

New Poll Shows Tremendous Support for Public Health Care Option

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Eighty-three percent of Americans favor and only 14 percent oppose “creating a new public health insurance plan that anyone can purchase” according to EBRI, a *conservative* business research organization. This flatly contradicts conservatives’ loudest attack against President Obama’s plan to provide quality, affordable health care for all.

The Employee Benefit Research Institute (EBRI) [1] calls itself “the most authoritative and objective source of information” on the issues of employee retirement and health benefits. Founded in 1978, EBRI says it “is the gold standard for private analysts and decision makers, government policymakers, the media, and the public.” And EBRI is funded by many of the largest corporations in America.

EBRI’s biggest donors include: AT&T, Bank of America, Boeing, General Dynamics, General Mills, IBM, JBMorgan Chase, Morgan Stanley, Northop Grumman, Schering-Plough, Schwab, T.Rowe Price, UBS Financial, and Wal-Mart. EBRI also receives large contributions from the insurance industry, including: Blue Cross Blue Shield, CIGNA, Hartford, Kaiser Permanente, Massachusetts Mutual, Metropolitan Life, Union Labor Life, and UnitedHealth.

Here’s who paid for the poll, as stated by EBRI:

This survey was made possible with support from AARP, American Express, Blue Cross Blue Shield Association, Buck Consultants, Chevron, Deere & Company, IBM, Mercer, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, Principal Financial Group, Schering-Plough Corp., Shell Oil Company, The Commonwealth Fund, and Towers Perrin.

So clearly, no one can accuse this organization of being “liberal” on health care issues.

These findings are from EBRI’s 2009 Health Confidence Survey, their 12th annual poll:

Do you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose the following:

Creating a new public health insurance plan that anyone can purchase:

- Strongly support—53 percent
- Somewhat support—30 percent
- Somewhat oppose—5 percent
- Strongly oppose—9 percent

Having national rules requiring insurance companies to cover all people, regardless of their health problems:

- Strongly support—55 percent
- Somewhat support—25 percent
- Somewhat oppose—9 percent
- Strongly oppose—9 percent

Expanding government programs, such as Medicare or Medicaid:

- Strongly support—45 percent
- Somewhat support—30 percent
- Somewhat oppose—9 percent
- Strongly oppose—12 percent

Requiring all employers to pay toward subsidized health insurance for employees:

- Strongly support—42 percent
- Somewhat support—33 percent
- Somewhat oppose—10 percent
- Strongly oppose—12 percent

Requiring everyone to participate in some kind of health insurance plan:

- Strongly support—38 percent
- Somewhat support—30 percent
- Somewhat oppose—13 percent
- Strongly oppose—16 percent

Despite clear public support for these provisions—all of which are likely to be in the Democrats' health care reform legislation—conservatives won't go along. The biggest battle right now is over the public plan option. As [commentator Al Hunt points out](#) [2]:

Although almost half of Americans are already covered by a public health plan, inclusion of a government option is a deal-killer for most Republicans and [some] Democrats...

The Congressional Progressive Caucus says it is a deal-killer if the public option is left out of the health care reform legislation. Get ready for a titanic tug of war.

There was another new health care poll in the news today, this one by Democratic pollster Stan Greenberg. Although the specifics aren't yet released, he talks about his polling [in the New Republic](#) [3]. I point it out because it echoes two important points I made last week in a somewhat controversial post called ["Why Not Single-Payer?"](#) [4]

I said "About 3/4ths of insured Americans are satisfied with their health insurance." Greenberg says: "Yet three-quarters are satisfied with their own health insurance."

I said "When Americans hear about a health care proposal, they immediately think "how is it going to affect me and my family." That's their overarching, overwhelming concern." Greenberg says when Clinton proposed his plan, "people responded personally, working to figure out what it all meant for them—the impact on their family, access to their doctors, dollars and cents, and on everything they'd done to become satisfied with their health care."

Some readers commented that they simply didn't believe the polling I cited in "Why Not Single-Payer?" It is natural for all of us—myself included—to seek out polls that support our side and disregard contrary polling results. But please understand that President Obama and progressive health care advocates have access to so much polling on this issue; they are not picking-and-choosing the polls they like. They are making clear-headed decisions in an effort to get the very best health care plan that can possibly be enacted by Congress this year.

The writer is a Senior Fellow at Campaign for America's Future and author of the book, ["Framing the Future: How Progressive Values Can Win Elections and Influence People"](#) [5].

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