

TO: INTERESTED PARTIES
FROM: BILL McINTURFF/ELIZABETH HARRINGTON – PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES
RE: KEY FINDINGS – HEALTH REFORM ARKANSAS STATEWIDE TELEPHONE SURVEY OF REGISTERED VOTERS
DATE: JUNE 27, 2017

KEY FINDINGS:

The Affordable Care Act (referred from here as ObamaCare) and the health care legislation recently passed by the U.S. House of Representatives (referred from here as House health care legislation) are viewed negatively by pluralities of voters in Arkansas.

- Pluralities of voters (44%) believe ObamaCare is a bad idea, 38% believe it is a good idea, and 16% do not have an opinion about it one way or the other. Not surprisingly, there are major differences in perceptions about Obamacare by party (Republicans – 11% good idea/73% bad idea, Independents – 41% good idea/39% bad idea, Democrats – 75% good idea/14% bad idea).
- Four in ten voters (40%) believe the House health care legislation is a bad idea, 26% believe it is a good idea, and 30% do not have an opinion one way or the other. There are differences by party; with majorities of Democrats (74%) and Independents (51%) saying it is a bad idea, while a plurality of Republicans in the state saying it is a good idea (47%).
 - Republicans – 47% good idea/10% bad idea/39% no opinion one way or the other
 - Independents – 17% good idea/51% bad idea/26% no opinion one way or the other
 - Democrats – 5% good idea/74% bad idea/17% no opinion one way or the other

Voters in the state do not want the U.S. Senate to pass the House health care legislation into law as is.

- A majority of voters (55%) in the state want the U.S. Senate to either make major changes to the House legislation before passing it (26%) or do not want the U.S. Senate to pass any part of the House legislation which would mean keeping ObamaCare in place (29%). Only 10% of voters want the Senate to pass the House legislation as is and 21% want them to make minor changes to it and pass it.

	<u>Republicans</u>	<u>Independents</u>	<u>Democrats</u>
Pass the House legislation as is	16%	6%	6%
Make minor changes	27%	21%	12%
Make major changes	29%	27%	18%
Not pass any part of the House legislation which means keeping ObamaCare in place	5%	31%	61%

There is support for the state's Medicaid program.

- The Medicaid program in the state is viewed favorably (55%) or neutral (22%). There are very few voters with unfavorable (14%) views of the program in the state. A plurality of voters want to keep Medicaid funding levels where they are today (43%), 38% want funding to be increased, and only 12% want to decrease funding for the Medicaid program. It is important to note that nearly seven out of ten voters (69%) either themselves, someone in their household or they know someone who is covered by Medicaid.

There are elements of proposed changes to ObamaCare that voters support but there are also many elements of proposed changes which are more problematic.

- Respondents were read a series of possible changes to ObamaCare that Congress is considering as part of health care reform. They were asked whether they would support or oppose making each specific change to ObamaCare or if they did not have an opinion one way or the other. In thinking about proposed changes being considered by Congress to ObamaCare:
 - There is **overwhelming support** for *“allowing health insurance to be bought across state lines so there is more competition between insurance companies to provide more options at a cheaper cost”* (62% strongly support/79% total support/10% oppose this change).
 - There is a **majority of support** for *“providing federal funding for states to cover people with pre-existing conditions through separate high-risk insurance pools”* (54% total support/27% total oppose).
 - Half of voters **support** this proposed change: *“Changing Medicaid, the program that provides health insurance coverage for low-income adults and children, from an entitlement program to a federal grant program so federal spending would be cut, but states could decide how to best use federal dollars to cover their low-income population”* (50% total support/30% total oppose).
 - There is a **plurality of support** for *“providing low-income people who are dropped from the Medicaid program with money from the federal government to help pay their monthly premium so they can purchase a private health insurance plan”* (48% total support/32% total oppose).
 - Voters are attitudes towards the following proposed changes are **tied** in support/opposition within the margin of error:
 - *“Eliminating the ObamaCare requirement that all health plans sold must provide a standard set of government-established benefits, including mental health services, addiction treatment, maternity care, and that provides preventive health services with no out-of-pocket costs”* (45% total support/41% total oppose).
 - *“Cutting the federal funding ObamaCare provides to states to expand their Medicaid programs so states can provide health insurance coverage to more low-income adults who were uninsured”* (42% total support/39% total oppose).

- *“Eliminating the money that the federal government provides to low-income people which helps pay their monthly insurance premiums and instead offer annual tax credits ranging from two thousand to four thousand dollars a year to help people purchase health insurance” (43% total support/41% total oppose).*
 - *“Eliminating most of the new taxes that are part of ObamaCare such as removing the additional tax on people making more than two hundred thousand dollars a year and the additional taxes on health insurance companies and medical device manufacturers” (42% total support/40% total oppose).*
 - *“Eliminating the money that the federal government pays to health insurance companies to provide lower deductibles and lower out-of-pocket health care costs for low-income people” (41% total support/42% total oppose).*
 - *“Providing low-income people with money from the federal government to purchase inexpensive health insurance plans that protect them if they have a very expensive illness or injury, but all preventive health services, routine doctor visits, tests, and minor operations would have to be paid out-of-pocket” (40% total support/43% total oppose).*
- There is a **majority of opposition** to the following proposed changes:
- *“Eliminating the individual mandate that requires individuals by law to have health insurance but allow health insurance companies to charge people thirty percent higher premiums for a year if they have not had continuous coverage” (30% total support/57% total oppose).*
 - *“Eliminating the more than one billion dollars in extra federal funding Arkansas receives annually to cover more people on Medicaid, which could impact the more than nine hundred thousand low-income people, working adults, and children currently covered by Medicaid” (30% total support/54% total oppose).*
 - *“Keeping in place the protections for people with pre-existing conditions as long as they continuously maintain their health insurance coverage. If they do not have coverage for more than sixty-three days, health insurance companies would be allowed to charge people with pre-existing conditions more for their insurance” (40% total support/52% total oppose).*

METHODOLOGY:

Public Opinion Strategies conducted a statewide telephone survey of N=400 registered voters (60% landline/40% cell) in Arkansas. The sample was drawn from the voter file proportional to the statewide registered voter population. Quotas were set by specific demographics such as region, age, gender, and ethnicity based on data from the U.S. Census and the voter file in order to ensure the sample is representative statewide.

The survey was conducted June 15-20, 2017. The margin of error on the sample of N=400 registered voters is $\pm 4.9\%$.