

Polling News & Notes

Overlooked Recent Polling and Insights • March 17, 2010

Health Care Reform Unpopular in Swing House Districts: As congressional Democrats push to pass health care reform, new polls have found reform is widely unpopular in key swing House districts. Three series of surveys—by the Tarrance Group, Ayres McHenry, and the polling company—all show health care reform as being deeply unpopular in the districts of House Democrats who will face competitive re-election campaigns this fall.

The Tarrance and Ayres McHenry surveys polled 15 districts that will be key for Democrats to hold this fall if they hope to retain control of the House: AZ-8 (Gabrielle Giffords), CO-4 (Betsy Markey), FL-2 (Allen Boyd), IN-9 (Baron Hill), NC-8 (Larry Kissell), NJ-3 (John Adler), NV-3 (Dina Titus), NY-13 (Mike McMahon), NY-24 (Michael Arcuri), OH-1 (Steve Driehaus), OH-16 (John Boccieri), PA-4 (Jason Altmire), PA-10 (Chris Carney), TX-17 (Chet Edwards), and VA-2 (Glenn Nye). In each district, Tarrance polled 300 likely voters (MoE +/- 5.8%) between March 7 and 8, while Ayres McHenry polled 400 likely voters (MoE +/- 4.9%) between March 8 and 11. These are truly swing districts, all 15 represented by Democrats, yet in 2008, they combined to vote for McCain over Obama by an average margin of 50.6% to 48.0%.

Health Care Reform Favor/Oppose

Tarrance & Ayres McHenry Surveys Battleground Cong. Dists.

AZ-8*	CO-4*	FL-2	IN-9	NC-8	NJ-3	NV-3*	NY-13	NY-24	OH-1*	OH-16	PA-4*	PA-10	TX-17	VA-2	
33	33	31	31	35	34	37	40	32	37	38	30	28	30	39	Favor
56	57	59	52	51	57	55	46	53	53	51	58	58	60	50	Oppose
11	10	10	18	14	10	8	14	15	10	11	12	14	10	11	Unsure

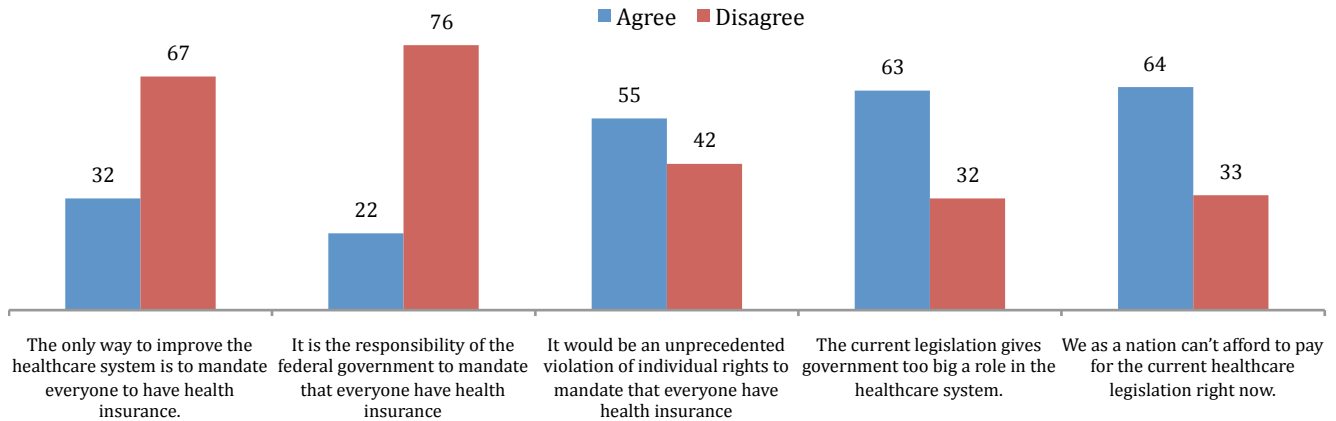
*District polled by both Tarrance and Ayres McHenry; average shown

On average, voters in the 15 districts oppose health care reform by a 54.4% to 33.8% margin, with 11.9% undecided. The surveys also found that in all 15 districts, voters say that Obama's health care reform will increase their taxes or the cost of their health care, that how their incumbent congressman votes on the health care legislation will be important to their decision to re-elect them this fall, and that they prefer their representatives oppose the current bill before the House.

Furthermore, in all 11 districts surveyed by the Tarrance Group, a majority of likely voters opposed going outside normal procedure to pass health care reform through reconciliation. Across the 11 districts, an average of 58.5% of voters opposed using reconciliation.

On top of these results, a national survey by the polling company polled 1,200 registered voters in 35 competitive congressional districts between March 8 and 10. This survey found that 36% of voters think Congress should pass health care reform, while 60% think it should reject it. The polling company's survey also gave additional insight into why voters oppose the health care reform legislation.

Next, I will you read you some of the arguments being made about health care reform. For each, please tell me whether you agree or disagree.



As the polling company’s survey makes clear, voters in swing congressional districts are not comfortable with the health care reform bill’s expansion of the federal government’s power. Not only do these voters reject the a government mandate for health insurance, but their opposition is also centered around the legislation’s prospective cost —64% believe that “we as a nation can’t afford to pay for the current health care legislation right now,” with 52% saying they strongly agree with the statement.

House Democrats may still succeed in passing health care reform over the objections of the American people. But if they do, Democratic members in swing congressional districts may wind up paying the political price this fall.

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