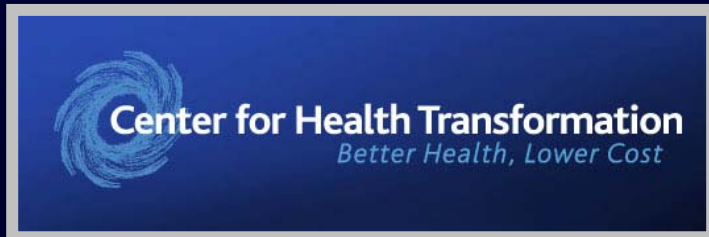




Health Care Summit National Survey

February 2010



&



Methodology:

Public Opinion Strategies conducted a national telephone survey February 17-21, 2010 among 900 registered voters. The margin of error for this survey was $\pm 3.3\%$.

We also conducted a statewide survey in a Southwestern swing state February 15-16, 2010 among 500 registered voters. The margin of error for this survey was $\pm 4.4\%$.

We asked respondents an open-ended question about what would be the one or two reform ideas to change the health care system they would most want to see emerge from the health care reform summit on February 25th.



Key *Findings:*

Key Findings:

- 1.** Americans have paid close attention to the health care debate as 85% say they have followed it closely with a very high 38% saying they have followed this debate “very closely.” The percentage following this issue “very closely” has climbed by 13 points since April of 2009.
- 2.** The national debate on health care over the past year has reshaped attitudes about the role of the federal government. American support for government-run coverage for all has declined, while the percentage believing health care is not the government’s responsibility has increased.
- 3.** The proposed changes to the health care system being developed by Congress and the Obama administration are now themselves on life support. A majority of Americans oppose this proposal. The difference in intensity is striking as by a two-to-one margin, voters strongly oppose rather than strongly support this proposal. Among those who have followed the debate most closely, opposition to the current health care reform proposal in Congress is especially high as 58% oppose this plan, with 52% “strongly opposing” this plan.

Key Findings:

- 4.** A constant in polling in early 2009 was the strong desire for change in health care. Remarkably, over time, a majority of voters now say it would be better to not pass this plan and keep the current health care system.
- 5.** Priorities in health care reform are shifting as well. The focus on expanding coverage is fading as Americans are looking more at issues like controlling medical decisions, cost, and the role of insurers. A concern about “making health care more affordable” crosses party lines.
- 6.** A majority of voters say they agree more with Republicans “to start the reform process over and focus on areas of agreement and smaller pieces of legislation” rather than go forward with comprehensive health care reform. When not framed as “Republicans in Congress” versus “President Obama and Democrats in Congress,” but instead simply describing the policy position, support for starting over bumps up even higher.

Key Findings:

- 7.** Make no mistake: The data suggests the public wants the two parties to work together and they do want action on health care. The strongest Republican argument for starting over is an appeal for genuine bi-partisan reform that finds areas of agreement between the two parties.
- 8.** After hearing the strongest argument for comprehensive reform versus starting over, support for the Democrat position marginally improves. The Republican position to start over though continues to enjoy majority support and an intensity edge on strong support.

Key Findings:

9.

While voters were not yet that focused on the February 25th summit, they do not lack for interest and passion when asked an open-ended question about the one or two reform ideas they would most like to see emerge from the meeting. Republicans and Independents would put medical liability much higher on the agenda than what is being discussed in Washington. Republican and Independent voters also raise wanting to be able to buy coverage across state lines. While a concern about health care costs cuts across party lines, the Democrat respondents focus on coverage for all, continue to be committed to a public option, and are much more negative and focused about the need to reform the health insurance industry and drug companies.

10.

Health care definitely has a political cut as we look towards November. Opposition to the current health care plan is especially high among voters who are most interested in the election, Independents, and is nearly universal among people who describe themselves as Tea Party supporters.



Detailed *Findings:*

The health care debate in the past year has shifted Americans' opinion about the role of the federal government in health care. Voters are more likely to say it is not the responsibility of the federal government.

	<u>June 2008</u>	<u>Feb. 2010</u>
Net Difference (Not The Federal Government's Responsibility <i>minus</i> Government-Run Health Care)	- 1%	+12%
It is <i>not</i> the Federal government's responsibility	28%	35%
Provide government-run health care coverage to all Americans	29%	23%
Assist those Americans who can least afford health care coverage to purchase it	38%	38%

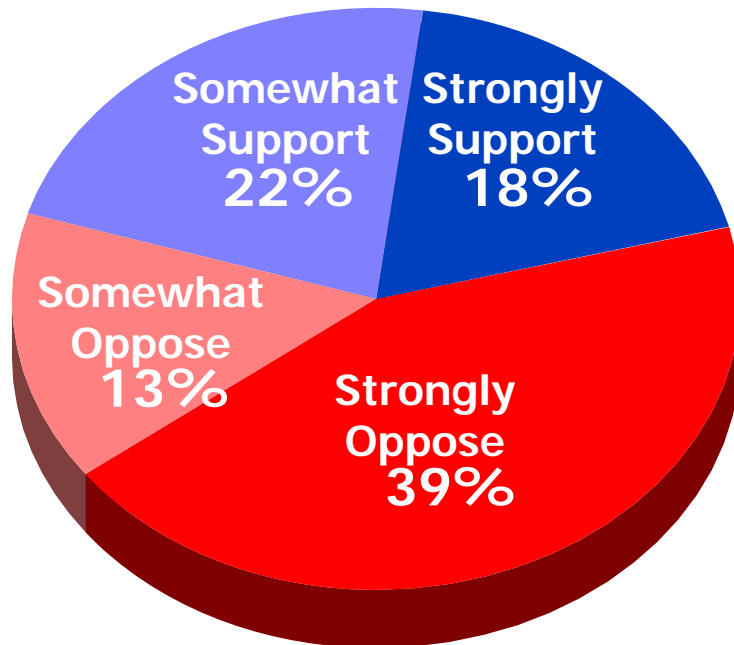
And, do you think it is the responsibility of the Federal government to...

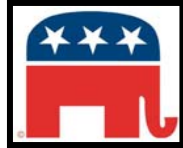

A majority of voters now oppose the current health care reform proposal. The difference in intensity is striking as by a two-to-one margin, voters strongly oppose rather than strongly support this proposal.

Support/Oppose Health Care System Being Developed By Congress & The Obama Administration

Total Support 40%
Total Oppose 52%

Among the 38% Very Closely Following Health Care Reform:
39% Support/58% Oppose



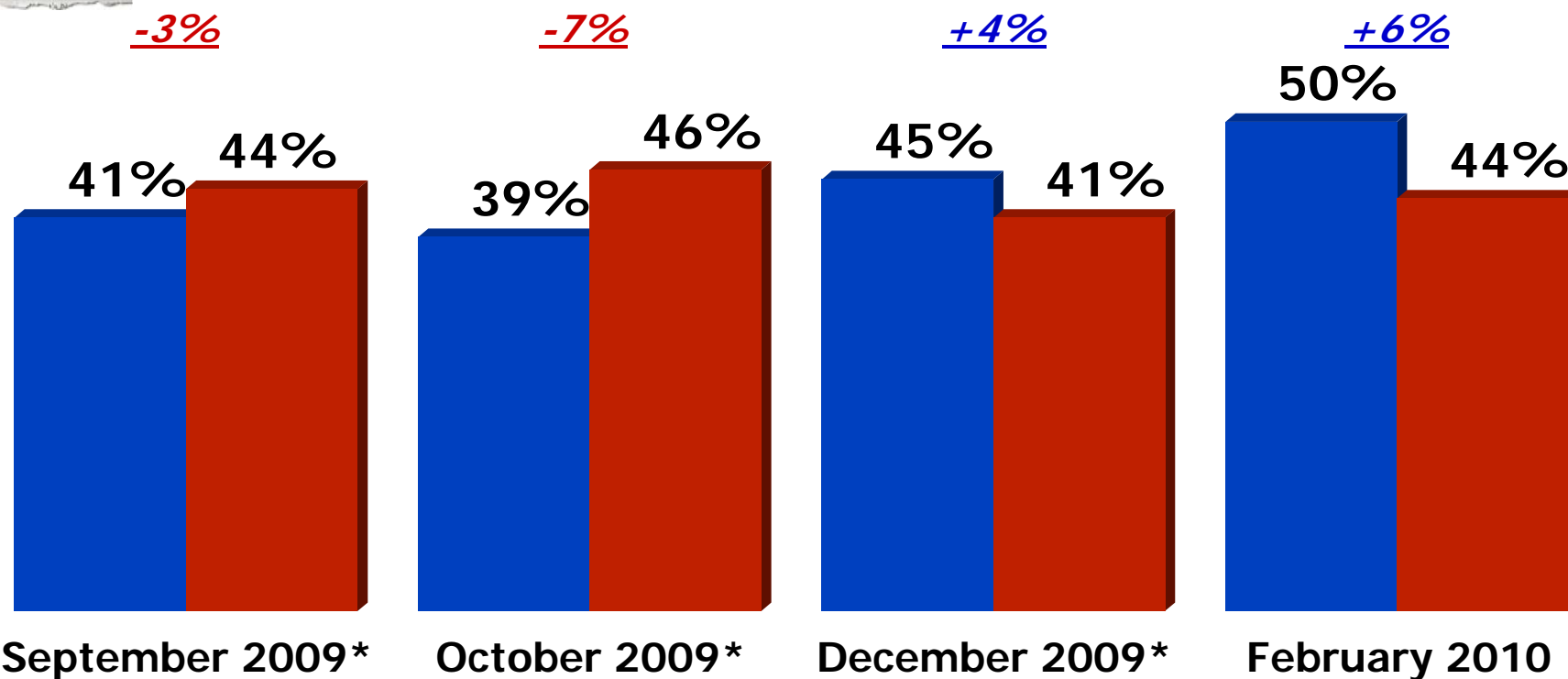
	Total Support	Total Oppose
	7%	88%
Inds.	32%	59%
	74%	18%

Overall, given what you know about them, would you say you support or oppose the proposed changes to the health care system being developed by Congress and the Obama administration? And would you say that you feel that way STRONGLY or SOMEWHAT?

Remarkably, over the course of this debate, a majority of voters have come to the conclusion the status quo is better than passing the plan being developed by Congress and the Obama administration.



Do Not Make Changes/Keep Current System vs. Make Changes/Pass Plan



*Data from NBC/WSJ Surveys among Registered Voters ■ Do Not Pass Plan/Keep Current System ■ Pass Plan/Make Changes

And do you think it would be better to pass the health care plan being developed by Congress and the Obama administration and make its changes to the health care system ...OR... to not pass this plan and keep the current health care system?

A focus on expanding coverage has faded as Americans are looking more at issues like controlling medical decisions, cost, and the role of insurers as the most important priorities in health care reform.

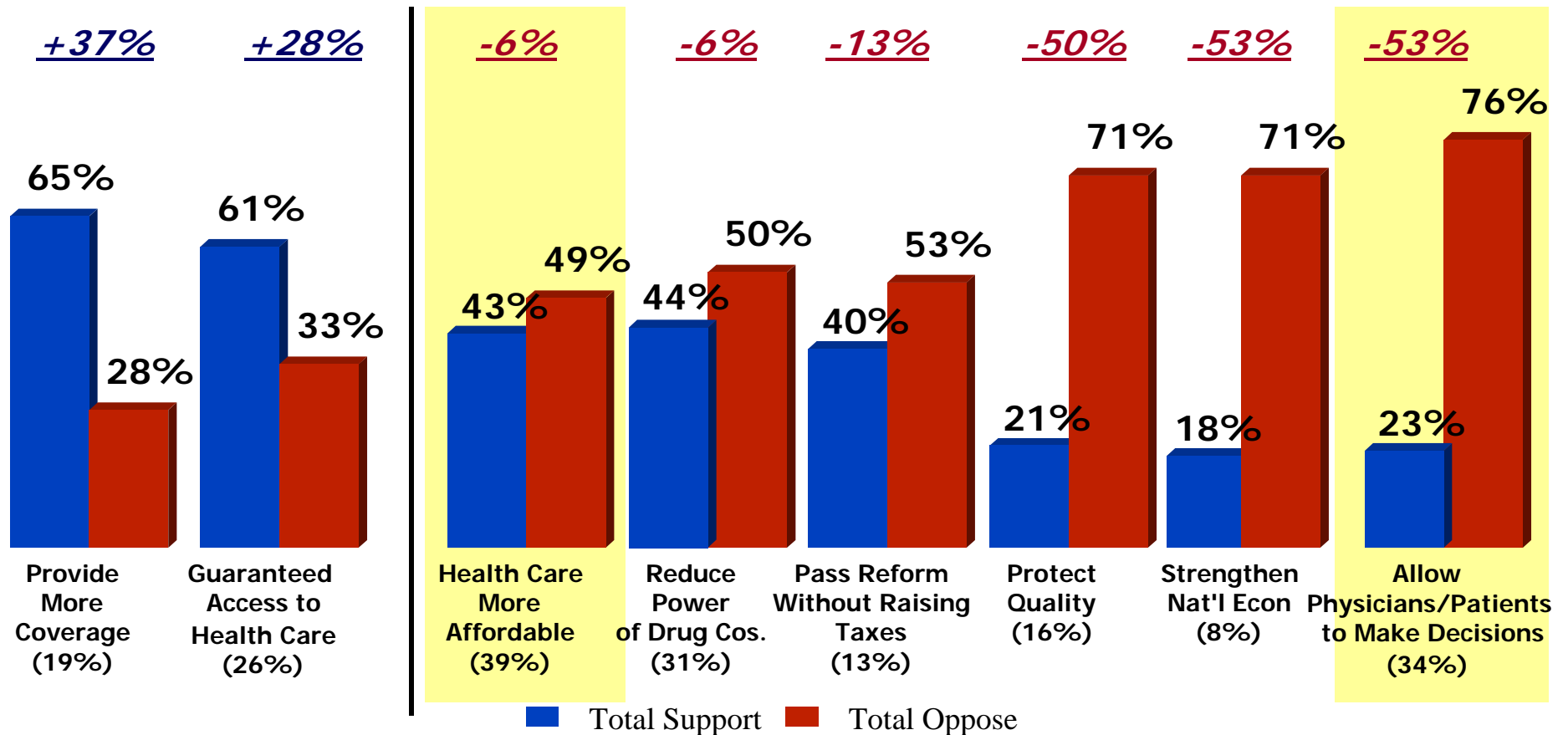
Goals of Health Care Reform (Ranked by Top Priority)

<u>Goals of Health Care Reform</u>	<u>TOP Priority</u>	<u>Combined Priority</u>
Making health care more affordable.	21%	39%
Allowing physicians and patients to be in charge of making medical decisions.	21%	34%
Reducing the power of health insurance and drug companies.	16%	31%
Guaranteeing access to health insurance even with preexisting conditions.	13%	26%
Providing health care coverage for more Americans.	9%	19%
Passing health care reform without raising taxes or the deficit.	6%	13%
Protecting the quality of our health care.	5%	16%
Strengthening our national economy by spending less on health care.	4%	8%

Now, thinking about the goals of health care reform... I am going to read you some objectives of health care reform. Please tell me which ONE you think should be the top priority.

While people who are concerned about health care cost are closely divided about the Obama plan, among those concerned with physician/patients' controlling medical decisions, opposition is extremely high.

Goals of Health Care Reform (Support/Oppose Obama Plan by Combined Priority)



Now, thinking about the goals of health care reform... I am going to read you some objectives of health care reform. Please tell me which ONE you think should be the top priority.

The concern about “making health care more affordable” crosses party lines as a top priority.

Goals of Health Care Reform (Combined Priority By Party)



**Republicans
(39%)**

**Lean Independents
(17%)**

**Democrats
(42%)**



Allowing physicians and patients to be in charge of making medical decisions. (50%)

Making health care more affordable. (32%)

Reducing the power of health insurance and drug companies. (29%)

Protecting the quality of our health care. (25%)

Guaranteeing access to health insurance even with preexisting conditions. (18%)

Reducing the power of health insurance and drug companies. (38%)

Making health care more affordable. (38%)

Allowing physicians and patients to be in charge of making medical decisions. (35%)

Guaranteeing access to health insurance even with preexisting conditions. (25%)

Providing health care coverage for more Americans. (16%)

Making health care more affordable. (45%)

Guaranteeing access to health insurance even with preexisting conditions. (34%)

Providing health care coverage for more Americans. (34%)

Reducing the power of health insurance and drug companies. (29%)

Allowing physicians and patients to be in charge of making medical decisions. (19%)

A majority of voters say they agree more with Republicans to start over and focus on areas of agreement and smaller pieces of legislation rather than to pass comprehensive reform.

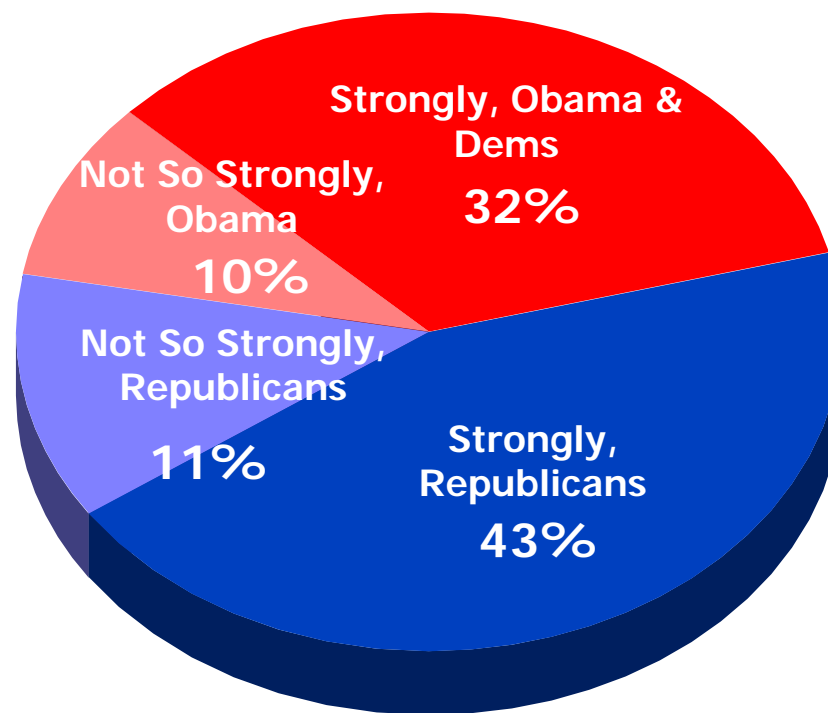
*Agree with more...**

Total Obama/Dems 42%
Total Republicans 54%

President Obama and Democrats in Congress who support comprehensive health care reform and want to pass a version of the House and Senate bills.

... **Or** ...

Republicans in Congress who want to start the health care reform process over and focus on areas of agreement and smaller pieces of legislation.



**Half Sample*

As you may know, the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate have both passed bills to reform the American health care system. But, they have not been able to agree on the details of health care reform so no final bill has been passed. At this point in the process who would you agree with more...

Support for starting over increases once partisan labels are dropped from the question.

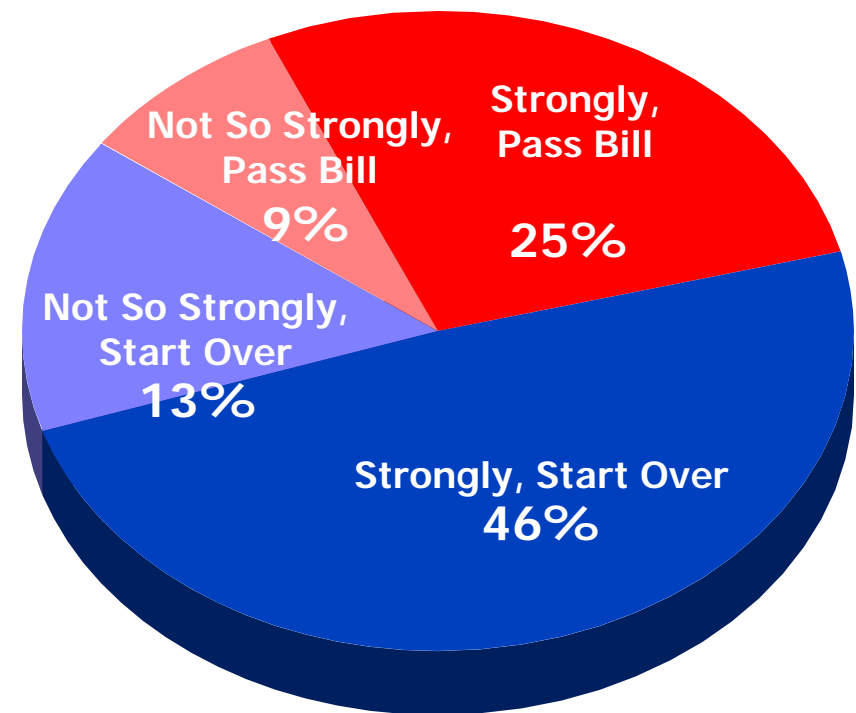
*Agree with more... **

Total Want Bill Passed	34%
Total Start Over	59%

Those in Congress who support comprehensive health care reform and want to pass a version of the House and Senate bills.

... **Or** ...

Those in Congress who want to start the health care reform process over and focus on areas of agreement and smaller pieces of legislation.



**Half Sample*

As you may know, the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate have both passed bills to reform the American health care system. But, they have not been able to agree on the details of health care reform so no final bill has been passed. At this point in the process who would you agree with more...

Everyone heard this Democrat argument about the rationale for comprehensive reform.

Democrats say the strongest reason for comprehensive health care reform is only through an overhaul of our health care system can we guarantee quality and affordable health care for all Americans. To fix the health care system once and for all, we have to tackle all the difficult issues at once, not just the issues that are easy or politically popular. Comprehensive reform means guaranteeing access to health insurance even with preexisting conditions and thirty million more Americans with health coverage without increasing the national debt.

% Strongly Agree

36%

% Total Agree

59%

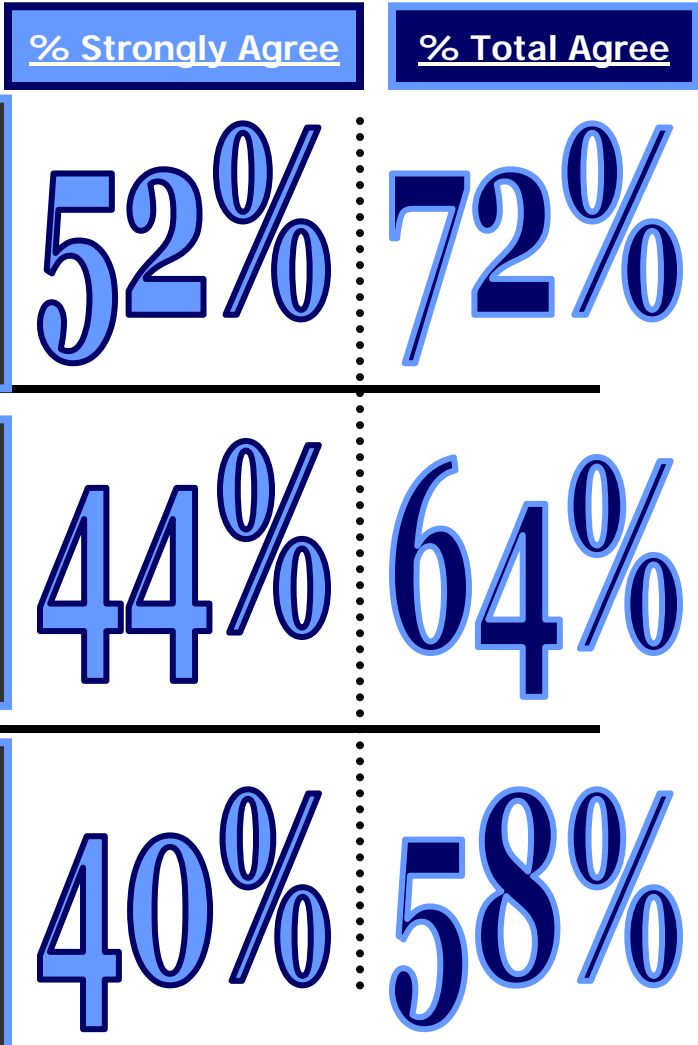
Now, I would like to read you the reasons Democrats and Republicans have given to explain their positions on the health care reform process. After I read each one, please tell me if you agree or disagree with that statement. And would you say you strongly (agree/disagree) with that statement or just not so strongly (agree/disagree)?

Each respondent heard one of these three Republican arguments as the reason to start over and focus on smaller pieces of legislation.

Process Contrast: Republicans say the strongest reason to start the health care reform process over and focus on smaller pieces of legislation is this is the only way we will ever have a genuinely bi-partisan effort to reform health care. The bills put together by Democrats in Congress and President Obama have been done behind closed doors and without the input of Republican ideas. To truly meet the needs of the American people, we need to put Democratic and Republican ideas on the table in full view of the American public and find areas of agreement.

Policy Contrast: Republicans say the strongest reason to start the health care reform process over and focus on small pieces of legislation is the four thousand five hundred pages of congressional legislation that has passed Congress means too much government intervention and a government take-over of our health care system. The result of a government take-over is less consumer choice, reduced quality of care, and higher taxes for American families and small businesses. We need health care reform in this country, but not thousands of pages of overly complicated legislation.

Blended Contrast: Republicans say the strongest reason to start the health care reform process over and focus on small pieces of legislation is the plan passed by the House and Senate will mean a government take-over of the health care system, less consumer choice, reduced quality of care, and higher taxes for American families and small businesses. There are areas of agreement between Republicans and Democrats and we need to get to work and pass those first rather than continue to fight over a bloated bill with special deals to certain legislators and favors to special interests. It's time to start with a clean slate.



Armed with these arguments, a majority of voters continue to support the Republican position to start over.

Agree with more...

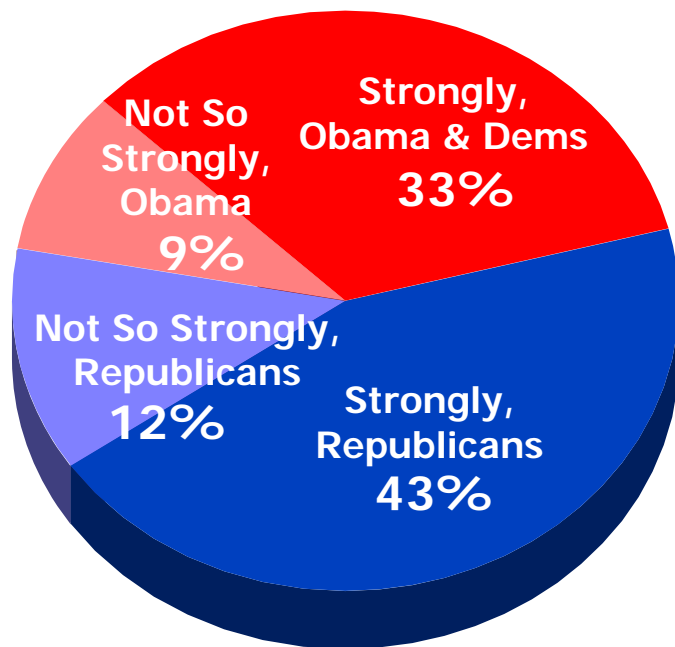
President Obama and Democrats in Congress who support comprehensive health care reform and want to pass a version of the House and Senate bills.

... **OR** ...

Republicans in Congress who want to start the health care reform process over and focus on areas of agreement and smaller pieces of legislation.

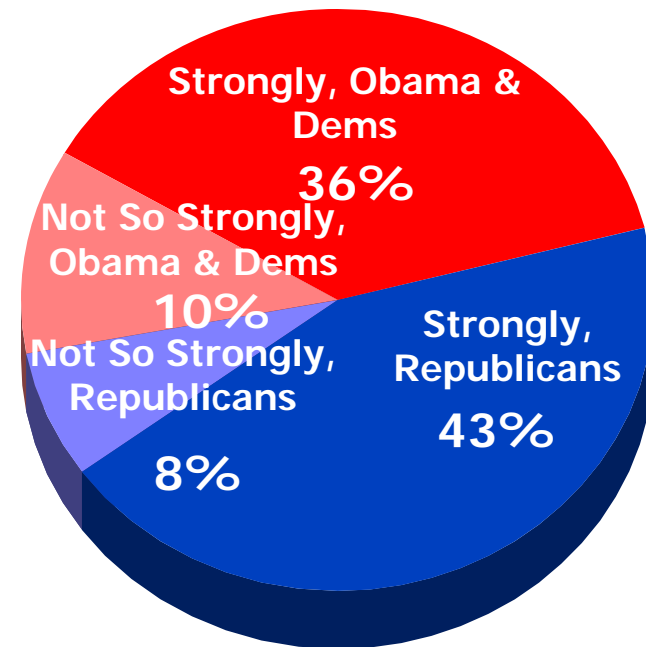
Pre-Test

Total Obama/Dems 42%
Total Republicans 54%



Post-Test

Total Obama/Dems 46%
Total Republicans 51%

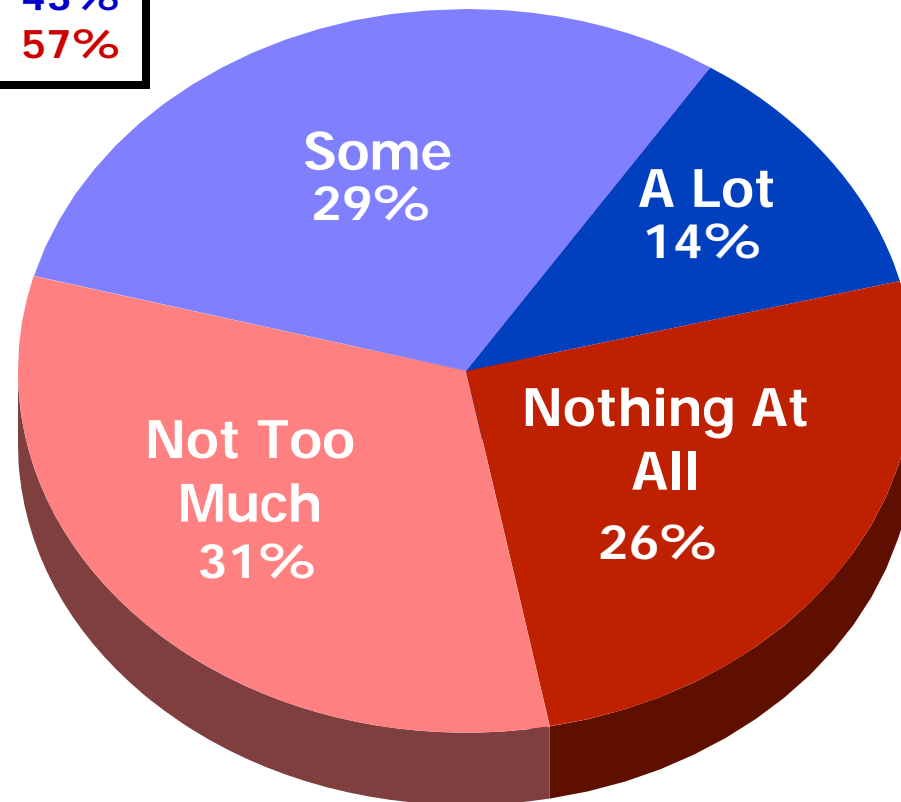


As you may know, the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate have both passed bills to reform the American health care system. But, they have not been able to agree on the details of health care reform so no final bill has been passed. At this point in the process who would you agree with more...

Only roughly four-in-ten voters have heard much yet about the February 25th Summit.

Seen/Read/Heard About a Health Care Reform Summit Scheduled for February 25th

Total Some/A Lot	43%
Total Not Much/At All	57%



How much have you seen, read, or heard about a health care reform summit scheduled for February 25th that will include President Obama and Democratic and Republican leaders in Congress... a lot, some, not too much, or nothing at all?

Listening to voters in a swing state about the upcoming health care summit, it is clear how much attention voters have paid to the health care debate.

We asked 500 voters in a Southwestern Swing State the following question:

As you may or may not know, a health care reform summit has been called for February 25th that will include President Obama and Democratic and Republican leaders in Congress. The objective is to discuss health care reform. If you were a participant in the summit, what are the one or two reform ideas to change the health care system that you would most want to see emerge from this meeting?

We were struck by the detail and passion of these verbatim comments. Voters have been paying A LOT of attention to the health care debate, and most have very specific recommendations for the health care summit. The level of specificity and intensity of the comments goes well beyond anything we could have anticipated.

Republicans said...



There are three things Republicans want to come out of the summit:

1. Get government out of health care;
2. Medical liability reform/malpractice reform; and,
3. Allow people to purchase insurance across state lines to increase competition and reduce costs.

Republicans feel strongly the current reform plan should be scrapped and we should be working in smaller steps.

Secondary mentions from Republican respondents include:

1. Ending the practice of free health care to illegal immigrants;
2. Reducing health care costs;
3. Covering those with pre-existing conditions; and,
4. Ending abuses in the system (Medicaid and Medicare).

There is also a thread in the comments about some necessary reform of the health insurance industry.

Swing Voters said...

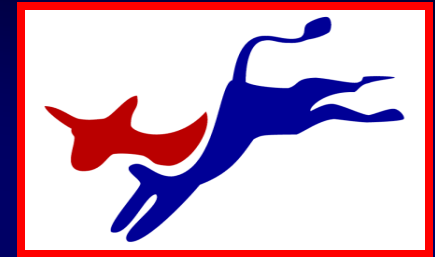


Comments among this voter segment largely mirror those comments coming from Republicans. In general, they are not supportive of President Obama's plan and think it is time to start over. These voters say the focus of health care reform should include the following areas:

- Medical liability reform/malpractice reform;
- Purchasing insurance across state lines;
- Stop providing free health care to illegal immigrants;
- Focusing on reducing costs;
- Covering those with pre-existing conditions; and,
- There were a small handful of comments about portability.

The swing voters who "lean Democrat" start to drift more toward extending coverage to more Americans.

Democrats said...



Base Democrats have an intense focus on "coverage for all Americans," are supportive of reinstating the public option, and hold firm that all Americans should have access to the same coverage as Members of Congress. They are also more keenly focused on reforming the health insurance industry and prescription drug companies.

There is some consensus with Republicans and Independents around the ideas of covering those with pre-existing conditions and making health care more affordable.

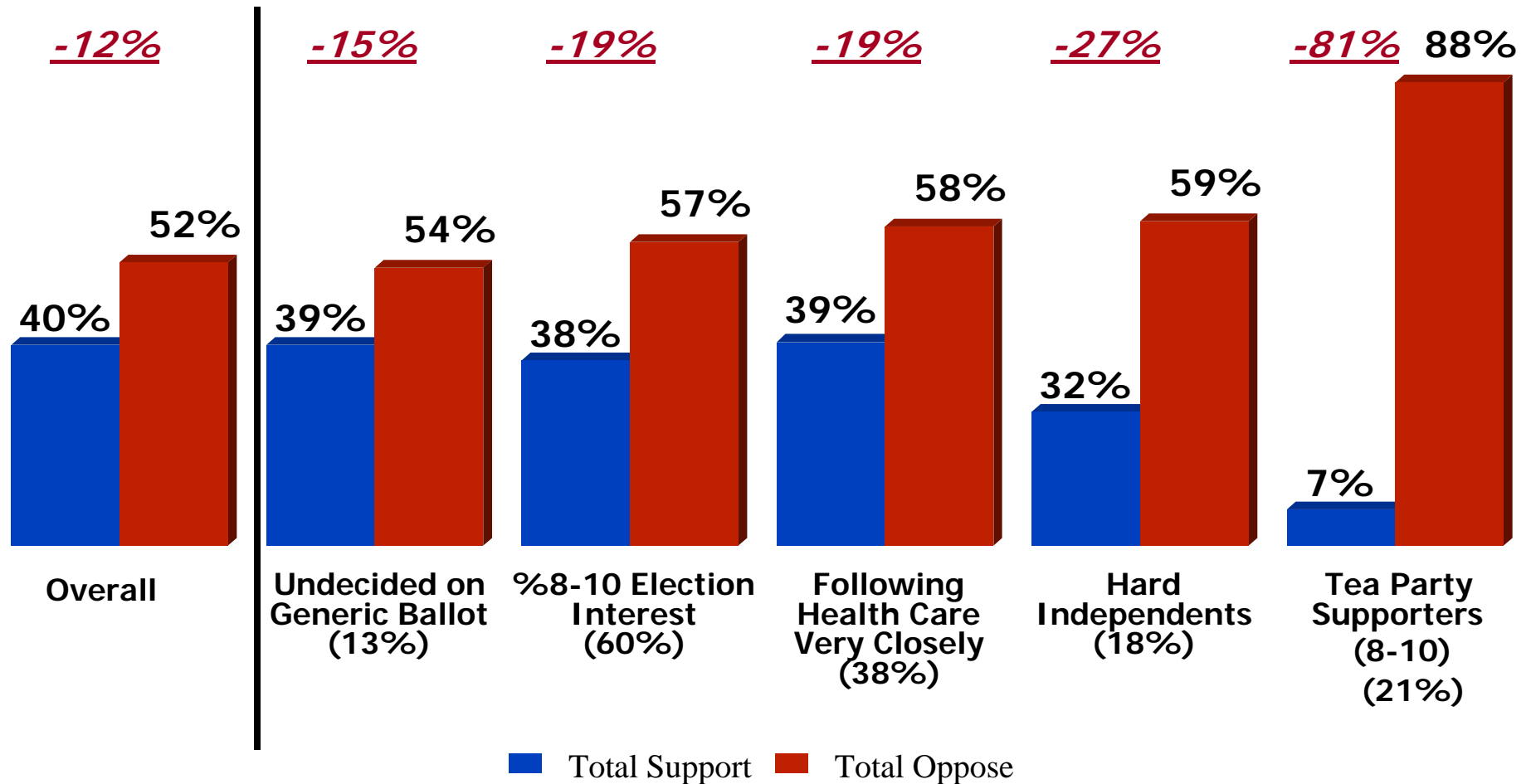
There were differences in the comments between soft and base Democrats. Soft Democrats voice concerns about mandated coverage, too much government involvement, and support for medical liability reform.



Looking Ahead to *the 2010 Elections*

As one looks at some of the critical sub-groups of the 2010 electorate, this data is not comforting for Democrats.

Support/Oppose Congress & Obama Administration Health Care Reform Plan



Overall, given what you know about them, would you say you support or oppose the proposed changes to the health care system being developed by Congress and the Obama administration?



Summary *Observations:*



Better Health, Lower Cost

www.healthtransformation.net • 202-375-2001

&



Turning Questions into Answers

www.pos.org • 703-836-7655