Insights into the Publics’ Views about Health Insurance: Challenges and Opportunities for Would-Be Reformers

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Challenges

1. Salience?
2. Goals easy, solutions hard
3. Willingness to pay or bear risk
4. Evaluate based on how it affects them (and don’t think of themselves as at risk)
5. Worry more about rising costs
6. Debates and messages matter
Challenge #1: Salience of Issue?

What two issues would you most like the president and Congress to act on next year?

- Iraq: 46%
- Economic issues: 15%
- Health care: 15%
- Immigration: 12%
- Taxes: 8%
- Terrorism/national security: 7%

Note: Asked of half sample. Responses 5% or less not shown.
Source: KFF/HSPH The Public’s Health Care Agenda for the New Congress and Presidential Campaign (conducted November 9-19, 2006)
Challenge #1: Public’s Desire for Change?

Which of the following statements comes closest to expressing your overall view of the health care system in this country?

- Completely rebuild
- Good, but changes needed
- Works well, minor changes only

Note: “Don’t know/refused” responses not shown.
Challenge #1: Satisfied with Own Situation

Among those with health care coverage, percent who…

Challenge #2: Public Often Agrees About Goals…

Do you favor or oppose the federal government doing more to help provide health insurance for more Americans?

- Favor: 85%
- Oppose: 14%
- Don’t know/Refused: 1%

Source: KFF/HSPH The Public’s Health Care Agenda for the New Congress and Presidential Campaign (conducted November 9-19, 2006)
Challenge #2: …But Not on the Best Solution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent who FAVOR</th>
<th>When forced to choose…Percent who say “MOST preferred option”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tax credits for businesses</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expanding state government programs such as Medicaid</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expanding Medicare to people under age 65</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax credits for uninsured individuals</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requiring businesses to offer insurance to employees</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National single-payer plan</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation/Harvard Health Care Agenda for the New Congress Survey November, 2004
Challenge #2 is Nothing New: Level of Support for 3 Health Reform Plans, 1945

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan</th>
<th>Percent saying “good” or “fair” idea</th>
<th>Percent favoring in forced 3-way choice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Insurance company plan</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal government plan</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor organization plan</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Challenge #3: Willingness to Pay?

Would you be willing to pay more--either in higher health insurance premiums or higher taxes--in order to increase the number of Americans who have health insurance, or not?

Note: “Don’t know/refused” responses not shown
Challenge #4: Evaluate in terms of Personal Impact

Do you think a universal health insurance system would make the following better, worse, or would it stay about the same?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Better</th>
<th>Stay the same</th>
<th>Worse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost of your/your family’s health care</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of treatment to you/your family</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of your/your family’s health care</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your/your family’s choice of doctors &amp; hospitals</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Don’t know/refused responses not shown
Source: ABC News/Kaiser Family Foundation/USA Today Health Care in America Survey (conducted September 7-12, 2006)
Challenge #4 is Nothing New: Expectations of the Clinton Health Care Reform Plan

Percent saying the Clinton Health Care Reform Plan would have the following effect on...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>No effect</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amount you pay for medical care</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your choice of doctors</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of care available to you</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You personally</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: "Don’t know/Refused" responses not shown
Source: Gallup/CNN/USA Today Poll, April 1994
Challenge #4: Uninsured = Not Necessarily Me

Would you say that more uninsured Americans are... employed or from families where someone is employed, or that more of these uninsured Americans are... unemployed or from families where no one is employed?

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation Health Poll Report
Challenge #5: Insecure about Costs

Percent saying they are VERY worried about the following…

- Having to pay more for your health care or insurance
- Losing your health insurance coverage

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation Health Poll Report
Challenge #6: Debates and Messaging Matter: Clinton Health Reform Plan Debate

Change in public support for Clinton Health Reform Plan over time...

- September 1993: Favor 59%, Oppose 33%, No opinion 8%
- April 1994: Favor 43%, Oppose 47%, No opinion 10%

Challenge #6: Debates and Messaging Matter: Truman Health Reform Plan Debate

Change in public support for Truman Health Reform Plan over time...

- March 1949:
  - Favor: 38%
  - Oppose: 38%
  - No opinion: 25%

- November 1950:
  - Oppose: 60%
  - Favor: 29%
  - No opinion: 11%

Source: Gallup Polls, 1949 and 1950.
Opportunities

1. Recognize needed public concern already present
2. Leadership needed – Top Down
3. Frame in terms of dealing with health care costs
4. Combine approaches; Build on what people know and like
Opportunity #1: Level of Public Concern Steady Since 1990s

Percent who worry that future health care costs will not be taken care of:
- December 1991: 68%
- September 1999: 65%
- January 2006: 61%

Percent who are concerned “a lot” about current and future health care costs:

Opportunity #2: Need for Leadership

Percent naming health care one of two most important issues for government to address

Note: “Don't know” responses were included in the base when percentages were calculated.
Source: NBC/Wall Street Journal; Harris Polls
Opportunity #2: Public Appetite to Hear About Health Proposals

Which health care issues would you most like to hear the 2008 presidential candidates talk about and focus on?

- Expanding coverage for the uninsured: 32%
- Reducing health care costs: 31%
- Improving Medicare Part D: 18%
- Improving quality and reducing errors: 10%
- Reducing spending on government health programs: 6%

Which would you like to see in a health care reform proposal from a presidential candidate for 2008?

- A new health plan that would make a major effort to provide insurance for nearly all of the uninsured and would involve a substantial increase in spending: 57%
- A new health plan that is more limited and would cover only some uninsured groups, but would involve less spending: 24%
- A health plan that would keep things basically as they are: 14%

Note: “Don’t know/refused” responses not shown
Source: KFF/HSPH The Public’s Health Care Agenda for the New Congress and Presidential Campaign (conducted November 9-19, 2006)
Opportunity #3: Link to Health Care Costs

Do you think the cost of health care is something the president and Congress can do a lot about, do a little about, or is that mostly beyond their control?

- 64% A lot
- 19% A little
- 14% Mostly beyond their control
- 3% Don’t know/Refused

Source: KFF/HSPH The Public’s Health Care Agenda for the New Congress and Presidential Campaign (conducted November 9-19, 2006)
Opportunity #4: Combine Approaches and Build on What They Know and Like

Among those insured through an employer…
Would you say that your employer is or is not doing the best they can to provide you and your family with affordable health insurance coverage?

- **Employer is doing the best they can**: 79%
- **Employer is not doing the best they can**: 19%
- **Don't know**: 3%

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation Health Insurance Survey (conducted April 30 – July 20, 2003)
Opportunity #4: Market OR Government…….. YES!

Letting **INDIVIDUALS** shop around for the best prices they can get for health care and health insurance

- Effective at controlling health care costs: 80%
- Not effective at controlling health care costs: 18%

The current health care system, in which **EMPLOYERS** purchase insurance for workers

- Effective at controlling health care costs: 67%
- Not effective at controlling health care costs: 30%

Having the **GOVERNMENT** regulate health care costs

- Effective at controlling health care costs: 62%
- Not effective at controlling health care costs: 36%

Note: Don’t know/refused responses not shown.
Source: ABC News/Kaiser Family Foundation/USA Today Health Care in America Survey (conducted September 7-12, 2006)
Biggest Hurdles

- Bridging ideological divides
- Figuring out how to pay
- Leaders willing to take this on
- Be prepared with messages that resonate