/15, 2010 among 743 registered voters.



Ipsos Shows Majority Wants Strong Reform, Other Polls Show Public Wants Action

While the uptick in support is certainly encouraging to supporters of reform, almost all of these surveys still show at least pluralities in opposition to the current reform measure being debated. However, when [Ipsos](#) probed further, they showed a surprising result. Of the 47 percent who oppose reform, 37 percent do so because reform does not go far enough (meanwhile, of the 41 percent who say they support the current proposals, 12 percent say they do so because they think the current proposals will stop reform from happening). Combining these results shows a majority - 53 percent - that supports reform or something that goes further. Yet, just 35 percent want to kill reform because it goes too far.

This data is further amplified by other recent surveys showing that a wide majority continues to demand health care reform, and has no interest in Congress or the president giving up on the effort. Back in mid-February, [ABC/Washington Post](#) asked whether lawmakers in Washington should keep trying to pass a comprehensive health care reform plan or give up on it. They found that, by a two-to-one margin, Americans want Congress to push forward on passing an overarching reform bill (63 percent to 34 percent).⁷ Furthermore, [Pew Research](#) had similar findings – 61 percent of all Americans either support the current reform proposals or want Congress to keep working toward a solution to achieve reform.⁸

Public Supports Reform When They Understand What It Includes

In this recent batch of surveys, several of the polls asked about the individual components of the health care reform proposals before Congress. The findings from [Kaiser Health's](#) tracking survey, [Newsweek](#), and [Ipsos](#) mirror previous results from other surveys – ultimately, there is great appeal for many of the individual parts, like overarching insurance reforms, establishing an exchange to provide competition and enable easier access to health care choice, providing financial assistance to low-income individuals, and providing tax credits to small businesses.

⁷ [ABC/Washington Post](#), conducted 2/4-2/8, 2010, among 1,004 adults.

⁸ [Pew Research](#), conducted 2/3-2/9, 2010, among 1,383 adults.



■ **Table 2: Primary Individual Components of Reform Incredibly Popular**

Survey	Proposal	Favor/Important	Oppose/Not Important	Net Difference
<u>Insurance Reform</u>				
Kaiser Health	Reforming the way health insurance works, for example, so that insurance companies can't deny coverage based on pre-existing conditions, and can't cap the benefits people get over their lifetime	76	19	+57
Newsweek ⁹	Requiring health insurance companies to cover anyone who applies, even if they have a pre-existing medical condition	76	19	+57
<u>Insurance Exchange</u>				
Kaiser Health	Creating a health insurance exchange or marketplace where small businesses and people who don't get coverage through their jobs can shop for insurance and compare prices and benefits	71	25	+46
Newsweek	Creating a new insurance marketplace – the Exchange – that allows people without health insurance to compare plans and buy insurance at competitive rates	81	13	+68
<u>Tax Credits for Small Business</u>				
Kaiser Health	Providing tax credits to small businesses to encourage them to offer coverage to their employees	72	23	+49
Newsweek	Requiring most businesses to offer health insurance to their employees, with tax incentives for small business owners to do so	75	20	+55
<u>Financial Assistance for Low-Income</u>				
Kaiser Health	Providing financial help to lower and middle income Americans who don't get insurance through their jobs to help them purchase coverage	68	25	+43
Ipsos/McClatchy	Insurance subsidies for lower-income families	73	23	+50

Note: Both Newsweek and Ipsos/McClatchy asked these questions on a favor/oppose scale, while Kaiser Health asked them on a scale of how important they are to be included in a health care reform proposal.

Other provisions are also exceedingly popular – Kaiser Health observes that helping close the Medicare “doughnut hole” (71 percent important), expanding high risk insurance pools to cover those with an illness (70 percent important), and even expanding Medicaid like the

⁹ [Newsweek](#), conducted 2/17-2/18, 2010 among 1009 adults.



potential public option compromise that failed two months ago (56 percent important) all score incredibly high marks. However, these surveys do show significant public hesitance for two particular components of reform – taxing the most high-value “Cadillac” plans (55 percent oppose according to Newsweek) and an individual mandate (60 percent oppose according to Ipsos).

Despite these points of contention, these recent surveys provide evidence that the public will support reform once they understand what it really includes. Newsweek, which asked about all of these policies – including the unpopular ones, re-asked the overall favor or oppose question for reform after describing the individual elements of the bill. They found that a plurality – 48 percent - favored the reform package, while only 43 percent opposed – a 14-point positive shift from the initial question.

Finally, Kaiser showed a similar result. After describing the various elements of reform they asked about the electoral impact of a vote in favor or opposition of health care reform and found that 35 percent would be more likely to support a candidate who voted for the legislation, while only 24 percent would be less likely. The results were virtually reversed when asked the opposite: if a candidate opposed the bill, 35 percent would be less likely to vote for that candidate, while 26 percent would be more likely to vote for him or her.