



CBS NEWS POLL
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**THE HEALTH CARE BILL, THE PUBLIC OPTION,
ABORTION, AND CONGRESS**
November 13-16, 2009

Americans would strongly prefer a health care bill that includes a public option to a bill without it, and a majority supports the idea of a public option for the uninsured specifically. Only one in four Americans say their preference is no health care legislation at all.

Yet most remain doubtful that the proposals before Congress would help them personally, and hold somewhat negative views of those proposed changes overall. Large majorities disparage both parties in Congress for their handling of health care reform.

THE PUBLIC OPTION

51% of Americans want a bill that contains a public option, favoring that over a bill without it by more than three-to-one. Only a quarter wants no bill at all.

WHAT KIND OF HEALTH CARE BILL SHOULD CONGRESS PASS?

One WITH a public option	51%
One WITHOUT a public option	16
No bill at all	26

Democrats (by 72% to 13%) and independents (by 47% to 15%) prefer the public option be included instead of excluded. Among Republicans, just 23% want a public option, 20% want a bill without it, and most, 51%, want no health care reform bill at all.

When Americans are asked directly about a public option for the uninsured, overall support is at 61%. Support is high among those under age 65 (nearly two in three back it) while half of those age 65-and-over do.

SUPPORT FOR A PUBLIC OPTION

	All	Under age 65	Age 65+
Support	61%	63%	51%
Oppose	28	27	35
Not sure	11	10	14

However, views on the overall package of reform under consideration in Congress, as people understand it now, remain more negative than positive, and split along partisan lines.

VIEWS OF CONGRESS' PROPOSED HEALTH CARE CHANGES

	All	Reps	Dems	Inds
Approve	40%	20%	57%	36%
Disapprove	45	74	25	47
Not sure	15	6	18	17

Perhaps the biggest reason for this lukewarm support for Congress' proposals: just 19% think the changes would actually help them personally. Views on this remain unchanged since August.

HOW WOULD PROPOSED CHANGES AFFECT YOU PERSONALLY?

	Now	10/2009	8/2009
Would help	19%	18%	18%
Would hurt	34	31	31
No effect	41	45	46
Not sure	6	6	5

By a nearly four-to-one margin, 38% to 10%, seniors (people 65 and over) think they would personally be hurt.

VIEWS OF CONGRESS, THE PRESIDENT

Americans continue to disapprove of how both Democrats and Republicans in Congress are handling health care reform. Democrats do only slightly better than Republicans on this. The negativity is not new, though positive views have edged up for both parties since before the House passed its version of a reform bill.

HANDLING OF HEALTH CARE REFORM

	Congressional Democrats		Congressional Republicans	
	Now	10/09	Now	10/09
Approve	30%	25%	23%	17%
Disapprove	59	60	62	67

The nation's Democrats just marginally approve of how their own party is doing on the issue: 51% of Democrats approve of how their Congressional members are handling health care, while 41% disapprove.

But even fewer Republicans -- 42% -- approve of how Congressional Republicans are dealing with the issue.

President Obama's approval rating on health care remains in the mid-forties. While 72% of Democrats approve, nearly a quarter of them disapprove. Republicans overwhelmingly (eight in ten) disapprove.

PRESIDENT OBAMA'S HANDLING OF HEALTH CARE

	Now	10/2009	9/2009	8/2009
Approve	44%	47%	47%	40%
Disapprove	48	42	45	47

VIEWS ON HEALTH CARE AND ABORTION COVERAGE

The House touched off controversy last week when it passed a health care bill containing an amendment addressing how health care reforms would handle abortion coverage.

Although most Americans favor keeping abortion legal, most also think in principle federal subsidies for health care plans should not be allowed to pay for abortions. Men and women agree; views divide along ideological - not gender - lines.

ALLOW GOV'T HEALTH CARE SUBSIDIES TO PAY FOR ABORTION?

	All	Men	Women	Libs	Mods	Conservs
Yes	34%	37%	32%	57%	34%	20%
No	56	52	59	36	52	76

The issues provokes passionate views: most who think the government should pay feel strongly about that, and eight in ten who oppose such payments feel strongly about their position, as well.

Those who strongly oppose any abortion payments oppose the health care reforms being proposed in Congress, while those who strongly favor allowing such coverage support the overall reforms.

WILL THERE BE A BILL?

Half of Americans think it is likely a health care bill will pass this year. Only 15% think it is not at all likely.

WILL CONGRESS PASS A HEALTH CARE BILL THIS YEAR?

Very likely	16%
Somewhat likely	34
Not very likely	33
Not at all likely	15

Supporters are optimistic: six in ten of those who approve of the health care proposals are also optimistic that they'll pass this year; most of those who disapprove think (or perhaps hope) that the bills will be defeated.

This poll was conducted among a random sample of 1167 adults nationwide, interviewed by telephone November 13-16, 2009. Phone numbers were dialed from random digit dial samples of both standard land-line and cell phones. The error due to sampling for results based on the entire sample could be plus or minus three percentage points. The error for subgroups is higher.

This poll release conforms to the Standards of Disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

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q7 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling health care?

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **				
	Total	*** Party ID ***			Oct09a
	%	Rep	Dem	Ind	%
Approve	44	13	72	38	47
Disapprove	48	82	23	50	42
DK/NA	8	5	5	12	11

q14 Which of these comes closest to your view? 1. Abortion should be generally available to those who want it. 2. Abortion should be available but under stricter limits than it is now, or 3. Abortion should not be permitted.

Generally available	34	21	46	31	41
Available but limits	40	42	37	42	35
Should not be permitted	23	36	14	23	20
DK/NA	3	1	3	4	4

q18 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Democrats in Congress are handling health care?

Approve	30	13	51	20	25
Disapprove	59	78	41	63	60
DK/NA	11	9	8	17	15

q19 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Republicans in Congress are handling health care?

Approve	23	42	14	19	17
Disapprove	62	40	76	64	67
DK/NA	15	18	10	17	16

q20 From what you've heard or read, do you mostly approve or mostly disapprove of the proposed changes to the health care system under consideration in Congress?

Mostly approve	40	20	57	36
Mostly disapprove	45	74	25	47
DK/NA	15	6	18	17

q21 From what you've heard or read, do you think the health care reforms under consideration in Congress will mostly help you personally, will mostly hurt you personally, or don't you think they will have much of an effect on you personally?

Help	19	7	26	19	18
Hurt	34	54	18	38	31
No effect	41	36	51	34	45
DK/NA	6	3	5	9	6

q22 Would you favor or oppose the government offering some people who are uninsured the choice of a government administered health insurance plan -- also known as a "public option" -- that would compete with private health insurance plans?

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **			
	*** Party ID ***			
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
Favor	61	35	82	56
Oppose	28	56	8	30
DK/NA	11	9	10	14

q23 How likely do you think it is that Congress will pass and President Obama will sign into law a health care reform bill by the end of the year -- very likely, somewhat likely, not very likely, or not at all likely?

					Oct09a
Very likely	16	13	16	17	14
Somewhat likely	34	27	42	31	36
Not very likely	33	37	29	34	33
Not at all likely	15	20	11	15	14
Don't know/No answer	2	3	2	3	3

q24 Which of the following comes closest to your view about the proposed changes to the health care system now under consideration in Congress? 1. Congress should pass a health care bill that includes a government administered health insurance plan also called a public option. 2. Congress should pass a health care bill that does not include a government administered health insurance plan also called a public option, or 3. Congress should not pass any health care bill.

Should include public option	51	23	72	47
Should not include	16	20	13	15
Should not pass any bill	26	51	7	30
DK/NA	7	6	8	8

q25 If the federal government provides subsidies or credits to help people buy health insurance, do you think those insurance plans should or should not cover abortion procedures?

Should	34	29	45	28
Should not	56	63	45	62
Doesn't matter (vol.)	2	0	2	2
DK/NA	8	8	8	8

q26 Do you feel that way strongly or only somewhat?

	Total	"Should" in q25	"Should not" in q25
Strongly	73	65	78
Somewhat	27	34	22
DK/NA	0	1	0

	<u>UNWEIGHTED</u>	<u>WEIGHTED</u>
Total Respondents	1167	
Total Republicans	311	282 (24%)
Total Democrats	414	430 (37%)
Total Independents	442	455 (39%)