



**To:** Women Donors Network, Communications Consortium Media Center  
**From:** The Mellman Group, Inc.  
**Re:** Public Support For Health Care Reform And Women's Reproductive Health  
**Date:** September 17, 2009

*This analysis represents the findings of a national survey of 1000 likely voters. Interviews were conducted by telephone August 27<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup>, 2009. The margin of error for this survey is +/-3.1% at the 95% level of confidence. The margin of error is higher for subgroups.*

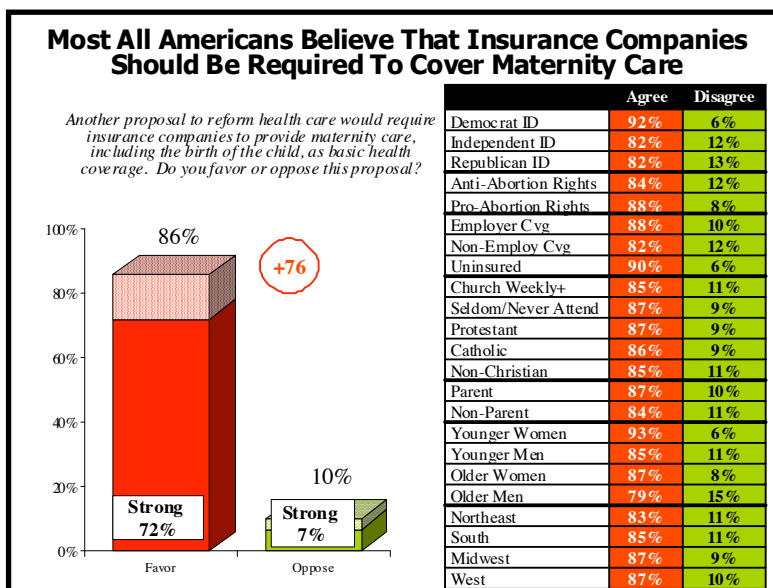
## Health Care Is A Top Priority For Voters

As the debate has swung into high gear, health care elicits more concern from voters today than any other issue, eclipsing even jobs and the economy, as 55% cite health care as extremely important. Jobs and the economy follow closely with 53%. Education (46%) is also in the top tier, with the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (36%), and the environment (28%) generating lower levels of concern. Health care is a top priority across party, age and gender.

Nearly three quarters (73%) of the electorate support some meaningful reform, though 18% predict they would oppose any major health care reform plan proposed by President Obama or Congressional Democrats.

## Support For Requiring Maternity Coverage Is Nearly Universal

The vast majority (86%) of Americans believe that insurance companies should be required to cover maternity care, while just 10% oppose such requirements. Nearly three-quarters (72%) of voters *strongly* support a requirement to cover maternity care, while just seven percent (7%) *strongly* oppose requiring insurance companies to provide such coverage. Support is quite high across party, age, gender, region, religious attendance, and views on abortion.

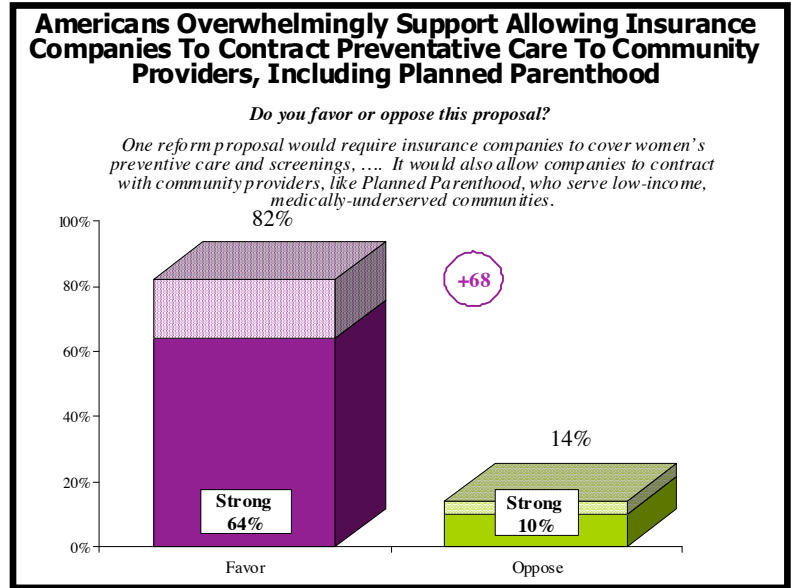


The vast majority (93%) supports empowering pregnant women to make informed decisions “about when to have a child, where to give birth and the health care provider who will attend her birth” while only 5% disagree with such a position.

## Allowing Insurance Companies To Contract Preventative Care Services To Community Providers, Including Planned Parenthood, Is Uncontroversial

Support for requiring insurance companies to cover women’s preventative care and screenings, including contraception, Pap tests, breast cancer treatments and sexually transmitted infection testing and treatment, and allowing companies to contract these services to community providers like Planned Parenthood (which is specifically mentioned in the question) is quite strong, with 82% in favor and just 14% opposed.

Again, vast majorities of voters across party, region, age, gender, religious attendance and current health insurance status support this policy.

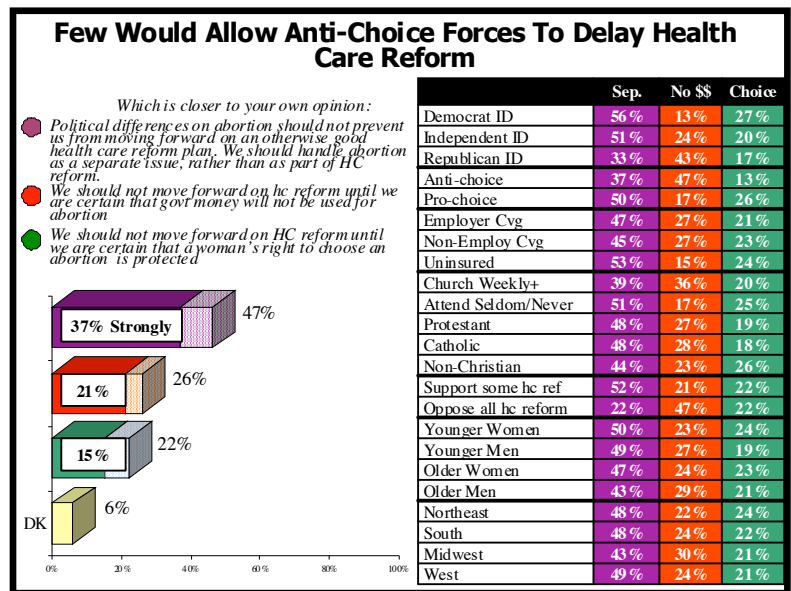


## Americans Do Not Want A Battle Over Abortion To Bog Down Health Care Reform

Nearly nine-in-ten (89%) Americans want to have a much broader national discussion that focuses not just on abortion but also on “issues such as birth control, comprehensive sex education, maternal health and childbirth issues....,” while just 8% disagree with that perspective. This sentiment is expressed by large majorities of every voter segment including Democrats (91%), independents (89%) and Republicans (85%), as well as Americans across region, sex, age and religious attendance. Importantly, 90% of pro-abortion rights voters (that is, the 66% who believe the government should not interfere with a woman’s access to abortion) and 89% of anti-abortion rights voters (that is, the 26% who believe the government should pass more laws that restrict the availability of abortions) agree.

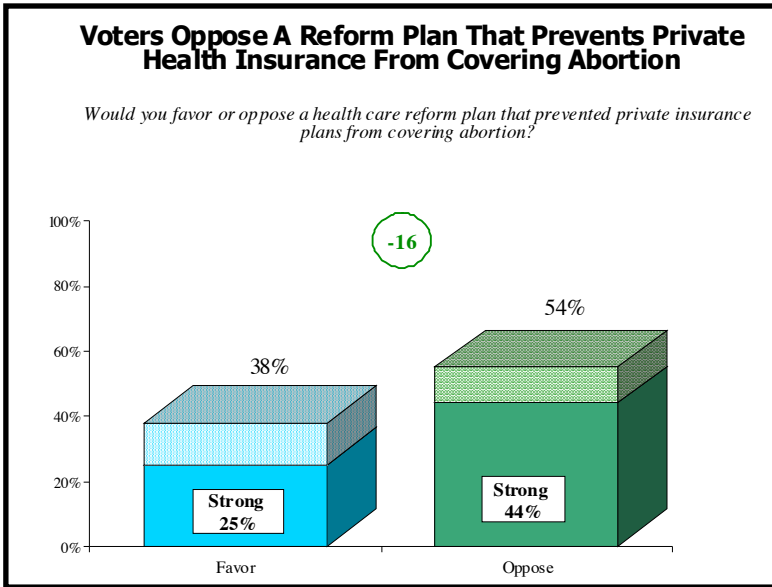
In addition, recognizing that reproductive issues, including birth control, abortion and end-of-life decisions, are difficult issues, 85% want us to “appreciate and respect our individual opinions” and “agree to disagree” on these matters.

Moving specifically to the health care debate, nearly half (47%) the electorate says, “Political differences on abortion should not prevent us from moving forward on an otherwise good health care reform plan.” Another 22% believe that health care reform should not move forward unless “a woman’s right to choose an abortion is protected.” Only a



quarter of voters (26%) believe that health care reform should not move forward unless “we are certain that government money will not be used for abortion.” Among the 18% of voters who would oppose any health care reform and among the 26% who want more new laws restricting abortion do even close to half favor delaying reform until we are assured that government money is not spent on abortion. Among the 82% of the electorate who are open to some form of health care reform, just 21% support that view.

**Voters Oppose Reform That Would Prohibit Insurance Companies From Covering Abortion**



By a 16-point margin, (54%-38%) voters would oppose a health reform plan that prevented private insurance plans from covering abortion.

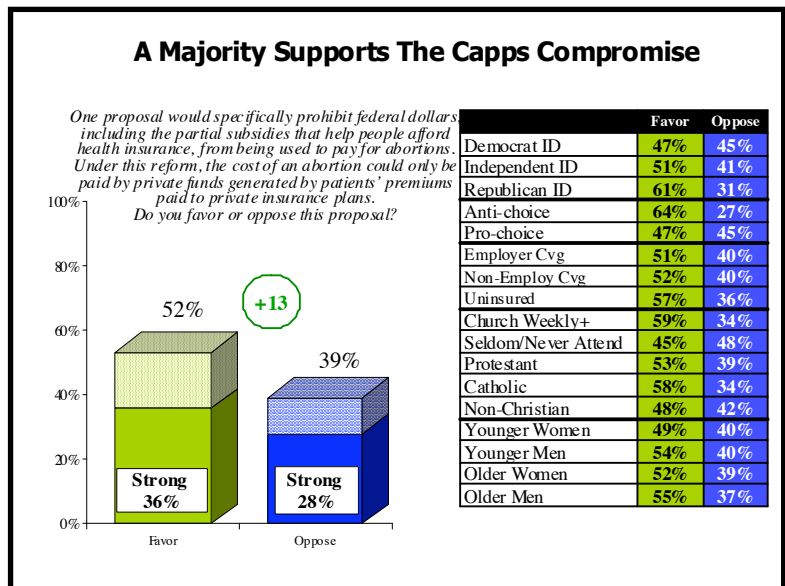
While Republicans are divided on the issue (46% favor, 47% oppose), Democrats (33% favor, 59% oppose) and independents (37% favor, 55% oppose) clearly oppose the restriction. The only major subgroup in which a majority favor this restriction are clear anti-abortion rights voters—but even in this segment, 39% oppose prohibiting private insurers from covering abortion.

**Most Americans Support The Capps Compromise, With Opposition Coming From Some Pro-Abortion Rights Voters**

When it is explained, a majority (52%) of voters support the “Capps compromise” which would prohibit federal dollars, including partial subsidies, from being used to pay for abortions, though abortions could be paid using private funds generated by patients’ premiums. Just 39% oppose this language.

It is important to note that some of the opposition comes from pro-abortion rights voters who oppose the restrictions embodied in the compromise. For example, 45% of Democrats and 45% of pro-abortion rights voters oppose this approach.

Equally important to note is that two-thirds (64%) of anti-abortion rights voters, 61% of Republicans, and 58% of Catholics—constituencies who favor a ban on using public money to pay for abortion—support the compromise.

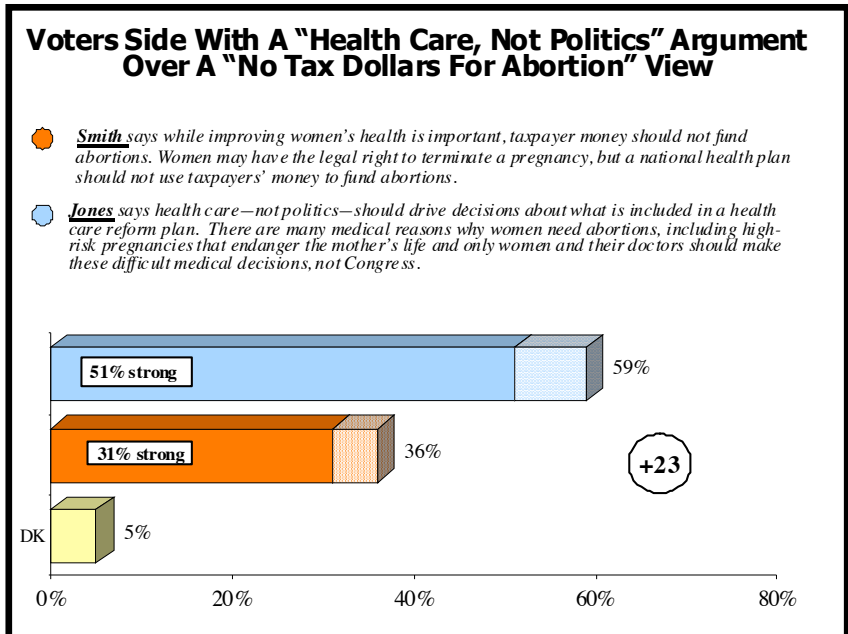


## Americans Believe The Insurance Exchange Should Be Able To Offer Information About And Sell Policies That Provide Abortion Coverage

After being exposed to strong arguments on both sides of the issue, a 56% majority believe an Insurance Exchange created under reform should offer information about plans that provide abortion coverage, while only 34% believe it should not.

Moreover, 56% say that those who purchase health insurance policies with partial subsidies should be able to buy plans that cover abortions along with other health care services, while 33% believe they should be prohibited from purchasing plans that would cover abortion.

In addition, voters support requiring the exchange clearinghouse to offer information about at least one plan that covers abortion and one that does not by a two-to-one margin (59% support, 30% oppose).



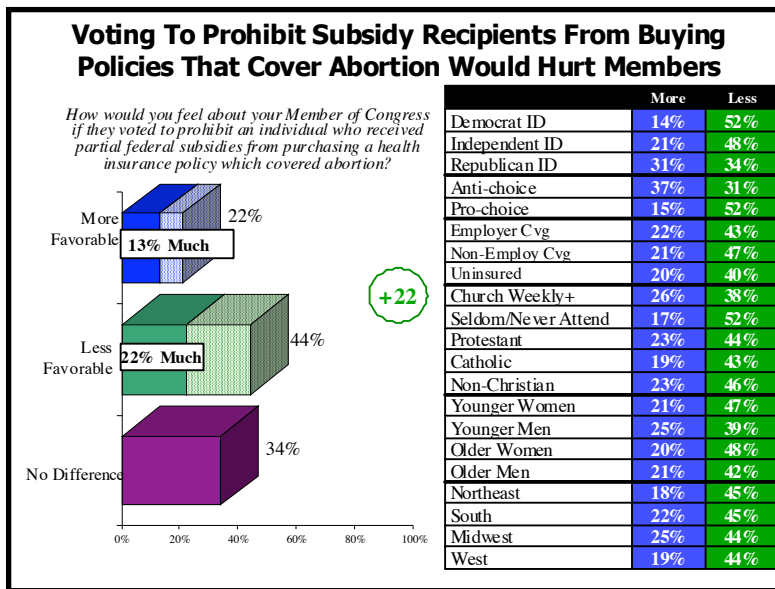
Later on in the survey, respondents heard another argument focused around the view that “taxpayer money should not fund abortion.” However when also provided with an argument suggesting that “health care—not politics—should drive” these decisions, 59% associated themselves with the pro-abortion rights viewpoint and just 36% took the anti-abortion rights position.

## Voters Do Not Want Congress Deciding Whether Or Not To Cover Abortion

Just 14% favor Congress and the President making coverage decisions with respect to abortion. A significant plurality (43%) support empowering an independent commission to make coverage decisions on abortion rather than insurance companies or politicians. Indeed, despite popular frustration with insurance companies, 27% would grant “private insurance companies, which currently make coverage decisions,” with this authority.

## Legislators Are Likely To Benefit From Opposing Abortion Restrictions And To Incur Voters' Wrath For Supporting Them

A plurality (44%) of the electorate would feel less favorable toward a Member of Congress who voted to prohibit subsidy recipients from purchasing an insurance policy with abortion coverage, while less than a quarter (22%) would be more favorable to such a member. An additional third (34%) would be indifferent. Even Republicans are more likely to feel less favorable (34%) than more favorable (31%) toward a Member who took that position.



A nearly equal proportion (43%) would feel less favorably about a Member of Congress who voted to prohibit the national health care exchange from providing information on plans that cover abortion. Less than one-fifth (19%) would feel more favorable and nearly two-fifths (38%) would be indifferent about a Member who voted to prevent the clearinghouse from providing information about insurance policies that cover abortion.

On the other side, 30% of Americans would feel more favorably about a Member of Congress who supported an

“abortion neutral” reform plan that kept “abortion policies about the same as they are today,” while just 20% would feel less favorable. A majority (51%) says they would not be swayed in either direction by a member who supported an abortion neutral reform plan; thus, abortion neutrality creates fewer electoral problems than other approaches.

More than a third (35%) would feel more favorable toward their Member of Congress if they voted to allow private insurance companies to cover abortion services “as they do now,” while a quarter (25%) would feel less favorable and two-fifths (40%) would be not be affected by a vote to maintain the status quo on private abortion coverage.

**Conclusion**

Americans want maternity care as part of the basic benefit package offered under health care reform and want to make sure that women can access their medical care in those community-based centers where they most often seek care. Furthermore, Americans oppose using abortion as a means of derailing healthcare reform and oppose using health care reform as a means of expanding or restricting abortion. Americans support efforts to keep this health care reform package abortion neutral.