

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Geoff Garin
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RE:

This memorandum summarizes the key findings from a new survey for Protect Our Care among a representative national cross section of 1,200 voters. The interviews were conducted April 14 to 18. The party identification of the sample is 45% Democrat, 43% Republican, and 12% independent. The self-reported 2020 presidential vote of the sample is 51% for Joe Biden and 47% for Donald Trump.

Overview

Lowering the cost of healthcare and expanding affordable health insurance coverage are top-tier priorities for voters. The survey results are crystal clear that putting these issues front and center offers a huge opportunity for President Biden and congressional Democrats to advance an extremely popular agenda that voters across party lines support and care about. Democrats have the high side of the debate on these issues and Republicans would oppose a Biden-Democratic healthcare package at their peril.

1. From a list of eight issues the president and Congress might focus on after addressing the coronavirus, “lowering the cost of healthcare and prescription drugs and making health insurance more affordable for more people” stands atop voters’ priorities. Forty-four percent (44%) choose it as one of their top two choices and 62% pick it as one of their top three—ahead of “creating new jobs by investing in infrastructure, clean energy, and manufacturing” (33% top two, 46% top three). The issue cuts across party lines: 62% of Democrats, 65% of independents, and 61% of Republicans pick healthcare as one of their top three priorities.
2. Support for three key elements of a healthcare package is both broad and deep.
 - 93% support giving Medicare the power to negotiate with drug companies for lower prices (54% strongly support).
 - 94% support lowering the cost of health insurance for people who purchase coverage on their own (52% strongly support).
 - 85% support giving poor and low-income Americans who are uninsured, including seniors, children, and people with disabilities, the opportunity to obtain health insurance at little or no cost (53% strongly support).

*NOTE: There is more support for lowering the cost of health insurance for **"people who purchase coverage on their own"** than when the same proposal is described as lowering the cost of health insurance for people who purchase coverage through the Affordable Care Act (though the latter is still popular at 77% support).*

If these three proposals were combined into a single package to lower the cost of healthcare, 84% of voters say Congress should pass the package, including 49% who say Congress definitely should pass it. Virtually all Democrats say Congress should pass this healthcare package, as do 81% of independents and 70% of Republicans.

3. While it is better to talk about the ends rather than the means of lowering the cost of health insurance for people who purchase coverage on their own, there is broad support for the mechanism by which this would be achieved. Seventy-three percent (73%) of voters favor a Democratic proposal to **permanently** expand and increase the tax credits and subsidies people can receive to offset the cost of health insurance premiums (32% strongly favor, 41% somewhat favor).

While we have no data suggesting that voters are aware of the healthcare provisions of the American Rescue Plan, 76% approve of those provisions when they are described to them and 66% say they favor making those provisions permanent.

4. As noted, the core policy of giving Medicare the power to negotiate for lower drug prices has extraordinarily broad and strong support. There is even greater intensity for three enhancements to this policy.
 - All Americans will benefit from the lower drug prices negotiated by Medicare, no matter where they get their insurance from (94% support, 62% strongly support).
 - Drug companies would not be allowed to raise the prices of existing drugs beyond the rate of inflation (92% support, 65% strongly support).
 - Drug companies would be required to roll back their price hikes for thousands of drugs (92% support, 62% strongly support).

Any halo that pharmaceutical companies may have gained from the development of COVID-19 vaccines has not altered the fact that the large majority of Americans believe that drug companies charge an unreasonable amount for medicines (24% reasonable, 76% unreasonable). This is a bipartisan verdict on the drug companies, with 74% of Democrats and 78% of Republicans saying they charge an unreasonable amount for medicines.

Moreover, by 63% to 25% voters are more worried that Congress will not go far enough to lower the costs of prescription drugs than that Congress will go too far in regulating the cost of prescription drugs and will reduce

the ability of companies to invest in the research and development of new life-saving medicines.

5. The best messages for sustaining voters' support for strong action on drug prices emphasize the unfairness of Americans having to pay higher prices for medicines than people in other countries and the effect this has on the lives of many Americans.
 - Americans should not pay three times more for medicines than people in other countries do.
 - Millions of Americans cannot afford their medicines, while drug companies make huge profits. Americans should not have to choose between paying for the medicines they need or paying for their food and rent.
 - Drug companies raise the price of existing drugs like insulin year after year, with no reason other than that they can. Even during the pandemic and economic crisis, drug companies raised the prices of more than 1,000 medicines.

Every message in favor of action to lower drug prices is far more convincing to voters than an opposing message that "government price controls on medicines will reduce the ability of the drug companies to discover new life-saving cures and treatments for diseases including cancer and Alzheimer's." Forty-two percent (42%) of voters find this message very or fairly convincing—far below the 71% who find our lowest-testing message very or fairly convincing.

6. The best framing of policies to lower premium costs for people who purchase insurance on their own provides clarity and specificity about the type of people who will benefit, as well as giving a sense of the scale of how many people will be helped.

FIRST: This proposal will lower the price of health insurance for millions of middle-class Americans and working families who buy their own insurance, including workers in jobs without benefits and middle-class small-business owners and farmers.

SECOND: Seven million lower-income Americans will be able to get health insurance with zero premiums as a result of this proposal.

It is more valuable to give examples of how much someone would save than to go into the details of capping premiums at 8.5% of income. For instance, this example is persuasive to voters:

"A 60-year-old couple with a household income of \$75,000 will save \$1,389 in monthly premiums—more than \$16,000 in savings a year."

7. By a wide margin, voters would prefer using the savings from Medicare price negotiations to “expand health insurance coverage to millions of Americans of all ages and lower premiums for millions more Americans” (63%) than to “lower the Medicare eligibility age to 60 and expand benefits to cover dental, vision, and hearing care” (37%). Democrats, especially liberal Democrats, come down solidly on the side of using the savings to expand coverage and lower premiums. Republicans are divided evenly between the two options.
8. When the focus of public policy debates is on healthcare, President Biden and congressional Democrats have the advantage over Republicans. By 49% to 28% voters trust President Biden more than they do congressional Republicans in Congress—including a 43%-to-13% advantage for the president among independent voters. Voters trust congressional Democrats more than they do congressional Republicans on these issues by 46% to 33%.

Moreover, Republican opposition to the three-point healthcare package we tested would further damage the GOP brand: 61% of voters, including 72% of independents, feel unfavorable toward Republicans after hearing that nearly all Republicans in Congress would oppose the healthcare package.