

**TO: Interested Parties**  
**FROM: Geoff Garin**  
**DATE: February 3, 2021**  
**RE: Broad Bipartisan Support for Action on Healthcare**

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A new national poll conducted by Hart Research Associates on behalf of Protect Our Care shows that voters across party lines want healthcare reforms to be at the very top of the agenda for President Biden and the Congress after congressional action on the COVID rescue package. The poll results also show there is broad bipartisan support for policies to lower the cost of healthcare and make health insurance more affordable for more people.

The Protect Our Care survey was conducted January 25-27 among a nationally representative cross section of 1,201 voters. The party identification of survey respondents is 45% Democratic and 44% Republican, while 11% say they are completely independent with no party leaning. The self-reported vote in the 2020 presidential election among respondents is 51% for Joe Biden and 47% for Donald Trump.

When given a list of nine possible goals President Biden and the Congress might address this year and asked to pick their top three priorities, 65% of voters select healthcare affordability as one of their most important goals – significantly more than for any other issue. Biden voters and Trump voters are equally likely to select lowering the cost of healthcare as one of their priorities.

These are the top four priorities selected by voters:

- Lowering the cost of healthcare and prescription drugs and making healthcare insurance more affordable for more people (65%)
- Creating new jobs by investing in infrastructure, clean energy, and manufacturing (45%)
- Reforming the political system and ending the power of big money in politics (40%)

- Reforming the federal tax system and ensuring the wealthy pay their fair share (39%).

Fully 76% of voters say that is either absolutely essential (41%) or very important (35%) for the President and Congress to pass legislation this year to lower the cost of healthcare and drugs and expand access to affordable health insurance. The imperative to address healthcare is shared across party lines, with 96% of Democrats, 68% of Republicans, and 63% of Republicans saying it is essential or very important.

Voters' sense of urgency about addressing healthcare is driven in part by the experience of the coronavirus crisis. We find significant salience to the idea that the crisis exposed many weaknesses and inequities in our healthcare system as millions lost their health insurance, and as a result the President and Congress "must move forward with a healthcare agenda that deals with the serious healthcare issues raised by the pandemic."

The salience of health reform also driven by a widely shared view that high healthcare costs (79%), people losing their health insurance coverage or not being able to afford healthcare (78%), and racial disparities in healthcare (57%) are big problems in the country today. Four in ten voters say that high healthcare costs are a problem for them personally.

There is not only a bipartisan consensus about the priority attention healthcare should receive in Washington, but also about many of the solutions Congress might adopt. For example, large majorities of voters express support for each of the following:

- ✓ Stop excessive drug prices by giving Medicare the power to negotiate with drug companies to lower the price of prescription medicines and making those lower drug prices available to both people on Medicare and those with private insurance (93% favor)
- ✓ Give people more options for their health insurance and create more competition to reduce costs in healthcare, by establishing new affordable public health insurance options as an alternative to private health insurance (83% favor)
- ✓ Allow people to buy into Medicare at age 55 or 60 if they no longer have access to coverage through an employer (80% favor)

## Hart Research Associates

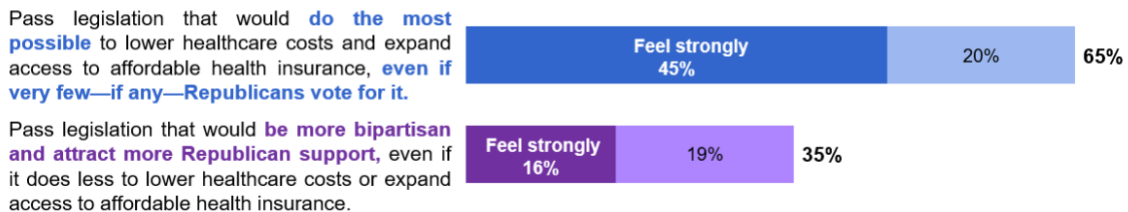
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- ✓ Make health insurance more affordable by expanding tax credits and financial assistance to offset the cost of premiums (79% favor)
- ✓ Address racial inequities in our healthcare system by funding improvements in healthcare access and treatment in minority communities and increasing funding for maternal and infant healthcare (72% favor)
- ✓ Expand access to affordable healthcare for over six million Americans by increasing the number of people who are covered by Medicaid (68% favor)

Voters are particularly avid about giving Medicare the power to negotiate with drug companies to lower the price of prescription medicines. Eighty-nine percent of rank-and-file Republicans support the policy, including 45% who strongly support it. Of the six policies tested, over half of voters choose Medicare drug price negotiations as one of their top two priorities for the President and Congress to pass. Seventy-nine percent of voters say that the amount that pharmaceutical companies charge for prescription drugs is unreasonable, and seven in ten voters continue to support Medicare price negotiations when the proposal is pressure-tested against a message citing the role of drug companies in developing the coronavirus vaccine and claiming that “government price controls” would reduce the flow of new life-saving cures and treatments.

The broad consensus in the country for meaningful health forms is, of course, no guarantee that congressional Republicans will cooperate in helping pass them. If Republicans do not support these reforms, voters are clear that they prioritize strong and consequential measures over bipartisan support in Congress.

*Which approach do you want President Biden and the Democrats in Congress to take?*



To an significant extent, it is not just Democrats who reject the idea of watering down healthcare legislation for the sake of bipartisanship: 68% of independents say Democrats should pass reforms that will have the greatest impact, even if no Republicans vote for them, and 44% of rank-and-file Republican voters come down on that side as well.

President Biden and Democrats in Congress already are more trusted than Republicans in Congress on healthcare issues, and the combination of Democratic success and Republican opposition on passing healthcare reforms would deepen this advantage. Sixty-two percent of voters say they would be more favorable to Democrats in Congress if they actually pass the reforms described in the survey, and 53% of voters say they would be less favorable to Republicans in Congress if they voted against these policies.